

Quality education in higher learning under— multi-lingual society in A&N Islands

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Abstract

Today education is a selling commodity, like other goods /things in the markets. The globalization of education has opened the door of exchange of education opportunity and value across the boundary of the countries .The Indian education has been extended overwhelming over last few decades .As a result, from school to universities, the number of institutions has been increasing like mushrooms. Education becomes a profitable business for investors .It's right to say investors in education may call promoters, who promotes education and get profits from markets of students. Therefore , a group of people from all walk of life in the society invested their money ,power or position to set up educational institute under the banner of trusty, foundation or charity .Specially , professional colleges in the line of engineering, medical , management are coming up even in the interior areas. India's diverse socio-cultural ethos and lingua-franca have introduced education in any dimensions. Language base education leads by state and religion created different kind of culture of educational atmosphere within campus .The multi-lingual education leads a mixed atmosphere in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands education and its basic philosophy. This multi-community linguistic society leads a unique and different kind of academic atmosphere in islands education system both in schools and higher learning institutions. Multi-lingual education in a single campus faces a number of challenges, which affected the student's unity and also disintegrated the professional atmosphere of the faculty. The socio- cultural multi-dimension aspects put the hardship for maintaining the disciplines of the students .Restriction on medium of instruction is giving a tough challenge to refreshers, who entering in the higher learning campus .Students fresh out of school need a period of academic thawing in terms of academic atmosphere, medium of instruction new approach of analysis of new curriculums under degree courses.

Keywords: Semester system, local born, bengali setters, multi-lingual education, nicobari tribes

Introduction

Plants are shaped by cultivation and men by education ... we are born weak, we need strength We need aidEverything we do not have at our birth and which we need when we are grown is given us by education –J J Rousseau stated about the philosophy of education. Today education is a selling commodity, like other goods /things

in the markets. The globalization of education has opened the door of exchange of education opportunity and value across the boundary of the countries .The Indian education has been extended overwhelming over last few decades .As a result, from school to universities, the number of institutions has been increasing like mushrooms. Education becomes a profitable business for investors .it's right to say investors in education may call promoters, who promotes education

and get profits from markets of students. Therefore, a group of people from all walk of life in the society invested their money, power or position to set up educational institution under the banner of trusty, foundation or charity. Specially, professional colleges in the line of engineering, medical, management are coming up even in the interior areas. Politician, educationists, industrialists spiritual / religious leaders are also keen to start educational institutes. According to Prof. AnandaKrishnana:

In case of private universities, those sponsored by respectable philanthropic or corporate organizations, interested in protecting their reputation, seek to constitute governing boards with well known and respected persons. However, there are many private universities established by individuals or families with solely profit motivations, which speak to populate the governing boards with docile persons.”(M. Anandakrishnana, 2007)

The governments are also generously giving permission to these investors /promoters (?) for opening schools /colleges at international standard. A group of them also successfully manage to tie up with foreign institutes to open their extension units in India for attracting the students among higher aspirant’s parents. As a result, number of universities have come under scanner of Union Higher Education Authority (Ministry of HRD) to judge the question of quality of such institutions and infrastructural facilities required for a deemed university. As a whole the quality of Indian education is deteriorating day by day.

Today definition of education and curriculum means earn reputation by producing good students. Maxim of quality education means; maximum number of subjects to be taught, high standard of books and syllabus, professional advertisement, best infrastructural facilities to students, better screening for admission, high capitation fees and last but not least assurances of job for pass out students.

World class Indian Education in public domain

India was rich in philosophy of education in ancient times. A number of world famous institutions of higher learning popularly known as Tushila, Patliaputra, Mithila, Vikramshila, Malkhed, Kalyani, Nalanda, Daranagar, Auhilwada, Tanjaur universities which were famous for their erudite teachers, which attract students. It has earned reputation and prestige

among foreign scholars who came from the various parts of the world. Gurukul system was given due respect to learn Dharma Sastra, NitiSastra and cultivation of knowledge for self esteemed and self development. The importance of education cannot be ruled out as it has both its material and temporal and spiritual aspects. Swami Vivekananda viewed:

children born with full of knowledge, it is education and teacher to cultivate the in born knowledge of the children for their future prosperity.

Right to education and free elementary education up to the age of 14 years has compelled the government to bring the education to the door step of every student. The current philosophy of education in India has exhibited a different kind of meaning and definition. According to National Human Development Reports 2001:

Education in the present day context is perhaps the single most important means for individuals to improve personal endorsement, build capacity level, overcome constraints and in the process enlarge their available set of opportunities and choice for sustained improvement and well being.

Education under linguistic diversity

India’s diverse socio-cultural ethos and lingua-franca have introduced education in many dimensions. Language base education leads by state and religion created different kind of culture of educational atmosphere within campus. The multi-lingual education leads a mixed atmosphere in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands education and its basic philosophy. This multi-community linguistic society leads a unique and different kind of academic atmosphere in islands education system both in schools and higher learning institutions. Multi-lingual education in a single campus faces a number of challenges, which affected the student’s unity and also disintegrated the professional atmosphere of the faculty. The socio- cultural multi-dimension aspects put the hardship for maintaining the disciplines of the students. Restriction on medium of instruction is giving a tough challenge to refreshers, who entering in the higher learning campus. Students fresh out of school need a period of academic thawing in terms of academic atmosphere, medium of instruction new approach of analysis of new curriculums under degree courses.

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New Education Policy; A new look

In the backdrop of globalization process and the changing socio-economic aspects, education has created a new mission for the societies. In the recent times, the meaning and definition of education has undergone many changes. The than Union Finance Minister Mr. Pranab Mukherjee has addressed the education as not only a vehicle of growth but also an effective and reliable instrument to ensure social justice:

Education acts as a liberating force to fight poverty and hindrances to growth. Education is going to play a multi-faceted role. The knowledge as intellectual capital has emerged as a means of economic growth. Therefore, government has taken initiative to establish National Knowledge Commission to interconnect all Knowledge institutions through high speed communication network. (University News)

Island's Higher Education And in the back drop of School education.

Penal Settlement established by British Colonial power in these Islands in 1858. The British authorities for their narrow and parochial interest had introduced education to limited students of their employees. To communicate with Indian convicts, to make them work as labours in the Penal Settlement, a very informal educational system was started by the British in 1870. English medium schools were opened only for children of British staff and Urdu medium for the children of the convicts families. Today as many as 400, including 24 pre-primary schools are imparting education to the children of these islands.

A evening degree college was established in 1967 to give higher education to the government employees at Port Blair .The higher education aspirants were obtained their degree from mainland bound educational institutions .Few medical and engineering seats are allocated for islands students on merit basis in various professional and technical institutions in Mainland. At present 86500 (Education Census ,2011-12)

students have enrolled in schools education and more than 4000 students are pursuing degree education in four colleges in Andaman.

Both schools and higher learning educational structure is unique and something different from rest of Indian educational institutions. The pedagogy of education is full of challenges. The multi-media and multi- ethnic educational atmosphere in both urban and rural areas is posing a different kind of perception in both schools and college levels. According to the time and space the demand of multi-lingual schools have been arisen .The settlement of Bengali families had urged to open Bengali medium schools in rural villages .Time and again the opening of Tamil, Telugu and more English medium schools have been demanded by the respective linguistic communities .Five major language are taught in schools are running by the Administration in these islands .Moreover ,to encourage Nicobari vernacular among Nicobari children , at primary level Nicobari language has been introduced.

Many of the schools are running more than two medium in a single campus at secondary and Senior secondary levels .Due to shortage of school building and other infrastructural facilities in some of the isolated and far flung islands , the authorities have opened multi-medium schools in the same campus .It creates over crowded . Hence , it is difficult for schools authorities to maintain discipline as well as quality oriented academic atmosphere . Students come from different socio- cultural and economic backgrounds that lead unity in diversity and also disintegration among the pupils and teaching community :

According to Mrs. Bannerjee (2011) :maintenance of uniformity and quality education among all students who belong to different socio-cultural and linguistic background with the same campus is quite a difficult task.

Different kind of lobby and difference of opinion are quite natural among staff and authorities.The teaching of one medium and teaching of other medium is varying, which poses a difference in quality of education /students producing by the schools. Many of the schools have lost their reputation and quality of meritorious student's and excellent results due to introduction of multi-media in the same campus. If we compare with all mega cities and state educations, this type of multi-medium teaching may not be found as it is practicing in the schools and college in these islands. Nonetheless, any school in city or rural area is left where more than one

medium is following. However, the private management schools follow English as medium of instruction. Study is reputed English schools is so competitive and difficult, only government servants and economically sound parents use to provide convent education for their wards.

“It becomes a status symbol and prestige for those aspirants parents who desire to admit their children in reputed schools in the city . It is a nightmare for parents to get their children admit in those schools”. (Bannerjee, 2011).

The number of Private Management schools/ Un-aided schools are 96 including, 31 pre-primary, 43 Primary, 12 Middle, 4 Secondary and 6 Sr. Secondary. All these private schools running by Trusty, organization ,who follow English as medium of instruction. Apart from that 13 local Body schools run by Municipality and Zilla Parisad. This schools are also follow English as Medium of instruction. Altogether, 428 schools are functioning to impart school education to Islands students.

Schools under Administration, Senior Secondary Schools are more than Secondary, 49/40. In Bengali dominated areas, the primary schools are running exclusive in Bengali medium, especially in Middle and North Andaman. But over the time, the people from Tamil Nadu, ChotoNagpur, Andra Pradesh and North India have settled down in the search of jobs and private business. As a result, the Hindi, Tamil and Telugu medium schools have been started by the administration to give education to the children of these linguistic community. Time and again, it found that at middle, Secondary and senior Secondary level majority of the schools have followed multi-medium to accommodate all major linguistic community in their own locality. At Senior Secondary level out of 49, 23 schools have two medium, 5 schools have followed three medium and rest schools followed single medium .

At secondary level out of 40 schools, 25 schools have started more than one medium in the same campus. Only hands full schools are followed single medium. Even at Middle level, schools are followed more than one medium to meet the demand of the mother tongue education. All these things are happening due to shortage of infrastructure and non-available of suitable land to open separate schools for the student of each of the linguistic community. It is a unique and unwelcome approach for better education atmosphere for students , who want a separate culture bound education for their future .

Schools educational pedagogy is directly reflected in higher learning institutions in Andaman. The students with good results in science prefer to get admission in professional courses in mainland bound professional and technical colleges either availing government quota or get admission with high capitation fees. Ultimately, only those students come in islands colleges and engineering / poly-technique are basically average in merits. Majority of these students get admission in general courses i.e. Arts, Sciences, Commerce and other streams. Among these students who are top in merits (Both in Science and Arts) in schools, prefer to get admission in four years integrated courses offering in local and mainland colleges. Limited meritorious students rush to Junior Basic Training (JBT) for Primary School teacher and ensure their job in teaching profession.

Education in the higher learning institutions

So we can easily be predicted the educational background of the hundreds of student who want to pursue degree education in these islands colleges. In the light of the above mentioned circumstances, we must have to set our mind to review the educational status of some colleges, which have already adopted the semester system in their institutions. As the Jawaharlal Nehru Rajkeeya Mahavidyalaya, a pioneer P.G. college in these islands affiliated to Pondicherry University, the semester system has been introduced in the college more than two decades. As many as 18 different disciplines are taught. The total strength of students is more than 3000. Most of the students belongs to isolated far-flung islands having low socio-economic background. They belong to different linguistic profile. Among them Nicobari tribal students occupies 8% of total seats. The other communities are Chotta Nagpur tribes from jharkhand, migrated Karen tribal from Burma, Bhatius from Madhya Pradesh, Mophlas from Malabar of Kerala, Tamil, Telugu, Bengali and Hindi speaking students from respective states in India are living in rural areas and having low profile socio-economic history. Their strength is not less than 80% of total strength of the college. The local born families of ex-convicts (Karen Moplas, Bhatius) and Bengali settlers have been notified under OBC category by the govt. of India.

Semester System and its features

Semester system in higher learning institution is not a new thing in Indian educations . In this line, JNU and IITs are

in the forefront which have already advocated in favour of semester system in universities. Dr.V.T.Patil , former vice chancellor of Pondicherry university was the pioneer in introducing semester system in Pondicherry university.:

the semester pattern of education is a dynamic attempt to redefine the goals of higher education in conformity with a rapidly changing social, political and economic order in India.

Prof. Patel has given lots of inputs and exercises regarding positivity of semester system. Semester system allows for a higher degree of innovation and flexibility to students as well as teachers. A large variety of courses can be formulated under the system of one or two semesters. He has developed an intellectual roadmap for higher learning institutions. Semester system has given way to conducting two final examinations per year. In the process the failure or drop-outs rate would be non- existent or of a very low order. The examinations are conducted regularly at specific intervals and the results are announced quickly before the commencement of the subsequent semester. In this system, the teachers are supposed to teach within the framework of the time-bound syllabus . The students will develop a high level of seriousness of purpose, utmost diligence and regular study habits allowing them to move ahead smoothly.

The issue of semester system in UG in all Central Universities has given enough debate in the academic world. Specially, the University of Delhi has come into the limelight with, the legal battle between the administration and the teachers of same. Two faculty members from D.U. Prof.Shahid Amin and Prof.Shohit Mahajan understood :

that the basic idea behind implementation of semester system is that the students will learn and get evaluated after 13-15 weeks and move on to the next set of courses. This would make college students more friendly. It would reduce the burden to a greater extent. It would create mobility, transfer of credits and resource utilization across Indian Universities. (The Hindu, nov, 20, 2010).

However, Prof. Vikas Gupta, faculty of Delhi University has critically presented some serious issues behind the introduction of semester system. He was concerned about the disadvantaged students lacking English language and is unable to adjust with new college atmosphere as they are from different socio-cultural background. As the semester

system is very short, within a few week of admission (8-10) they have to appear for University examination. (Vikas Gupta, EPW, feb.27, 2010,)

Feature of Islands Degree Courses

Three years degree courses were started in JNR Degree College. The semester system carries two main papers of the main subject along with one allied, English foundation compulsory for all disciplines ,one language and Environmental studies from 1st to 4th Rest two Semester 4/5 main paper is taught. Each semester starts from July to November and December to May. In each semester students have to take two main papers, along with three other papers. Altogether students have to learn 30 papers in three years, of which 13 papers are main papers. Each paper carries 100 marks. Minimum marks to pass is 40 .Second class is between 50-59%.The system allows the students to get promotion from one semester to another in spite having back papers. Hence they are allowed to appear in the final semester examination in spite of failing in any previous semester. The students are given four years time to clear their back papers.

Medium of Instruction

The medium of instruction is both English and Hindi. In Arts stream, majority of students answers their papers in Hindi. At school level , the students are allowed to follow their mother tongue as medium of instruction. Therefore, many of the schools follow, multi-medium in a single campus, where students can take up Tamil, Bengali, Telugu, Hindi and English language as medium of instruction. Perhaps at college level, other than Hindi or English medium, the students of other mediums have to change their medium and switch over to either in Hindi or English medium in examination. Therefore, it is difficult affair for the Bengali, Tamil and Telugu students to follow either English or Hindi medium at the time of examination and perform a good result. Hence medium of instruction is a core issue in the pedagogy of higher learning institutions . Prof. Gupta, Delhi University, has rightly pointed out that the difficulty arises to follow a new language within a short period:

It is true for the students who lack English reading and writing skill.....they need more time to read and write in English, which is indispensable for them in the present scenario.”

We admit that point from the survey on first year semester students of this college who revealed that most of them fail in English foundation. The poor results for those who have changed their medium what they had followed in schools. Majority of the students are having rural background including 8%-10% are tribal students. To adapt themselves to the college atmosphere as well as city culture is a time consuming affairs. Prof, Gupta has vibrantly expressed the same experience and made a deviation between advantaged and disadvantaged groups in colleges. They have to almost immediately face examinations on entering college and if they do not perform well, inequality occurs at the very beginning of their college life ,which may have an adverse impact on their performance and morale.

At the entry point, the newly admitted students get minimum lectures as compared to other semester's students. After a lapse of one month, the classes start in the month of August for first year students as because admission formalities take time. On the other end, the teachers also face constraints to motivate the new comers to adjust with innovative teaching system and vice-versa. They have to get themselves accustomed with new atmosphere like language barrier, different culture bound classmate as well as senior students of the college. The hostlers face additional adjustment problems. Altogether, it is a difficult affair for teacher, students, and hostlers to co-opt with new environment .In this backdrop, the students of science and commerce and computer faculties are little bit free from these constraint. Because they do not face medium of instruction problem, mostly they are from English medium background. The teacher finds it easy to control the students, because in science, only few numbers of students get admission as compared to arts and literature faculties. Their strength is four times than science classes. Nonetheless, it is stated that the quality of science students is going deteriorating. Perhaps, the good meritorious rank holders students prefer to join technical and professional courses in mainland with the help of reserved quota in various institutions .Therefore only left out students in science stream are bound to peruse higher education in these colleges.

The students have to take main papers as well as allied subjects from other disciplines. More over language,

English foundation(compulsory up to forth semester) and environment studies are taught in degree courses. Hence, pressure of these papers on studies other than main papers results in loss of interest in main papers. Ironically, at entry point students feel aimless due to vast syllabus in each paper. Therefore, it is impossible for majority of students to give equal importance to each paper and special attention on main papers for good score. It is found that the students are less attentive in English foundation, language and allied papers. As a result, either they score poor or get fail marks. Clear in English foundation , language and allied papers up to forth semesters is a big challenge for maximum students. It also affects their results in main papers. When they appear in final semester (vi- semester) , many of them have many back papers to be cleared in the previous semesters .

Frequent examinations (two terms in each year) with heavy subject burden leads to dropout tendency. In arts subjects ,at least 30% students drop out before reaching final year .Among the final year students ,many of them do not perform good results (at least 50%) or qualify for pursuing higher studies. Subject burden do not permit them to engage themselves in other co-curriculum and other usefully activities in college life. Prof. Gupta rightly pointed out that the higher learning is not limited to class-room oriented activities, it is a place of socialization, political training ,debate, cultural interaction. But present semester system leave no time for the students for meaning full interaction with each other or performing well with translated reading materials , reference books and articles etc. Once a student come out from college campus with so many back papers, it becomes difficult for them to clear all arrear papers in one or two attempts. These categories of students neither go to apply for any job, where graduation is a qualifying degree nor go for further studies.

Allotment of classes

The number of classes per day is five. Hence due to attending five classes (per class fifty minutes) continuously ,the students do fail to give due attention to all lectures in class room. As a result, after attending main papers, most of them move out from the classes. Therefore, their attendance in English foundation, languages and allied papers is very irregular, which ultimately affect their performances in examinations.

Table 1. Results of degree colleges 2006-2007 & 2007-2008, J N R M College, Port Blair

Courses	2006-07	2006-07	%	2007-08	2007-08	%
	Appeared B G T	Passed B G T	Percentage Total	appeared B G T	Passed B G T	Percentage Total
BA	113+232=345	68+153=221	69.05	158+188=345	89+139=228	65.89
B Sc	38+57=95	19+31=50	52.63	27+66=93	09+47=56	60.20
B Com	29+22=51	20+16=36	70.58	22+21=43	15+18=33	76.74
BCA	07+17=24	05+16=21	87.50	13+10=23	08+07=15	65.21
BBA	17+02=19	11+01=12	63.15	9+13=22	08+11=19	86.36
Total	204+330=534	123+217=340	63.67	229+298=527	119+228=351	66.60
Post Graduate	Appeared B G T	Appeared B G T	Appeared B G T	Appeared B G T	Appeared B G T	Appeared B G T
MA	06+36=42	06+33=39	92.85	06+33=39	04+34=38	97.43
M Sc	03+22=25	02+20=22	88.00	05+22=27	04+20=24	88.89
M Com	04+07=11	04+07=11	100.00	05+06=11	04+03=07	63.63
Total	13+65=78	12+60=72	92.30	16+61=77	12+57=69	89.61
Mahatma	Gandhi	Government	College	Results		
B.A	187+185=372	37+71=108	29.03	124+168=292	27+73=100	34.24
B.Com	144+68=212	41+27=68	32.07	114+66=180	23+20=43	23.89
Total	331+253=584	78+98=176	30.13	238+234=472	50+97=143	30.29

Source: Basic Statistics, A&N Islands, 2008-09.

In JNR college, Port Blair and M G Govt. College, Mayabander, Middle Andaman, the strength of the girl students are more than boys. Especially in master degree, the numbers of girls are four times more than boys. On an average the results in under graduation level is not up to the mark in all faculties. However, the results of girls are little bit better than boys. In Mayabander Degree College, the results of two academic years show that only 35% students got success in examinations. When compared to MG College Mayabander, the JN College, Port Blair, the result is good but not satisfactory. In P G courses in JNR College, the performance of results is in between 85% to 90%. As the number of students in PG is very limited and they are meritorious, so the individual attention to students can be given by teachers. Naturally, good results can be expected from them. However, the causes behind poor results in under graduate level are many like language problems, increase in burden due to number of papers, poor attention in English

foundation, poor attendance in classes, number of students in each class is more than capacity, frequent examinations, the number of classes in between two semester is insufficient. The length of examination period is long in an academic session to complete two semesters. Time is less to cover syllabus and students do not get enough time to prepare for examination.

Conclusion

Suggestions

- ❑ The students have to be compelled to attend all classes. Extra attention should be given in English foundation so the pass percentage can be increased.
- ❑ Paper burden can be reduced. Instead of four hundred marks in English (one hundred mark in each semester) up to four semester, only two papers

should be taught in first and third semester as foundation.

- ❑ Number of papers in allied and language subjects should be reduced. These two subjects paper should be placed in alternative semester. If we want to make the students more quality oriented in their main subjects, then their paper burden should be reduced.
- ❑ Students who carry more than one back paper in each semester, should not be promoted to next semester. They should make it realize that in every semester they have to clear all papers .
- ❑ The number of classes of each day should be reduced from five to four and one class should be devoted for co-curriculum and other sport activities.
- ❑ Extra attention should be given to tribal and weak students by providing extra coaching classes.
- ❑ The total strength of the students of each class should be reduced.
- ❑ And left out students should be accommodated by opening one or more degree colleges in different places with new job oriented subjects.
- ❑ Strictness should be maintained on compulsory attendance of students. Students with Poor attendance should not be allowed to appear in examination.

Observations

Medium of instruction is both English and Hindi. But questions come in English only. Therefore, the students , who are poor in English face the difficulty to understand language and meaning of the questions The bi-lingual questions paper may solve the problems, than only quality answer can be expected from the students. . So far as school education is concern, the administration is going to revisit the multi-medium approach for each of the community .The academic atmosphere in the

school education is deteriorating, especially in government managed schools where more than one medium is running in a same campus. The administration is planning to seek the opinion of the educationalists to restructuring the multi-medium school education and proposing to introduce single (Hindi/English) formula in the education . But if we look back our past education , when most of the schools followed single medium both in rural and urban schools - the results, discipline , and academic atmosphere was so excellent .The contemporary college education was also so good and strong as because the base of the students was so excellent .But nowadays only few private management English medium schools are producing good students and administration managed schools do not show good results in the Board Examinations .This poor quality education is ultimately showing a poor performance in college education .

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