

Changing Paradigms of Higher Education: An Innovative Approach

Dr. Nazir Ahmad Gilkar*

ABSTRACT

The present paper attempts to trace changing paradigms of higher education by adopting an innovative approach. The need of the study has been realised in pursuance of present objectives. The paper is based on observations and empirical evidences. The new paradigms are deliberated upon in detail. Finally, the paper summarises the entire discussion.

Keywords: *intellectual capital, changing paradigms, spiritual laboratory, evaluation process, pedagogical tools.*

Introduction

Innovation can be described as generation of new and creative approaches to different issues. The term is used in relation to the creation of new ideas, structures, policies, approaches etc. with a vision of benediction of the society or environment. The innovators and researchers are being shouldered with an extravagant responsibility of providing solutions. The solutions not only for the existing problems as a reactive approach, but also solution to the expected problem with a proactive approach. The words of great leader Shingo also reflect the importance of innovation “those who are not dissatisfied will never make any progress”. Dissatisfaction and problem always leads to innovation. Thus, innovation is increasingly being seen as the currency of 21st Century.

The Study

Rationale

Healthy education system is the very foundation of a healthy society. As is evident thus:

- Downfall of Great Britain was not because of World War I(1914-1918); or Great Depression of 1930's(1929-1936); or World War II (1939-1944). Research findings reveal that it happened due to sick education system, the UK was confronted with.

* gilkarna@rediffmail.com

- In our state Bhagwan Sahay Committee 1972 (the only education Committee constituted by the State Government from 1947 to till date) with a mandate to ascertain problems of education system and measures to overcome. An event-post 1971, Indo –Pak war and emergence of Bangla Desh. Change in the geography of the sub-continent and shift in political paradigm.

The other members of the committee were Mr. G Parthasarthy, Mr. M S Swaminathan, Mr. J P Naik, Ms. Mehmooda Ali Shah, Dr. Aga Ashraf Ali and Prof. Saty Bushan. My take on the subject is that Mr. G Parthasarthy was thereby acquainted with education scenario of J&K State, to read the psyche of people and understand public feelings through their education system as he was asked to engage himself in parlays with Mirza Mohammad Afzal Beigh that culminated into Indra-Abdullah Accord of 1975 and resumption of power by Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah and adoption and approval of the recommendations of the committee by his cabinet.

- Dr. Manmohan Singh Hon'ble Prime Minister of India visited the state in recent past, He did not interact with:
 - Law makers in the state Assembly; state bureaucracy in the civil secretariat; bar and bench in the Hon'ble high court; business community in the chamber of commerce. He straightway visited the University and interacted with teachers there. Teachers reflect intellectual capital of a society. To what extent a society is evolved is assessed on the basis of its intellectual capital. That is why NPE(1986) says, "No people are above the level of its teachers". The policy document is adopted by the parliament of the country. Thus, the Parliament or the nation accords concurrence to this statement.

The present paper has been attempted in the aforesaid backdrop.

Objectives

The study pursues the following objectives:

- To probe into alternate models of higher education in a changing environment.
- To light the role and essence of education in general and higher education in particular.

Methodology

The study is based on the available literature, the observations of the author and the empirical evidence gathered from a select group of academics in a workshop. The first draft of the paper was presented in a seminar in order to obtain the response of the participants and changes were affected as suggested by the learned participants.

Contextual Analysis

- 1) The concept of autonomous colleges is a new experiment for bringing about educational innovations. The underlying idea is to have freedom with flexible operations. The University Grants Commission of India (UGC) was quite ambitious to make 10% of the colleges autonomous during the 11th plan (2007-12) by laying more and more emphasis in successive plans. But there is resistance to adapt to the new realities (Narahari: 2013). The idea is confronted with a variety of challenges.
 - The affiliating Universities are very much reluctant to de-affiliate the colleges despite the fact that the UGC has granted autonomous status to some of them, or
 - The faculty (of course with some respected exceptions) become sceptical in the name of accountability. The basic problem is that they do not trust themselves. Why they want to avoid responsibilities when given, Why many colleges should not become autonomous and degree awarding colleges when private Universities, Deemed Universities, foreign Universities and such other models are operating hassle free and are not prevented in the new mechanism.
- 2) Choice based credit system (CBCS) allows students to choose courses of their choice from a basket of large number of electives within or outside the department or even outside the faculty. Varied choice for a student enables him to gain relevant inter disciplinary knowledge besides the core competency in the subject he is pursuing undergraduate or post graduate qualification. Academic credit on the other hand is the unit to measure course work. Credits may also be assigned for laboratory, tutorials, field work, summer assignment and hidden curriculum (Bhushan: 2004). The CBCS also requires to be implemented at undergraduate level as well, as it offers: i) Variety of learning experience; ii) Incorporates sufficient flexibility; iii) Effective examination management and cost effectiveness; iv) Teacher autonomy and accountability; v) Congenial institutional academic culture; vi) Well defined syllabus and uniformity in course content; vii) Effective internal Quality Assurance Cell.
- 3) In our state we have all types of Universities like State Universites, Central Universities, Agricultural Universities, Deemed Universities (SKIMS and NIT) and Private Universities. The two premier heritage colleges viz. Sri Pratap College, Srinagar and Govt. Gandhi Memorial Science College Jammu are engaged in the dissemination of Science education. These are single faculty institutions. These institutes are best fit for single faculty university status. The faculty universities will add a new dimension in the higher education in the state.
- 4) The entrepreneurial culture needs to be developed in the institutions of higher education. Every student irrespective of subject combination he is

pursuing has to be developed as an entrepreneur. This is not to be done under a conventional format. An entrepreneur is primarily innovative and has risk appetite. By regular class-work business enterprises are not produced. We need social entrepreneurs, women entrepreneurs, business entrepreneurs, educational entrepreneurs, rural entrepreneurs and so on. An activity based course of study in this regard is to be designed and developed in such way where a student enjoys maximum freedom and flexibility. He needs to visit enterprises, interact with working entrepreneurs, study their success stories. More can be learnt through experiences. The students are to be motivated and guided by the teachers. However, at the end of the academic session they will submit their responses for evaluation with a complete scheme of their engagements. There are a number of IIM passouts who have written different books as for instance Reshmi Bansal has written 4 books on entrepreneurship. The local media also publishes stories of successful entrepreneur.

- 5) Examinations in pursuance of some preset objectives: are to put students in real situation to understand the vagaries of examination. An examinee shall be comfortable and stress free during examination the way teaching-learning is enjoyed. Focus must be on thorough study, rather than rote learning of selected course content. To study social sciences, philosophy, psychology, sociology, history, education, literature despite being a student of business or science education. Prof. A G Madhosh responded to satisfy a curiosity as to know why government is opening new colleges with arts, humanities or social sciences only. "There is wisdom in social sciences leads from knowledge to wisdom." To make examination participative by incorporating self-evaluation of answer scripts and hand over award sheet to Controller (Examinations) to compare same with the result notification and marks card highlighting the marks awarded by the subject-matter specialities and to find out \pm gap thus has risen accordingly. To have standard answer scripts attempted by the respective examiners and published by the University for every Question Paper. This way students will be guided as to how each question paper was to be answered and accordingly evaluated by the examiners. To analyse the results and assess the performance outcome. It is rightly said that the evaluation of course content is directly related to the methodology and procedure adopted during the transaction of the course content. The teaching-learning process and evaluation are interdependent and have an interchangeable cause-effect relationship. To see that open book system is put to practice. However, such a system gradually has to be adopted by the University.
- 6) Evaluation and teaching-learning process are interdependent. Evaluation reflects the effectiveness of teaching-learning process. Teachers and students are directly engaged in this process. Any type of lapse in the process is joint responsibility of both the stakeholders in the process. The evaluation

thus has an added significance. It primarily makes an assessment of this process wherein not only the students but the teachers as well are equally assessed. Sometimes examination papers cause heavy chaos in the student community and even loss of precious lives. The question papers understandably are usually well within the prescribed syllabus. Attempting exercises at the end of every unit without understanding the core of the subject is a flaw in the teaching-learning process when it sans regular, frequent and varied practices. This practice does not approve of shortcuts, but detailed and comprehensive studies. The understanding of the fundamentals and core of the concept. The teachers need to change the methodology of teaching. Motivate and inspire students, to go through the subject in detail. Once studies are conducted in such a fashion the learning outcome will be in line with the preset objectives. Change in mindset and focus on possibility and positive thinking to get a comparative advantage. The negative mindset will lead us nowhere and as a sequel to it, we suffer a comparative disadvantage.

- 7) Based on their writings and scholarly presentations Dr. Haseeb Drabum Junaid Azim Muttoo, Aijaz-ul-Haque, Naeema Ahmad Mehjoor, Dr. Javaid Iqal, B.R.Sing, S.L Katroo, Fida Iqbal, Abdul Rashid Khan, ZG Mohammad, Aijaz Ahmad Kakroo, Bashir Ahmad Kirmani and so on, on different philosophical, social, economic, political and other issues , it is in the interest of academic excellence to incorporate the select group of non-academics to render their noble services in the institutions of higher learning like colleges and universities across the state. Their experience and exposure can easily be utilised to add value to the teaching-learning process. They may not be fulfilling the required procedural formalities but the fund of knowledge they have accumulated over the years will be utilised to improve educational process in the context of special lectures
- 8) The main features of the amended scheme are the shift from aggregate API score to cap as % of API in 5 categories. The shift in the premise has initially been resisted. However, with the passage of time faculty will be adaptive and the amended guidelines will become operational. The (2nd amendment) Regulation 2013 of UGC minimum qualification for appointment of teachers and other academic staff in Universities and colleges and measures for the maintenance of standards in higher education, read thus: i) Provided that API scores will be used for screening purposes only and will have no bearing on expert assessment of candidates in direct recruitment/CAS. ii) Provided also that the API score clam of each of the sub-categories in the category II (Research and Publications and Academic contributions) will have the following cap to calculate the total API score claim of direct recruitment/CAS. a) Research papers (Journals etc.) 30%; b) Research Publications (Books etc.) 25%; c) Research Projects 20%; Research Guidance 10%; Training courses and Conferences/Seminars etc. 15%.

The overall selection procedure shall incorporate transparent objective and credible methodology of analysis of the merits and credentials of the applicants based on weightages given to the performances of the candidates in different dimensions and his/her performance on a scoring system proforma based on the Academic performance Indicators (API) as provided in these Regulations.

- 9) To find answers to a fundamental question. Is it because of faculty development that student value is created or student value creation makes perpetual faculty development mandatory? This is an interesting paradox and finds a cause-effect relationship with one variable as independent and the other dependent. The knowledge upgradation by the faculty is extremely important to keep pace in the era of knowledge based society. Faculty is demanded to explore opportunities (internal as well as external) in this regard because students suffer on academic setback when faculty sans contemporary knowledge updating. Faculty development and student value creation run parallel and enjoy higher positive correlation. Discussing aforesaid ideas would pave a way for research the same. Fig (a) highlights the changing paradigm.

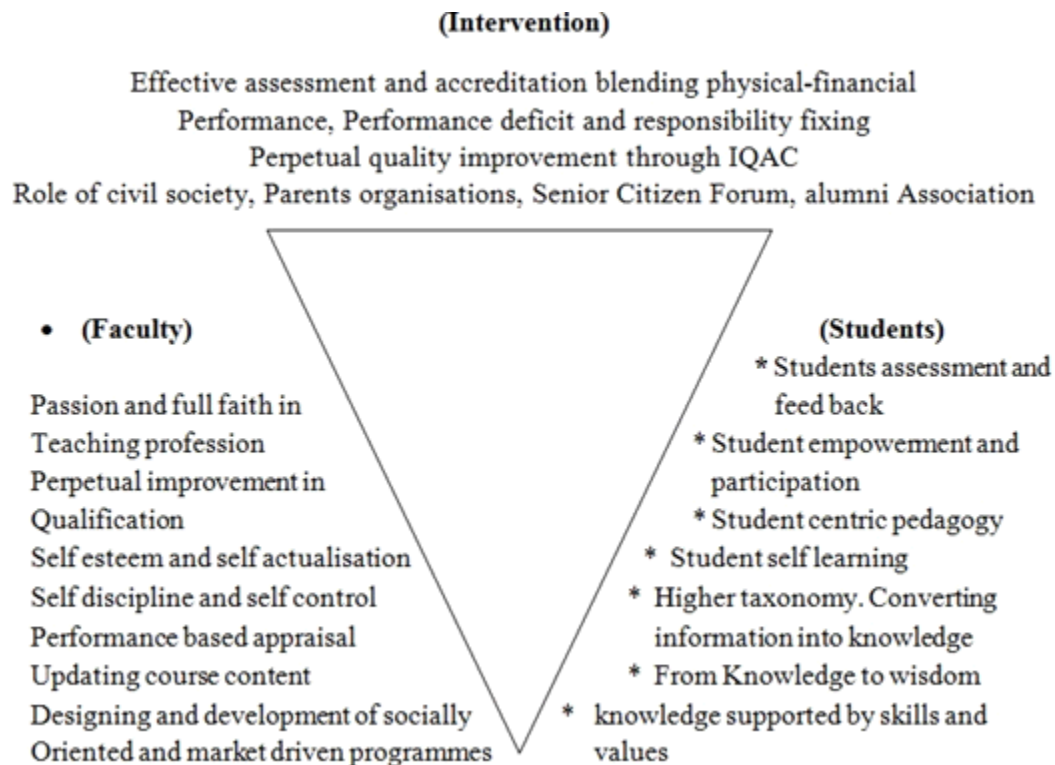


Fig. (a) Triangular Framework

- 10) The faculty have to go to the battle field on a periodic basis to see how techniques are changing. What is the new artillery to get into polemic that is teacher cognition or superior thinking skills. Old notes do not work. Degrees done decades back are useless. If we consider them still relevant we need to visit the battle field time and again. ICT is to be integrated with the teaching-learning process as a support system. Edusat sessions for select content will provide a variety and content not transacted in the regular class room. I did my Ph.D ten years back and it is still relevant if I am not current with the contemporary trends. What we require is to have focus. What matters is to be current (Ramkumar: 2013)

Table: Select Parameters

N=25

		Mean	SD	CV	Mean Score (%)	Rank
1.	Autonomous colleges	6.50	3.41	190.61	92.86	R
2.	Choice based credit system	6.57	3.73	176.14	93.86	R
3.	Revisiting Examinations	6.75	2.98	226.51	96.42	R
4.	Faculty Universities	5.79	3.74	154.81	82.71	R
5.	Entrepreneurial Culture	6.10	2.93	208.19	87.14	R
6.	Evaluation and Teaching-Learning process interdependence	6.81	2.21	308.14	97.28	R
7.	Non-academic engagement in teaching	5.42	3.83	141.51	77.43	R
8.	Sustainable qualification improvement	6.10	2.51	243.02	87.14	R
9.	Concentrating on pedagogical issues	6.65	2.05	24.39	95.00	R
10.	Sustained academic pursuits	6.72	2.01	334.33	96.00	R

Source: Based on responses.

Based on 7 point Likert Scale (7=high; 1=Low) the responses obtained against each parameter are tabulated. The table reveals highest response in the range of 77.43 % and 97.28%. Of course there have been varied deviations parameter-wise which reflect the priorities of the respondents. On the whole the response is highly encouraging as regards the changing paradigms envisaged in higher education sector.

Summary and Conclusion

Healthy education system is the very soul and foundation of a healthy society. To what extent a society is evolved is assessed on the basis of its intellectual capital (thought generation). "No culture can flow, if it accepts to be exclusive."The

access-equity-excellence in the culture of all inclusiveness must move parallel. Cognitive-affective-conative components of the education serve the intellectual, social and economic purposes. The teaching- learning process demands to be stress free and student friendly. The system must enable students to question the basic premises and paradigms. Thus, not to accept the things as they appear to be, but create new paradigms. The entrepreneurial culture needs to be developed in the institutions of higher education. The concept of spiritual laboratory will improve emotional and spiritual quotients. Teachers are always learners and institutions work for perpetual capacity building of the faculty. They must put themselves in real life situations and understand vagaries the students are confronted with. Evaluation and teaching learning process are interdependent. It primarily makes an assessment of the whole process where not only the students but the teachers equally are assessed. Any performance deficit is inter alia a pedagogical issue. Based on their writings and presentations eminent non-academicians who deliberate upon with an authority on philosophical, social, economic and political issues need to be engaged in the institutions of higher learning for academic dissemination. From aggregate API scores, the premises have been shifted towards cap as % of API in 5 categories. The move initially meets reluctance, because change always has been resisted. But with the passage of time people become adaptive and new modals became operational. The responses of the select group of academics have been highly encouraging to see that changing paradigms are taking place in higher education sector from time to time.

References

1. Narahari, AM (2013), Need For New Education Models – Time to Review, "Teachers Movement, Vol. 15 (9): 11
2. Bushan Sudhanshu (2004), Choice Based Credit System, "Paper was written for workshop on Choice Based Credit System at Kuvempu University. Shimoga on 20th of Oct. 2004.
3. Ramkumar, K (2013) "We need teachers from the battlefield."Careers 360, Nov: 360-361