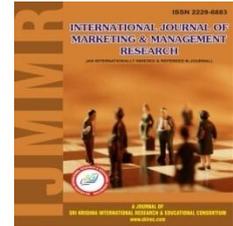




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## ANTERIOR EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM- A NEED OF TIME

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### ABSTRACT

*Universities propagating specialized subjects like law, medicine, engineering and languages have proliferated and have added to the diversity and plurality of the system. The genesis of mono-faculty universities has led to a plethora of problem. Criticizing such universities, as the mono-faculty system lacks representation in other fields of study and thereby it is not a holistic approach in imparting knowledge. Traditional universities have been deprived of major disciplines and the very concept of a university has been dented. While China has 2,236 higher education institutes, India has just 602 institutes. Only 13.5 per cent of students are pursuing higher education. While in China 22.11 per cent of students are taking up higher education. These comparisons clear the picture of the same. This paper focus on the frontal educational system which is a need of time.*

**KEYWORDS:** *holistic, mono-faculty, frontal, proliferated.*

### INTRODUCTION

Higher education reforms are essential if the nation is to meet the serious challenge of skill shortage that will not allow the economy to grow at 8-10 per cent annually. While many of the recommendations of the National Knowledge Commission are in the process of being implemented, we are waiting for the government to act on the recommendations relating to reform of higher education.

The debate on what needs to be done ought to be over, and the time now is to focus on action. The bills have already been drafted but none of them have been tabled in or passed by parliament.

Referring the government's plan for \$5 billion National Knowledge Network (NKN) which is

expected to be ready in about nine months, it will enable researchers and students from different backgrounds and diverse geographies to work closely for advancing human development. It would be a platform for delivering effective distance education where teachers and students can interact in real time, he said, adding it is especially significant in a country like India where access to education is limited by factors such as geography and lack of infrastructure facilities.

In next 12 months, FICCI also proposes to set up 5 national knowledge functional hubs in partnership with industry leaders from capital goods sector and patron institutions all over India. Institute patrons include Thapar, Manipal, Amrita and UPES Universities while industry patrons include Larsen & Toubro, Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited, Thermax, Bharat Forge, Chemtrols and Hindustan Dor Oliver. Higher education in our country to a great extent has become a cause to meet the parental expectations and aspirations which seek to ensure that children are well placed and financially stable. The IT revolution changed the way one visualized the earnings potential of a particular profession. Over the last twenty years, the economic liberalizations policies brought about a sea change in career choices.

A true knowledge economy is one where the entire population is knowledgeable and not exploited by anybody, and uses its knowledge to improve its wealth. It could not be market driven, but excellence -driven. Academicians point out a situation where higher education is tailor made to meet the market trends and that is in the introduction of biotechnology courses in the country. They argue that biotech students pass out without a sound understanding in life sciences. We cannot rule out the possibilities of compounding the trend among students to favors computer related courses neglecting other pure sciences, if we place too much emphasis on ICTs. ICTs for the sake of economic development cannot solve our problems including poverty. One cannot generate water or provide seeds to farmers with ICT alone.

Higher education must respond to society's needs and one of Indian society's needs is to create inquisitive minds. Higher education institutions often ignore creativity at the grassroots level and the value of traditional knowledge systems. Surely education does not stand for profits alone.

The consensus over the importance of education is matched by angst over how to reform it. These debates have two dimensions. There is the increasingly murky relationship between education and employment. Unemployment is being attributed not merely to a business cycle downturn, but a mismatch between education and employment. In advanced countries, college graduates are less likely to be unemployed than their less educated counterparts. The technology revolution and globalization produced a pitiless combination. On the one hand, you must have higher skills to have a shot at a job. On the other hand, there is global competition for those jobs. The answer to both these challenges, so the story goes, is education reform: education that allows you to participate in the economy, and education that allows you to compete. Both propositions seem intuitively obvious. But whether education will continue to be enough to give access to jobs, if the competition becomes genuinely global, is an open question. Education will be central to the arsenal of competition between nations. War metaphors are not alien to education. After all, the famous American Report, "A Nation at Risk", had as far back as 1983 warned that the nation "has been committing an act of unthinking, unilateral educational disarmament".

In countries like India, there is another version of the education-economy mismatch. There is a disjuncture between the demands of the economy and what education produces. Part of this may be simply a matching problem: there is a supply out there, but individuals cannot be matched with the right kind of jobs. Part of it is a genuine shortage, exacerbated by the fact that schooling

is not the same thing as education, just as having a degree is not the same thing as having actual skills. Low (albeit growing) rates of educated female participation in the labour force means some of India's significant human capital is simply not coming on the job market. India is also going to increase its retention rate in secondary schools and higher education. In the short run, this helps mitigate the employment challenge: it may be that the upward pressure on wages is due in part to the fact that the supply of labour is shrinking because more people are staying longer in school. States with higher education achievement like Kerala tend to have higher unemployment. So while education is intrinsically important, the relationship between education and employment in the long run is no less uncertain. The framework for calibrating education to the job market remains a leap of faith.

But if the top end of education is marred by uncertainty, so is the lower base. With the Right to Education Bill, the milestone of near total enrolment and access to adequate infrastructure will have been achieved. The demand for schooling has exploded. But the key issues in school reform — quality and accountability — are still open questions. It is, in retrospect, amazing that so much ideological energy has been expended on the issues of public versus private schooling. Part of this was understandable: there was a deep consternation at the failures of the public system; and now there are questions about the RTE's possible effect on low-cost private schools that have been as much part of the education revolution as any. The comparative evidence on what systems work is mixed at best: there are successful and unsuccessful models of all systems, public, private or public-private partnerships. But the focus of debate largely remains the somewhat irresolvable and abstract issue of systems.

The real tricky questions come in the realm of teaching, testing and curriculum, no matter what the system. But these three issues are harder to resolve because they involve difficult choices. They are also not the sort of issues that lend themselves to neat legislative or bureaucratic solutions. There is a consensus in most studies that exposure to good teachers is the surest guarantee of improved learning achievement; equally there is a consensus that good teachers are not easy to identify before the fact. The quality variance of teachers, even in India's so-called top schools, gives one a reason to pause. Some have proposed that teachers be appointed only after long internships and evaluations. But there is no framework in which to think of our recruitment practices.

At one level, testing is a no brainer: an essential ingredient of accountability is being able to measure. Organizations like Pratham revolutionized our discourse on education by simply measuring what children know. It is a mark of some progress that there is now at least beginning to be a debate over what we should measure: at higher levels, what is the trade-off between "aptitude"— based testing, and content-driven exams? At the lower level, there is a need to at least track basic achievement in mathematics and literacy. But while some measure of testing is essential for any accountability, preventing an education system from being distorted by the superficial certainties of testing is a different challenge. An equally deeper challenge will be responding to results of such tests. At one level, these can be a tool for teachers to identify where to begin their teaching: teaching must talk to a child, not talk at them. On the other hand, what we do know from comparative evidence is this: given flexibility and a culture that makes students the centre of education, not abstract objectives, teachers can improve outcomes. Yet, it takes enormous resources and the best teachers to compensate for the complex background inequalities that result in unequal educational performance. Testing allows for a perverse kind of sorting: where society stops investing in weaker children. These are not insurmountable challenges. But they will get exacerbated in times to come.

Our curriculum debates have oscillated between ossified, bureaucratic imaginations, taking perverse pride in an endless amount of material formally covered, and the romantic fantasy of an oxymoron called free, unstructured education. This is now being replaced by equally false dichotomies between skill-based and general education, and near total neglect of the basics like writing, logical reasoning and mathematical skills. That we need the educational arsenal is clear. But post-RTE, the oldest questions need to take centre stage. What should we be teaching? How should we be teaching? Why should we be teaching? And how do we know that we have in fact managed to teach? Or else, to use the other war metaphor, will our education be arming without aiming?

With the increasing capacity of information and communication technologies, there is a rise in new learning opportunities beyond the traditional "book-teacher" model. Globally, the nature of learning and teaching is changing rapidly due, in part, to increasing interaction from more accessible global telecommunication networks driven by the content of the Internet. New options for distance education are driving the shift from traditional learning communities (schools, universities and colleges) - constrained by proximity - towards unrestricted lifelong learning possibilities. The shift from teacher-centered to learner-centered learning means teachers at all levels need to embrace new information and communication technologies and education and training need to keep up with the advances of new technologies. As new technology is being accepted as the catalyst for new learning environments, access to communication has become crucial. Access to communication and information is indeed a fundamental human right. This is easier said than done in developing countries. The challenges to access to information and communication are tremendous.

A substantive progress in implementation of information and communications and for that matter progress in quality of life and development cannot be achieved without preparing people for a knowledge society. This partially involves making an environment amenable for diffusing computers to schools, training the population in computer application and a building a solid national computer and communication science education. Advanced university training in computer communication systems, computer systems, information science, parallel and distributed systems, software engineering, simulation techniques and tools and telecommunication systems and creation of campus and nationwide network and information systems in education have no substitute for national development. The challenge here is not to put computers on the desks of schools but also to create the conditions for bright students to emerge with solutions to actual problems – perhaps this could lead to a national industry comparable to current agricultural production.

## **CONCLUSION**

The consensus over the importance of education is matched by angst over how to reform it. These debates have two dimensions. There is the increasingly murky relationship between education and employment. Unemployment is being attributed not merely to a business cycle downturn, but a mismatch between education and employment. In advanced countries, college graduates are less likely to be unemployed than their less educated counterparts. The technology revolution and globalization produced a pitiless combination. On the one hand, you must have higher skills to have a shot at a job. On the other hand, there is global competition for those jobs. The answer to both these challenges, so the story goes, is education reform: education that allows you to participate in the economy, and education that allows you to compete. Both propositions seem intuitively obvious. But whether education will continue to be enough to give access to

jobs, if the competition becomes genuinely global, is an open question. Education will be central to the arsenal of competition between nations. War metaphors are not alien to education. After all, the famous American Report, "A Nation at Risk", had as far back as 1983 warned that the nation "has been committing an act of unthinking, unilateral educational disarmament".

This partially involves making an environment amenable for diffusing computers to schools, training the population in computer application and a building a solid national computer and communication science education. Advanced university training in computer communication systems, computer systems, information science, parallel and distributed systems, software engineering, simulation techniques and tools and telecommunication systems and creation of campus and nationwide network and information systems in education have no substitute for national development.

Accompanying this change will see a shift towards more qualitative methods of inquiry yielding in-depth understanding of the teaching-learning processes in a technology-based environment. In other words, research should focus on understanding what, when, why and how learning takes place in the technology enriched environment which is important because this will be the pedagogy of the future at all levels of education and training.

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