

Perceived Quality of Education in Higher Education Institutes in India

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Abstract

Quality is the buzz word of today. Famous educationalists have said that education is related to future employment and is the key to the future one holds. Thus, quality of education is one of the pressing concerns of today's society. The current paper is an attempt to analyse the Perceived Quality of Education in Higher Education Institutions in India. Through this paper the researcher will discuss the concept of quality, higher education, problems in Higher Education System and will also suggest measures to alleviate these problems. The paper is based on secondary sources and has derived information from appropriate journals, books and websites.

Keywords: Higher Education Institutions, Perception, Problems in Higher Education, Quality Assurance, Quality of Education

1. Introduction

Quality of Education is a buzz word in modern era, yet, a highly debated term. Quality is a comprehensive term perceived differently by different people. Quality comes from the blend of excellent learning process and public satisfaction in the service provided (Hanaysha, Abdullah, & Warokka, 2011)^[1]. Quality of education can be defined as -

1. Healthy, well-nourished, participating learners who are supported by their families and communities.
2. Healthy, Safe, Protective, Sensitive environments with adequate resources and facilities.

3. Content to equip learners with knowledge and skills for life.
4. Processes to facilitate learning and reduce disparities.
5. Outcomes (KSA) linked to National Goals for education and positive participation in the society. (UNICEF, 2000)^[2]

Oxford Dictionary describes quality as “the standard of something as measured against other things of a similar kind; the degree of excellence of something.” Cambridge Dictionary defines the term simply as “how good or bad something is.” Though the dictionary meaning on first hand appears very simple, to understand it in completeness, the

term quality holds a subjective meaning which differs from person to person. Where school education has its importance in creating a strong base, higher education provides a cutting edge to the learners.

Education for all: Global Monitoring Report emphasizes two aspects in assuring quality education

- Learner's cognitive development.
- Promotion of values and attitudes as responsible citizens & in nurturing ingenious and emotional development. (UNESCO, 2004)^[3]

There is however an emerging argument in the literature describing quality as culture (Harvey and Stensaker, 2008)^[4]. Such perspective lays importance on the organizational view of quality and views it as a process of transformation, where each entity of the organization is concerned with and weighs quality as of prime importance. This conceptualization is concerned with the intrinsic traits of higher education in which quality is considered as a driving force behind what everyone does in an organization. In the same way, quality culture is perceived as an organizational culture that involves: (1) a psychological component of shared values, beliefs, expectations and commitments towards quality, and (2) a structural or managerial aspect with well-defined processes that enhance quality and coordinate efforts (EUA, 2006)^[5]. Others think of quality culture as organizational culture, which proffers development of effective and efficient care for quality (Berings et al., 2011)^[6]. A quality culture is not likely to be constructed irrespective of the context in which it is located, which further complicates the term. Quality thus, depends on the chronological, situational, spatial context which is further

defined by valuator. From the discussion, it can be said that the notion of quality is amorphous and contextual. Quality has a dynamic and ever changing impression. It is a never ending journey, progressing from times immemorial to infinite years ahead (Harvey and Stensaker, 2008).

1.1 Objectives of the study

2. To understand the concept of quality of education as perceived in Higher Education Institutions
3. To comprehend the problems pertaining to Quality of Education in Indian Higher Education System.
4. To suggest measures to improve and sustain Quality of Education in Higher Education Institutions.

The concept of quality in the present study will apply to Higher Education Institutions. Therefore, it becomes imperative to understand what are Higher Education Institutions and their types.

2. Higher Education

Higher education is perceived by different people differently. Higher education offers in-depth knowledge to and understanding so that the learners advance to the new-frontiers of knowledge in different domains or fields of studies. *It is basically about knowing more and more about less and less.* Four predominant conceptions about higher education are – production of qualified human resources, training for research career, efficient management of teaching provision, matter of extending life chances. (Barnett, 1992)^[7]

Indian Higher Education system is the second largest in the world. In Indian Higher Education System, there are two prominent institutions – Universities and Colleges.

Universities are conferred with power to award degrees and are of the following types –

1. Unitary Universities, confined to teaching and research in their own departments and having a small campus
2. Affiliating Universities, with a central campus and departments/ schools imparting instructions and conducting research. These universities have affiliated colleges responsible for teaching according to the jurisdiction of the affiliating university, which confers degrees to the students of these colleges.
3. Deemed Universities, conferred with the status due to their long involvement in teaching or excellence in a particular area.
4. Institutions of National Importance, established under Acts of Parliament like IITs which can award their own degrees.

Colleges are managed by their governing body comprising of representatives from state government, university, promoters of college, principal and teaching staff. University has a substantial control over colleges. Colleges can be classified as –

1. Government colleges are managed by the state government and follow the university to which they are affiliated.
2. Private colleges are managed by trusts or societies and functional under the directions of the concerned university
3. Depending on the types of courses offered, colleges might be classified as Arts and Science or Professional Colleges.
4. Depending on financing, colleges may be classified as grant-in-aid, those private colleges which receive substantial government funds. The other category is self-financing colleges do not receive substantial funds from government and fees from students turns as the main source to manage their costs.

5. Affiliated colleges function under a university's direction when it comes to academic matters, curricular aspects, conducting examination, publishing results and awarding degrees. (Stella, 2003)^[8]
6. Autonomous colleges, the need for autonomous colleges was clearly felt as the system of affiliated colleges does not provide any right to the college to frame curricula, course of studies and system of assessment. (GOI, 1992)^[9]. For the autonomous colleges the parent university will provide general guidelines and confer degrees upon successful candidates. Autonomy is provided to design and plan content and quality of teaching, admission and assessment of students. The university accepts the evaluation by the college and mentions its name on the degrees awarded. (UGC, 2017)^[10].

3. Role of Higher Education Institutions

As per Kothari Commission (1966), role of Higher Education Institutions can be enlisted as follows –

1. To seek and cultivate new knowledge, to engage vigorously and fearlessly in the pursuit of truth, and to interpret old knowledge and beliefs in the light of new needs and discoveries;
2. To provide the right kind of leadership in all walks of life, to identify gifted youth and help them develop their potential to the full by cultivating physical fitness, developing the powers of the mind and cultivating right interests, attitudes and moral and intellectual values;
3. To provide the society with competent men and women trained in agriculture, arts, medicine, science and technology and various other professions, who will also be cultivated

individuals, imbued with a sense of social purpose;

4. To strive to promote quality and social justice, and to reduce social and cultural differences through diffusion of education; and

5. To foster in the teachers and students and through them in the society generally, the attitudes and values needed for developing the 'good life' in individuals and society. (GOI, 1966, p 497-98)^[11]

4. Quality Assurance in Higher Education Institutions

The International Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE)^[12] defines accreditation by using the generic term 'quality assurance' which is as follows: "... quality assurance may relate to a programme, an institution or a whole higher education system. In each case, quality assurance consists of all attitudes, objects, actions, and procedures which, through their existence and use, combined with quality control activities, ensure that appropriate academic standards are being maintained and enhanced in and by each programme. Quality assurance extends to making the process and standards known to the educational community and the public at large".

Fourie and Alt (2000)^[13] discussed the challenges to sustain and enhance the quality of teaching and learning against the background of the quality assurance policy developments at the national level. In their view, the major matter of concern is that the academic staff becomes occupied by building and conforming to formal quality assurance procedure and diverts attention from teaching and research.

Tam (2001)^[14] viewed that quality in higher education and its measurement were premised on two important considerations: maximizing the students' educational development and their continued improvement. But in his view, it is very difficult to measure quality because it is a highly contested concept and has multiple meanings for different people who, therefore, demand different quality outcomes and methods of assessing quality and that there are a variety of stakeholders in higher education, including students, employers, teaching and non-teaching staff, government and its funding agencies, accreditors, validators, auditors and assessors including professional bodies having their own perceptions about quality.

Tulsi (2001)^[15] was of the view that implementation of total quality management in higher education requires deep commitment, full involvement of people, top management support, fair reward and recognition policies and training of concerned people in the concept, tools and techniques of total quality management.

Aamdor and Havnes (2008)^[16] argued that a core aspect of quality higher education was to prepare students for future employment. Employability however goes beyond getting a job, as it includes the quality of job performance/job mastery. It is closely related to the quality of the professional curriculum, including the study and style of the student, relevant and quality training. To come to grips with the concept of employability, life-long learning is also needed.

The National Accreditation Regulatory Authority for Higher Educational Institutions Bill (2010)^[17] states that 'Accreditation is a process of benchmarking of academic quality of a higher education institution by an

accreditation agency' and 'Academic quality' means the quality of teaching, learning and research; it includes infrastructure, human resources, curricula, and admission procedure and governance structure.

Accreditation as an 'explicit national-external quality-assurance mechanism' was initiated only in 1994. The accreditation system of India began as a top-down model but incorporates the critical element of voluntary participation of the institutions of higher education. It was initiated as a response to the country's need for quality enhancement at the national level. The huge, complex and diverse system of Indian higher education needed quality controls over and above the routine regulatory mechanisms.

Stella and Woodhouse (2011)^[18] believe that higher education institutions in developing countries like India could be at disadvantage in transnational education and also at establishing a set of minimum standards because of their capacity to participate effectively in global trading system.

Hill and Chalaux (2011)^[19] opined that in Indian higher education, the number of providers especially private sector providers was rising rapidly. But with such an expansion of educational infrastructure in higher education, access has not always been assured. High drop-out rates and low attendance continues to be a challenge at lower levels. Poor learning outcomes amongst school students and mediocre higher education provision called for more effective government regulation and funding arrangements.

Venkatesh (2013)^[20] in her article states that the goal of accreditation is to maintain

quality in education by building a healthy competitive environment for quality rating of educational institutions. The assessment process helps placing benchmarks, impact statements and performance evaluations to quantify various attributes in Higher education. Accreditation process can be broadly classified as –

1. Institutional Accreditation, i.e., reviewing the institution itself.
2. Specialized, professional or programmatic accreditation, i.e., reviewing specific programmes within the institution.

She further states that the resources available for improvement in quality are limited, also quality assurance, assessment and accreditation in higher education sector is voluntary in nature, and the process is more tilted towards flavors of south and west which makes the process jeopardized. Moreover, regional imbalance is also a feature when it comes to growth of higher education institutions. Though the Government through the accrediting bodies are taking measures for reforms, unless these reforms are implemented, the process being made mandatory and continuous revisions and renewal in content is made by means of networks and global knowledge economy be set up, sustainability of quality will always be in question.

Verma (2016)^[21] conducted a study to determine the state of research in review of quality assurance in higher education settings. In his study he defines quality in the context of higher education as a judgment about the level of goal achievement and the value and worth of that achievement. It is also a judgment about the degree to which activities or outputs have desirable characteristics, according to some norm or against particular specified

criteria or objectives. He concludes his study with a strong emphasis that though quality is a growing concern, there is very little research on quality management. He furthers that pressure for quality assurance poses a major challenge for India and other developing countries.

5. Perceived Quality in Higher Education

The word Perception comes from the Latin words perceptiō which is further derived from perceptus and perfect passive participle, percipio, which means “receiving, collecting, act of taking possession, apprehension with the mind or senses.” Many of the Indian ancient texts like the Vedas, Upanishads, Bhagavad Gita, Patanjali and many schools of yoga describe perception as one of the methods of knowledge from sensory experience, which man shares right with the lowest living beings up to the transcendental perception of ultimate reality as claimed by great mystics and seers of the world.

Perception is defined as the process of receiving, selecting, organizing, interpreting, checking and reacting to sensory stimuli or data. (Udai Pareek et.al, 1981)^[22]

Perception is a conscious, or phenomenal, experience of seeing, hearing, or touching etc. Perceptual experience provides the final output of perceptual processing. (Styles, 2005)^[23] It is the selective process as sensory organs are capable of sensing much more data than the brain is capable of processing. It is a process of assigning attributes. During the attribution process people make personal attribution, i.e., the characteristics of the person caused the behavior and situational attribution, i.e., the situation and not personal characteristics caused the behavior. Consensus information is gathered by observing others in

similar situations. Distinctive information is gathered by observing a target in a different situation. Consistency information is gathered by observing the person in a similar situation but in different time frame. When consistency is higher and consensus and distinctiveness is low, a person attributes the cause of behavior to be due to personal attribution, whereas, if consensus and distinctiveness is high but consistency is low, behavior is attributed to situational attribution. (Champoux, 2017)^[24]

There are various components which affect the process of perception which can be clubbed up as Stimulus and Organismic variables. (Benjamin, Popkins & Nation, 1994)^[25]

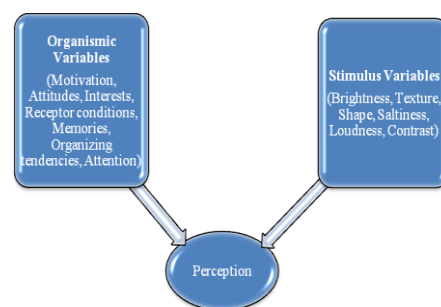


Fig 1: Determinants of perception (Benjamin, Popkins & Nation, 1994)

Kumaran (2002)^[26] conducted a study on quality in higher education on the basis of perceptions of students and teachers of government and private colleges in Tamil Nadu. The overall quality was significantly better in private colleges than in the government colleges. The private colleges had better quality aspects in four dimensions namely quality performance, learning climate, planning for quality and staff cooperation. Women colleges had better quality aspects in quality performance and staff commitment than co-educational colleges. On the other

hand, co-educational colleges had better quality aspects in terms of staff commitment, time management and quality improvement than men's colleges.

6. Problems in Higher Education Institutions in India

Anand (1997)^[27] analyzed the causes of deterioration of quality in higher education and revealed that favouritism and corruption were known to exist in all types of higher education institutions in the matters of admission, internal assessment, practical examination etc. The privately managed higher education institutions were widely seen as money making machines for their managements. He further opined that earning hefty amount through allocation of seats was also not uncommon.

Churchman and Woodhouse (1999)^[28] raised the quality issue of professional education and identified that the biggest problem in maintaining quality was the different interests and perspectives of stakeholders. Teachers, students and administrators have their own notions of viewing quality, which do not match with one another.

Trivedi (2000)^[29] opined that institutions of higher learning were not playing a positive role in identifying and addressing the issues that affect the progress of communities, nations and global society as a whole. He also remarked that without high quality education would remain a counterfeit.

While reviewing the growth of educational institutions, one can see that in the last two decades, Private providers have exceptionally increased in number while the numbers of Government and Private-aided institutions by and large have remained the same. Normally

believed to be inexpensive, higher education in India is costly except in centrally funded institutions and those (that do not matter) in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh.

Gandhi (2000)^[30] reported that over the last five decades there had been phenomenal expansion of the higher education system in India. Yet in the fast changing socio-economic context and need of skilled manpower, the higher education system would be exposed to still greater pressures for expansion. It may be because of demands for social equity and justice, for providing a training ground for skilled manpower to meet the needs of expanding industry, trade and commerce or for self employment, for initiating and managing social change, or just for intellectual curiosity.

Patel (2003)^[31] argued that in developing as well as developed countries, the higher education scene would in future, provide and indeed demand a much greater diversity not just in subject range but in terms of institutional arrangements as well as how subjects are taught or research done.

Balachander (2004)^[32] observed that expansion of higher education in India was not accompanied by quality. No doubt India is producing largest number of skilled manpower, but there is unemployment among its educated youth due to mismatch of degree with jobs.

Mehta (2004)^[33] carried out role analysis of teachers in university system as perceived by students. He reported that (i) there should be easy availability of research grants and scholarships for students. Besides, they should have right kind of motivation since higher education demands commitment, (ii) proper knowledge regarding scope and admission to higher education through internet service

should be provided to the students at cheaper rates and through enquiry cells. (iii) The students have emphasized both on the professional and expressive role orientations of teachers for better role relationship in between them. Further, increased interaction in formal and informal settings can reduce distance between them and make teaching-learning an effective process.

While the Government is concentrating on commercialisation of higher education in India, students are continuously subjected to exploitation by one or the other un-scrupulous private provider. Unfortunately, students have to face these problems with no recourse. The private organised sector in India employs around nine million people (around 2.2 per cent of the total workforce). This is so small that any expectation of it absorbing the large pool of around 3.5 million graduates coming out of the system every year is really unreal. With the move towards rightsizing, the public and the government sectors (with 20 million people) cannot absorb many more graduates. Most jobs in the unorganised sector employ a bulk of the Indian people where higher education qualifications are not essential. Under these circumstances, the problem of graduate unemployment continues to persist. It can be expected that higher education expansion will be dictated more by signals from the households and private demand for higher education than by the signals from the job market. (Agarwal, 2006)^[34]

Singh (2006)^[35] opined that higher education in India had expanded enormously in terms of quantity without adequate concern for quality. He emphasized that the quality crisis in higher education had emerged due to its unplanned growth.

Clancy and Goastellac (2007)^[36] compared the policy perspectives for access and equity in higher education among different countries. They found that there was a general movement from the priority given to inherited merit in the admission process through a commitment to formal equality, towards application of some modes of affirmative action for the under-represented groups.

Thorat (2007)^[37] viewed that these days the exclusion from access to higher education was reflecting in the disparities observed not only between the poor and the non-poor, but also across social groups based on caste, religions, ethnicity and gender. He further highlighted that access to higher education was low among Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Other Backward Classes from all religions. Muslims, girls, wage labourers, landless farmers, and marginal farm households are among the most deprived, with the poor within all these categories suffering the most. In his opinion, inclusiveness in higher education would only mean increased access to education for such groups currently having only limited access. He therefore suggested a compensatory affirmative action policy and pro-poor policy for ensuring inclusiveness in higher education.

Dubey (2007)^[38] analyzed the challenges of quality in education and reported that the biggest challenge for education in the new millennium was to establish coordination in terms of “quantity” vs. “quality”. She also analyzed the reasons for the deterioration of quality in education as: lack of irresistible curiosity, analytical ability, lack of experimentation in students and teachers; overburdened teachers; lack of flexible curriculum; obsolete teaching methods; privatization of education and lack of government expenditure on education.

Roy (2007)^[39] analysed Indian higher education in the era of globalization and pointed out that most of the higher education institutions in our country lacked even the basic library and laboratory facilities. Old syllabi, unscientific evaluation system, malpractices of different sorts, even in teacher's appointment, poor salaries of the teaching staff, low level of infrastructure facilities, are some of the burning problems of the present higher education system.

Altbach and Balan (2007)^[40] argued that the basic problem of Indian higher education was indeed related to the traditional universities. The state universities, particularly, are characterized by endemic under-funding, political interference, often a significant degree of corruption in academic appointments sometimes admissions and examinations, and inadequate and ill-maintained facilities.

Singh and Sarkaria (2007)^[41] have noted that there has been a rapid growth of private professional institutions owing to increasing market demand for the professionals and the retreat of the state from financing higher education sector. But most of these institutions have been established with profit making as the underlying motive. As a result, the quality of education in these institutions does not seem to be a priority, giving rise to unscrupulous institution and dearth of resources.

Mitra and Singh (2008)^[42] in their discussion paper analyzed the problems in regulation of higher education in India. The authors were in favour of an independent regulatory body as recommended by National Knowledge Commission. So in their opinion lesser regulation of entry and more of

governance of higher education is the need of the hour.

Rao and Reddy (2008)^[43] observed that in terms of the total quantum of output of our higher education institutions, the Indian higher education system was one of the largest in the world, but in terms of quality of education, India did not necessarily rank fairly well with many developed and even developing economies. What we find in India is there exists a good number of universities and other institutions of higher education of excellence, at the same time there also exists a large number of institutions of substandard quality.

Singh (2009)^[44] in his study highlighted that some of the private higher education institutions, especially those offering courses having demand in job market are maintaining quality standards simply to sustain in the competition and for their profitable operation. As these institutions collect huge amount of money in the form of fees, hence they do not have any dearth of funds for maintaining good infrastructure, hiring competent faculty and providing better facilities. Further, some private institutions are maintaining better infrastructural facilities as compared to the government institutions, but do not have requisite, experienced and competent teaching faculty. These institutions provide good facilities to attract people but do not maintain regular faculty to save money. These institutions are primarily profit-oriented ventures and for enhancing their profit margins, they compromise the quality parameters for building, laboratories, libraries and equipment. Besides, to save money, most of these institutions do not hire qualified faculty on regular basis. Rather less qualified people are hired at low salaries on session basis.

Pradhan (2011)^[45] suggested that a high enrollment rate in higher education in India could be achieved by providing access to all people on the basis of merit. Besides, higher education must be refashioned in a manner to nurture excellence and competitiveness at the global level in general and the national level in particular. However he argued that in a country with multi-sided diversities in terms of religion, language, socio-economic status, providing equity and ensuring excellence simultaneously appears to be a myth.

For global recognition of its qualifications, India needs to work towards synchronizing its academic standards with internationally accepted practices. Also, Government needs to allocate more funds towards Higher Education. Neglect of doctoral studies is also a key area to be addressed. Robust research depicts that higher education adds on to the earning capacity and thereby contributes to development. Research also shows that it contributes to various human development indicators like life expectancy. Educational institutions have slowly started turning into business entities, though the Government emphasizes upon development of innovative PPP in higher education and make it self-sustained, the formal contracts usually ends up as business deals whereby public partners shares costs and risks and private partners share profit. Moreover, in this process of self sustenance, most of the financial burden is imposed on the learners in the form of high fees. In short, Government efforts can be said as “Private enrichment and public pauperization”. (Tilak, 2012)^[46]

Shahguri (2013)^[47] enumerated the following problems in Indian Higher Education Institutions

1. Dearth of quality and qualified faculty is a key feature of Indian education system, where, most teachers are either less trained or unequipped in terms of experience. Inadequate number of faculty leads to poor student – teacher ratio which in turn hampers quality. Moreover, the trend of contractual teachers is also adding to the problem of maintaining quality, where, less qualified faculty is hired to cut the associated costs.
2. Inadequate infrastructure which remains a serious problem in rural pockets of the country. Even in the urban counterparts, facilities in terms of labs, digital content, ICT are not up to the mark. Poor Government funding leaves institutions to manage their own survival where employees give more emphasis on sustaining themselves rather than focusing on quality education.
3. Inappropriate curriculum leading to mismatch between industry expectations and skill set of college students, further resulting in skill shortage despite of large graduate unemployment.
4. Low quality research and lesser emphasis on innovation and innovative practices.
5. In Indian Education system, where on one hand there are multiple regulatory bodies with overlapping and burdensome role, on the other hand it suffers from lesser monitoring of quality and no appropriate parameters to measure performance indices of faculty leading to inconsistencies in delivering quality education
6. Low and inequitable access arising as a result of high fees, unequal access to means for meeting the financial requirements of education and variation in the number of quality colleges and universities. Education loans in India have a very high rate of interest as such very few graduates avail this facility.

Kumar & Ambrish (2015)^[48] also acknowledged low enrolments, no equity in Gross Enrollment Ratio, Vagueness of the concept of quality, poor infrastructure, political interference in education, dearth of qualified faculties, voluntary nature of accreditation process, inadequate focus on research and innovation, and burden of administrative functions to be the prime challenges in Higher Education System in India.

IILS (2017)^[49] identified the constraints existing in higher education institutions and placed them under three categories

1. Regulatory, dealing with the problems of centralization of regulatory and accrediting on one hand and corrupt practices within regulatory agencies on the other.
2. Institutional, where the system of affiliating colleges is turning as a burden to state universities and UGC denies private agencies to affiliate colleges. Moreover, the legislation for private universities do not incentivize undergraduate courses making them more inclined towards professional courses where fees charged is relatively high. Students lose chances to get exposed to numerous courses in humanities, social sciences etc. in an integrated manner.
3. Decision, though Admission and Fee Regulatory Committees (AFRC) exists in most federal states, there is a debate between private and state institutions whether fees charged should be uniform across students. Private institutions point that AFRCs are vulnerable and highly influenced by state government. Fee regulations and uniformity influence the functioning of private institutions which are in need of funds, furthering the problems of corruption and cronyism.

Aruchami (2004)^[50] argued that current competitive global setting demanded intellectual leadership. The role of teaching faculty for assuring quality in educational institutions is important because it is only the teachers who motivate learners to become responsible and productive citizens of the country. For achieving this aim we must solve the problems related with the teaching community as a whole.

Soni (2011)^[51] argued that the main reason for poor quality of higher education had been the existing huge gap between rapidly evolving needs of Indian business/industry and those provided by the higher education institutions. It has been strongly felt that there is an urgent need to bridge the skill gap. There is a need to adopt a holistic approach to the new age academia-industry interaction which should address issues like improvement in governance of academic institutions and industry linkages, building centres of excellence, effective industry involvement in education related policy issues etc. Similarly the academic fraternity needs to come out with their creative thoughts and share these with industry for their actualization.

Bora (2012)^[52] highlighted major challenges confronting professional education in India along with suggesting some reforms to deal with such challenges. He was of the view that as the industry is the ultimate judge of our products, therefore we must take their feedback seriously for improving our products in the future.

7. Suggestions to improve Quality of Education

Based on the problems enlisted above, with the following measures, Quality can be

assured and sustained in Higher Education Institutions in India -

1. Ensuring skilled, trained, experienced and permanent staff in Higher Education Institutes which furthers that the problems pertaining to teaching fraternity must be resolved in time. Faculties must not be puppets in the hands of management, but should be equal stakeholders. Their appointments and separations must be reported to an authority appointed for their grievances. This authority should ideally be tripartite in nature comprising of representatives from Management, Faculty and Government and at University Level. This would bring a stop to the institutes working on the fancies of the management and would curb favoritism and nepotism in working class to some extent. Moreover, the practice of contractual appointments must be kept minimal for the betterment of teaching learning process.

2. Admissions and evaluation must be scrutinized and monitored by a board constituted at the Institution and University levels. The records should be maintained online to check paper waste. Surprise visits by these boards would ensure proper system in place.

3. Fees for various courses should be decided at the state level and students must be encouraged to report any institute charging more fees to the state government directly. Moreover, state level legislations should be designed containing provisions of fee designing, scholarships, fee increment and waivers, penalties for contravening the provisions, means of amendments etc.

4. Skill gap between what is needed and what is taught must be reduced to the extent that the graduates may be in a position to cater their services at global level. For this, the curriculum must be revived keeping in mind

the demands of the industry and society at large. Curriculum must meet international standards and committees should be made to study and upgrade syllabus. Regular feedbacks and suggestions must be sought from industry and platforms for discussions between academicians, industrialists and government representatives should be encouraged. This should be done at the university level and assured by UGC.

5. Unscrupulous and substandard institutions should be identified and warned to make needed changes and upon failure must be blacklisted and must not be entitled to carry on any programmes in future.

6. Ideal student-teacher ratio must be ensured and monitored; else further appointments should be made.

7. Frequent formal and informal talks between students and faculties should be encouraged for enhanced learning. Components pertaining to critical thinking, analytical ability and experimentation should essentially be made a part of all programmes and encouraged by faculties.

8. Students must be encouraged and supported by the institution and Government for lucrative start ups, so that they not only look out for job but even create jobs for the coming generations.

9. Research must be promoted and students should be supported in terms of research grants to ensure innovation and upgradation of knowledge base.

10. Facilities of library, labs, canteens and other open spaces must be ensured in educational institutes for better learning. These facilities must not be for name sake but be updated timely and made fully functional and accessible to all the students of the institute. The college management must ensure timely monitoring for their effective operations.

11. Online lectures and programmes should be promoted for constant growth of the working citizens. Also courses should be introduced and promoted with facilities of studying on the go like ‘school on wheels’ whereby the needs of the rural pockets can be addressed. The curriculum should be based on the needs of the rural communities so that they could start up ventures at their place and even be equipped to serve in urban areas as per their desires.

12. Students should be essentially oriented on the scope and future prospects of the course.

13. Political interference in the matters of higher education must be discouraged.

14. Learner centric education should be encouraged.

8. Learner centered paradigm of education

Harvey (2003)^[53] reported that students were important stakeholders in the quality monitoring and assessment processes and it is important to obtain their views and feedback. Their perceptions, about the teaching-learning, the learning support facilities such as libraries, computing facilities, the learning environment, lecture rooms, laboratories, social space and university buildings, health facilities, student-service modes of finance, transport facilities etc. are important for the continuous improvement of quality of higher education.

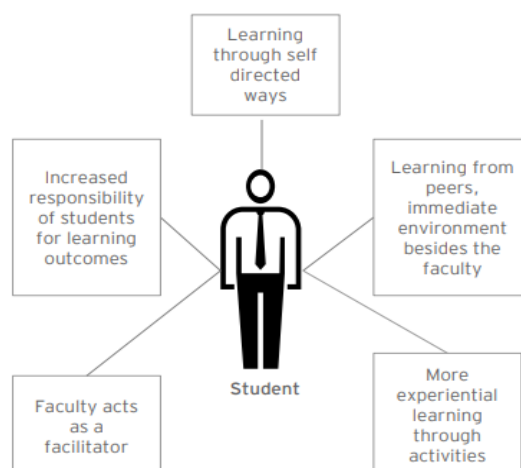


Fig 2: Learner-centered paradigm of education (Source: Higher Education in India: Vision 2030)

FICCI Higher Education Summit 2013 report proposes a model of learner centric education for effective, reflexive, customized and thoughtful learning, which would make learners innovative, creative, independent and help evolve them as critical thinkers ready for adapting to dynamic work environment. In order to accomplish this it is required to revamp the existing education system and develop praxis oriented content, pedagogy, and assessment systems which would be interactive in nature, changing the role of teachers from instructors to facilitators for which the faculties need to be trained. The report also presents some problems in the existing system – low GER, HDI ranking, employability and less number of institutions in top listed institutions across the globe, probably because of poor quality. (FICCI, 2013)^[54]

9. Conclusion

Quality in Higher Education is definitely a growing concern. Challenges and obstacles lie ahead for sure, but an understanding of them will be helpful in their discovery.

Transparency in the system and a certain amount of training, monitoring and regulation can ensure a proper system in place. This concern of system of quality in higher education needs to be connected with accountability which can further assure quality in its fullness. Each and every stakeholder must be identified, studied, utilized and supported to the best possible extent to grant wings to Higher Education in India.

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