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# EDUCATION: OFFERS REMEDY OR NEEDS REMEDY?

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## INTRODUCTION

The journey towards establishing an egalitarian society in India was started sixty one years back. For establishing and sustaining such a society, India needed man power development. Of all the ways education is considered the most suitable instrument to achieve the goals of productive human capital. The economics of education too speaks of education as the investment that multiplies and rewards the practitioners of it. In the ensuing years plans were made and commissions set up to look after the education system of the country. The education commission 1964-66 stated 'On the quality and number of persons coming out of our schools and colleges will depend our success in the great enterprise of national reconstruction whose principal objective is to raise the standard of living of our people.'

## EDUCATION AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Education was assigned the role of panacea or remedy for the deficiencies in the society. 'Education is expected to make a contribution to addressing sustainable human development, peace and security, universal values, informed decision-making, and the quality of life at individual, family, societal, and global levels' (Pigozzi, M.J, 2008).

Although all levels of education are important for national development, the focus here is higher education and its importance for our country's progress. 'Quality higher education makes sound personalities shaped by ideals of integrity, character, transparency, forthrightness and compassion for the helpless. Quality higher education even accrues permanent benefits to humanity. But quality as envisaged in industrial and business management is often taken as role model for educational institutions. Integrity, character, transparency, forthrightness and compassion for the helpless take a back seat in industrial management except those few investors with altruistic attitudes. In industry, human resources is managed (if not driven) to achieve short term or limited ends, whereas in academics it is self- created and self driven for long term. And also in higher education there is more altruistic relationship and where ethics and values get manifested in it. In higher education leadership matters more than material returns' (Soundararaj, 2009).

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In the beginning, the Indian higher education model adopted was based on western model of education. 'The curriculum replicated the London model and the affiliating system of higher education institutions got established. Science technology commerce and management found their way into an otherwise linguistic and humanities curriculum' (Soundararaj, 2009). In India we find that the model adopted by our forbears have given rise to two contrasting groups - one side there is highly paid and highly educated individuals and on the other hand a vast group still struggling to access basic necessities of life.

The growing economy was supposed to be sustained by the products of the educational institutions. But it is said that 'Less than 7 percent of India's dauntingly large labour force is employed in the formal economy. That means that only about 35 million people have job security in any meaningful sense. Of the 35 million, only 21 million are direct employees of the government, this leaves around 14 million working in the private 'organized' sector. And just over a million or about 0.25 percent of India's total pool is employed in information technology, software, back-office processing and call centers' (Edward Lee, 2007). 'Several studies indicate the mismatch between the supply and demand of professionals in terms of skill set learning by fresh entrants in the job market' (Albuquerque, 2007). What education does is the function and what education should do is the aim of education. What we find is incongruence between its aim and function.

The system of higher education is at a state of crisis. Some of the reasons for this are unplanned expansion, inadequate inputs, falling standards, weakening of student motivation, lack of relevance, and lack of national consensus in dealing with such situation'(Agarwal,J.C,2004).

## QUALITY EDUCATION

If education is to fulfill its ultimate aim or what it should do it needs to look at its quality. 'A quality education understands the past, is relevant to the present, and has a view to the future. Quality education relates to knowledge building and the skillful application of all forms of knowledge by unique individuals who function both independently and in relation to others. A quality education reflects the dynamic nature of culture and languages, the value of the individual in relation to the larger context, and the importance of living in a way that promotes equality in the present and fosters a sustainable future' (Pigozzi, M.J, 2008). NAAC, (2006 ) defines quality as a social construct:

- In terms of exceptional (exceeding high standards and passing a required standard)
- In terms of consistency (exhibited through zero defects and getting it right the first time making quality a culture)
- In fitness for purpose (meaning the product or service meets the stated purpose customer specification and satisfaction)

- As value for money (through efficiency and effectiveness)
- As transformative (in terms of qualitative change)

NAAC  looks at it from these perspectives

As product (output of the educational institutions)

As software (process in the educational institution)

Service (the activities that have direct impact on student satisfaction)

The following figure as ideated by Robert Barret (Barret ,1992 in NAAC, 2006) suggests that there are four core activities that take care for the students quality in higher education.
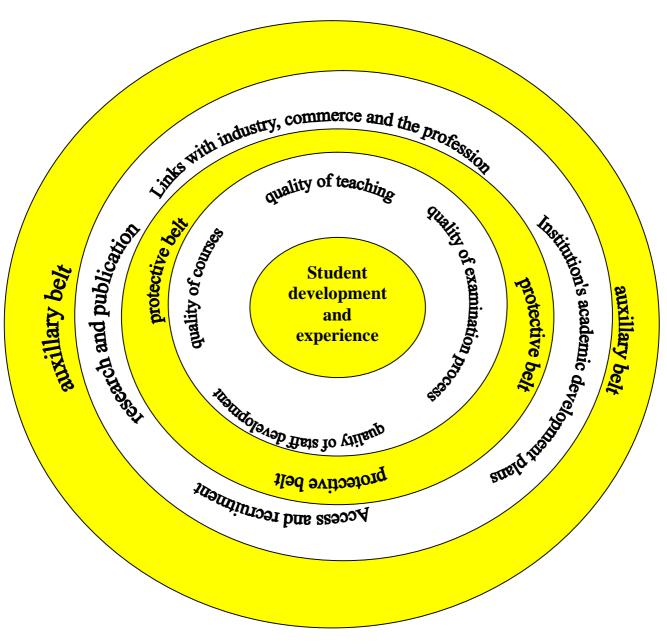


**Figure1: Barret's quality framework**

The four areas are 1.Teaching learning 2.Student assessment 3. Staff development 4. Curriculum /courses. They fall under the protective belt and other fall under auxiliary belt, namely research and publications, policy of admission and recruitment, institutions academic developmental plans and link with industry

Based on the ideas presented above the author identified certain zones which needs critical examination.

- The Zone of Learner
- The Zone of Educational Processes
- The Zone of Environment
- The Zone of Administrative structures and management processes
- The Zone of Resources
- The Zone of Measuring learning outcomes

## A COMPREHENSIVE VIEW OF QUALITY EDUCATION

### The Zone of Learner

**Connecting with the learner**

When we talk of quality of education the first aspect we need to look at is the learner. It is around the learner the entire system of education revolves. Learner of every kind – whether male or female, young or old , poor or rich – be catered to by the institutions in which they are admitted. They are treated without any discrimination and on par with everyone. **Kathleen Lynch and John Baker** (2005) examined the key dimensions to equality that are central to both the purposes and processes of **education** in their article and state that **equality** means equality in educational and related resources; equality of respect and recognition; equality of power; and equality of love, care and solidarity. It is important that we take positive efforts to reach out to the difficult to reach students who dwell in remote areas. As important is the attention we need to give students with specific disabilities. Learners have a right to a quality education that will serve as the basis for lifelong learning

**The learner's potentiality**

Any learner is not a blank slate. He brings with him various skills and potentialities. They come from different background and have strengths of unique kind. The learning activities should take advantage of these experiences. When the teacher is able to relate content or initiate content with the learners' experience it becomes fruitful.

### The Zone of Educational Processes

**Classroom interactions**

The process of teaching learning is to follow the appropriate pedagogy and classroom interaction. In the teaching learning both of these levels operate within a specific context, which can vary considerably from location to location. In educational process, the application of principles of education is to be adopted by the teachers. In classroom interaction has to be open and there is respectful exchange of views and opinions.

**Course structure**

The content or the course structure with a functional component, a support component, an inter disciplinary component, life frontier engagement component and a major or core component would ensure better academic transactions in higher education courses' (Soundararaj, 2009). The course content becomes irrelevant if students are not clear about their goals. Every IIT student's education is subsidized by the state, but a huge proportion of them take admission courses in MBA courses after doing their engineering course. Eventually the student rarely takes a career that has anything to do with his past engineering education. It so happens that the resources spent by the nation go waste.

**Skills**

Moreover skills like critical thinking, conflict resolution skills, ICT skills, cross-cultural communication and the attitudes needed for team work and taking responsibility for actions has to be developed.

**The Zone of Environment**

**Physical environment**

Physical environment and adequate infrastructure is also as important as the academic facilities. Building standards, sanitation standards, furniture standards, equipment standards have to be met by the institution. One of the things to be noted is that in times of students' unrest the most convenient way to show displeasure is to destroy the college or class properties like desks and chairs.

**Psycho -social environment**

When it comes to psycho-social environment in ideal situation there should be no bullying or other forms of violence no evidence of coercion, but instead we find violent ragging and bullying a part of campus life.

**The Zone of Administrative structures and management processes**

**Management of time**

Flexible timetables to accommodate the situations that balances with events that occur in the society say, assembly elections or weather cycles or calamities have to be in place.

**Rules and procedures**

Institutions and their bureaucracies need to be learner friendly. There has to be provisions for systems of checks and balances in place. Along with clear rules and procedures, there need to be concerted efforts in implementation of good policies. The teaching and non teaching staff knows and employs rules and

practices that support them and their professional development. The policies governing promotions need to be transparent and equitable. Active participation of parents and communities.

**Appropriate legislative framework**

State is responsible for assuring provision of quality education. It is necessary state has provisions to meet grievances and offers remedies when required. A recent development is the setting up of a new apex body called the national commission for higher education and research (NCHER) . 'The proposed NCHER will replace the UGC, the AICTE and the NCTE. All higher institutions have to seek authorization as per the norms it lays out. The collegium of NCHER will have two kinds of members –core and co-opted.  NCHER will specify norms and standards needed for an institution to award any degree or diploma; develop a national curriculum framework; specify norms and processes for establishment and winding up of a university; specify norms of academic quality; and lay down minimum eligibility conditions for appointment of V-C.'(TOI, February 1, 2010)

**Scholarship system**

When participation in higher education becomes unaffordable there need to be in place scholarship or financial support to the needy.

## The Zone of Resources

**Human resources**

In terms of human resources in higher institutions sufficient, qualified teachers at each level and subject and the systems in place for development of education professionals have to efficient.

**Time resources**

Length of the academic year and time on task for teaching and time allocated for preparation need to be considered.

**Financial resources**

Appropriate percentage and unit costs for different levels have to be considered. Here has to be equitable allocation of resources across levels.

## The Zone of Measuring learning outcomes

The continuous assessment pattern, with sufficient internal tests and exams will help students to cope with knowledge acquisition and retention.

CONCLUSION

India has many difficult and challenging problems. There are problems of globalization, environmental issues and public health issues. Education is the tool which can meet these challenges. Only quality products of our educational institutions will change the society for the better and be capable of shouldering the responsibilities of the future.

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