

**ASSESSING SOCIETAL NEEDS AND QUALITY OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN PRESENT SCENARIO
– AN EMPIRICAL STUDY**

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ABSTRACT:

This paper examines the concept of societal needs and Quality of higher education. It also an attempt to deal with some critical issues related to quality of higher Education in India to meet societal needs. The higher education system has to understand the pulse of the ever changing vibrant society and offer an education accordingly. The quality of higher education system should help to develop the overall development of the person to meet the global requirements In India nearly 60 percent of our population is under the age of 24 perhaps, a major percentage of them will search for higher education. The poor quality of higher education available in India may attract more number of average quality foreign universities. So, Educational institutions and government should be socially responsible to make revolutionary changes in the present curriculum. The study analyses the opportunities and challenges posed by society to higher education. Primary data is used to measure what is expected from the institution in maintaining quality of education, how they did it and what is actually achieved in the process of meeting societal needs. This paper attempts to identify the factors that determine the quality of education and to discuss appropriate strategies to improve the quality of higher education to meet the societal needs.

Keywords: Quality of Higher education, societal needs, Evaluation, Teachers, Universities, Challenges

INTRODUCTION:

According to Gandhiji, “Education is the process of bringing about the best in an individual and human being must be encouraged to bring about his best of abilities, so that the community is developed” In India higher Education system has failed to maintain quality due to poor standards followed for admission, curriculum, teaching methodology, Poor Quality of teachers etc. In the present education system thousands of graduates are coming out from different colleges on the basis of traditional method of evaluation system which is based on the memory skills and lacks real-life application and employability skill. The present higher education system fails to adopt a long-term vision and will result in increasing poverty, unemployment, migration, and outdated thinking patterns .The quality of the higher education should be made responsive to the requirements of changed or changing society. Now days the society is very much dynamic, the present society has no longer require muscle power rather, it requires brainpower

Instead of clinging to fixed ideas and rigid thinking patterns, the system of higher education can be changed in to new dimensions. In an increasingly global and complex world, education Curriculum should be revised to concentrate on the needs of each society and personal growth of an individual in an action-oriented approach and not theoretical oriented approach

Educational institutions and government should be socially responsible to make revolutionary changes in the present curriculum. Whatever they learn should be directly useful in their practical life. Whatever is not useful in the practical life should be eliminated. The more emphasis should be on vocational education. The basic aim of curriculum has to be to develop the powers of the learners. It is an urgent need to modify curriculum to meet the challenging needs of global based industry and requirement of knowledge society. Naturalism emphasizing the psychological approach is required in present higher education. The changing or changed Society expects the self-expression, self-discipline and self-learning from present higher education. Our government is also taking so much initiative to improve the quality of education and planning commission proposed Rs.2.5 lakh crores during the 11th five year plan period(2007-2012) for education

The purpose of this paper is to contribute to the on-going discussion on the implications of societal needs and maintaining quality in higher education. This paper intends to identify gap between societal needs and quality in higher education today. It also discusses the opportunities and challenges posed by society to higher education. The aim of this paper is to discuss appropriate policies and strategies to improve the quality of higher education to meet the societal needs

REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

The aim of higher education cannot merely be to develop ‘higher competencies’ but also to inculcate in the students ‘high values’ (Prof.K.P.S.Unny, June, 2008)

Ancient India considered knowledge as the third eye that gives insight into all affairs. (Rao,sudha,singh,Mithilesh kr; 2007)

Undoubtedly education has proved to be a catalyst, for all development process, a great force that can effect desirable social changes and human development (Sharma, Darshana, 2007)

According to Dr.Abdul Kalam “mission of education is the foundation to ensure the creation of enlightened citizens, who make a prosperous, happy and strong nation”

“Education is above all an inner journey whose stages correspond to those of the continuous maturing of the personality.” **J.Delors**

Quality assurance has to guarantee that there is a substantial added value to graduates as compared to their entrance “value” .(**András Róna-Tas, 2001**)

Overall, the poor quality of higher education available in India means that a number of average quality foreign universities will continue to be successful in tapping this extensive Indian resource(**Rajat Kathuria, 2005,**” ‘We need quality higher education’ Business standard)

Value added is the difference a college makes in their education. (**Douglas C. Bennett, 2001**” Assessing quality in higher education”)

The NAAC, with a vision ‘to make quality the defining element of higher education in India through a combination of self and external quality evaluation, promotion and sustenance initiatives’, has assessed and accredited 3,644 Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) (as on 22/12/2007) and has also undertaken a number of quality promotion activities. There is a mixed response from the HEIs and the academia, to the external quality assessment. Many institutions have voluntarily opted for NAAC assessment and proudly exhibit their accreditation status (“Assessment of quality in higher education is the sign of times “Harsh Bhal January 31, 2008)

Education has an immense impact on the human society. One can safely assume that a person is not in the proper sense till he is educated. It trains the human mind to think and take the right decision. In other words, man becomes a rational animal when he is educated. It is through education that knowledge and information is received and spread throughout the world. An uneducated person cannot read and write and hence he is closed to all the knowledge.(**Manu Goel, 2007**)

Separate the direct returns to measured skill from the indirect returns of more schooling and suggest that perhaps one-third to one-half of the full return to higher achievement comes from further schooling. Note also that the effect of quality improvements on school attainment incorporates concerns about drop out rates. Specifically, higher student achievement keeps students in school longer, which will lead among other things to higher graduation rates at all levels of schooling. (**Tyler 2000**)

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

The scientific knowledge and technological skill has brought many changes in the Society. So there is a change in the rational and objective attitude of the society resulting in modernization, which should reflect in the system of higher education also. This paper attempts to analyze the quality of higher education and also identify the gap between the quality of present higher education system and societal needs. In order to identify the gap a research has been conducted through questionnaire survey. The sub-objectives of the study are

- To identify the factors which determine the quality of higher education
- To analyze gap between societal needs and quality of present higher education system

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

The study uses both primary and secondary data. The research relies to a great extent on primary data. For the purpose of the study well- structured Questionnaire was designed by incorporating scaling technique

SAMPLING METHOD AND SAMPLE SIZE

The study uses Convenience sampling method. The respondents chosen were company executives and middle-level managers.300 respondents filled up the questionnaire

ANALYSIS OF DATA

The data collected through questionnaire were tabulated and further suitably analyzed by applying Percentage Analysis and Weighted average Analysis

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION:

Table-1
Changes to be introduced in the present Education system

Response	No of Respondents	Percentage of the respondents
Yes	280	93.33
No	20	6.67
Total	300	100.00

93.33% of people expect changes to be introduced in the present education system

Figure -1
Changes to be introduced in the present Education system

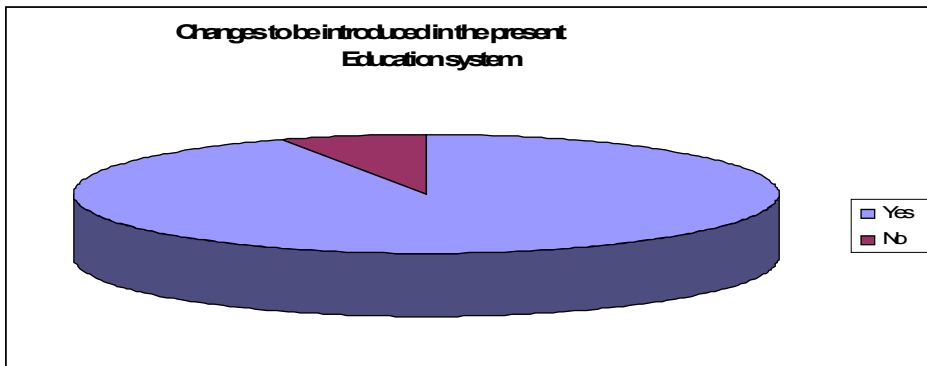


Table- 2
Changes expected in the present education system

Qualities	No of respondents	Percentage of the respondents
Life Skill	72	25.71
Soft Skill	156	55.71
Domain Knowledge	116	41.42
*Others	64	22.85

* Others include practical knowledge, Campus environment, extra curricular activities, faculty up gradation, Global communication system, etc.

From the above analysis 42% of respondents feel soft skill is to be introduced in the present education system to improve the quality

Table-3
Justification done towards the collection of fees:

Response	Number of respondents	Percentage of the respondents
Yes	64	21.33
No	136	45.33
Not sure	100	33.33
Total	300	100

Table-4
Rating the present higher education system

Parameters	RATING				
	More Effective (5)	Some what effective (4)	Neutral (3)	Some what effective (2)	In effective (1)
Teaching methodology	136	56	56	50	12
Syllabus/curriculum	112	120	36	25	12
Faculty student relationship	96	64	56	40	52
Mode of evaluation	36	88	64	64	48
Continuous assessment	76	64	72	56	32
Transparency in evaluation	72	64	112	32	20

Weighted average analysis

Parameters	Weighted Average		Rank
Teaching methodology	1164	77.60	2
Syllabus/ Curriculum	1200	80.00	1
Faculty student relationship	1020	68.00	4
Mode of evaluation	900	60.00	6
Continuous assessment	996	66.40	5
Transparency in evaluation	1036	69.08	3

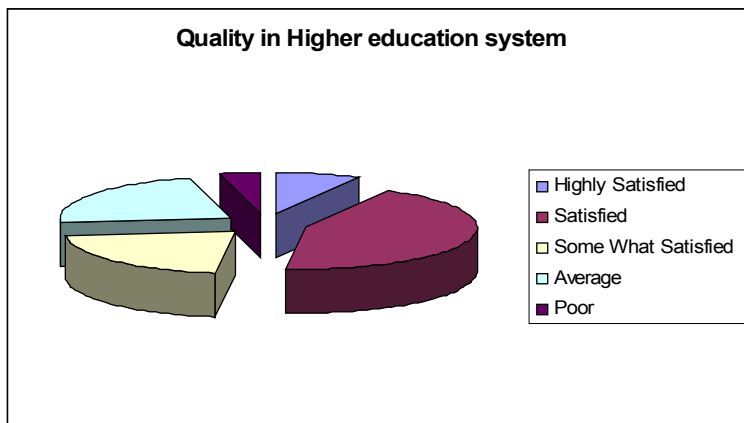
Weighted mean = $\sum W_i X_i / \sum W_i$

In order to analyze the rating of the present higher education system, weighted average analysis has been done. Syllabus / Curriculum have gained more weights and it is followed by teaching methodology. Most of the people are not in favor to the mode of evaluation

Table-5
Quality in Higher Education System

Level of satisfaction	No. Of Respondents	Percentage of the respondents
Highly Satisfied	24	8
Satisfied	132	44
Some What Satisfied	64	21.33
Average	68	22.67
Poor	12	4
Total	300	100

Figure -2
Quality in Higher Education System

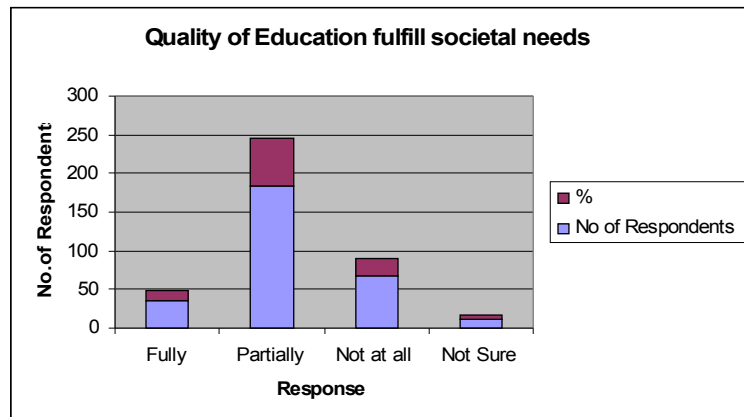


The research shows that 44% of the respondents satisfied about Quality in Higher Education System and only 4% of them rated quality is poor.

Table-6
Quality of Higher education Fulfills Societal Needs

Response	No of Respondents	Percentage of the respondents
Fully	36	12.00
Partially	184	61.33
Not at all	68	22.67
Not Sure	12	4.00
Total	75	100

Figure -3
Quality of Higher education Fulfills Societal Needs



From the above table it can be inferred that 61.33% of them feel that Quality of Higher education partially fulfills societal needs, 4% of them have no idea about it and only 12% of them believed that fully fulfills..

Table-7
Gap between societal requirement and present education system

Response	No. Of respondents	Percentage of the respondents
Yes	228	76
No	24	8
Not sure	48	16
Total	300	100

On the basis of analysis it is clear that 76% of them believe that there is a gap between societal requirement and present education system and only 8% of them stated that there was no gap.

Table-8
Reasons for Gap between societal needs and quality in Higher education

Parameters	Strongly agree (5)	Agree (4)	Neutral (3)	Some What disagree (2)	Disagree (1)
More theoretical	96	80	96	16	12
Lack of self-development	92	96	56	32	24
Lack of occupational skill	36	116	104	36	8
Lack of meeting industrial requirements	112	56	72	24	36
Lack of self confidence	64	92	72	36	36
Lack of practical knowledge	120	60	148	36	36

Weighted average analysis

Parameters	Weighted Average		Rank
More theoretical	1132	75.48	1
Lack of self-development	1100	73.32	2
Lack of occupational skill	1036	69.08	5
Lack of meeting industrial requirements	1084	72.28	4
Lack of self confidence	1012	67.48	6
Lack of practical knowledge	1092	72.80	3

Inference:

Weighted average analysis shows that most of the factors are equally responsible for reasons for the gap between societal needs and quality in Higher education. Only occupational skill and self-confidence have not played to that level

FINDINGS:

- The research shows that the gap between societal needs and value of higher education is wide
- 93.33% of people expect changes to be introduced in the present education system
- 55.71% of respondents feel soft skills is to be introduced in the present education system and followed by Domain Knowledge skills (41.42%) to improve the quality
- 45.33% of them feel that educational institutions are not Justifying the fees that they collect
- 61.33% of them feel that Quality of Higher education partially fulfills societal needs.
- 76% of them believe that there is a gap between societal requirements and present education system.
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- Weighted average analysis shows that Most of the people are not in favor of the mode of evaluation (15.00)

The research shows that the gap between societal needs and value of higher education is so wide so government and educational institutions want to think or act freely to make changes. Hence, there is a need to examine the role of the higher education to fulfill societal requirement and it must think, to understand reality and to change this reality to make individuals to live in a variety of changing settings, and to be able to change occupations

SUGGESTIONS:

REVOLUTIONARY CHANGES REQUIRED:-

- On the Teachers Level
- On the Curriculum
- On the Educational Institutions/ universities Level

ON THE TEACHERS LEVEL:-

- ✓ Positive attitude.
- ✓ Think “Out of the box”
- ✓ Teaching should be made interactive
- ✓ Faculty student relationship should be improved
- ✓ Motivation classes should be conducted periodically
- ✓ Shift from memory based learning to learning from experience.
- ✓ Psychological guidance.
- ✓ Students to be encouraged to ask questions to teachers.
- ✓ Practical oriented.
- ✓ Improving the confidence level of the students.
- ✓ Completion of syllabus.
- ✓ Involvement in research work and publishing articles

REFORMS IN TEACHING METHODOLOGY

- ✓ Teaching with Audio Visual aids to be made compulsory where necessary
- ✓ Project based teaching
- ✓ Case study method of teaching.
- ✓ Teach with Models.
- ✓ Use of multimedia with animations for high penetration rates.
- ✓ Interactive communications/ Dialogues to be made while teaching.
- ✓ Brain storming sessions to be made adequately on every lesson taught.
- ✓ Debate to be made on the subject leading to lateral Thinking.
- ✓ Ensuring the learning practically.
- ✓ Industrial Visits.

ON THE CURRICULUM

- ✓ Periodic up gradation.
- ✓ More practical sessions.
- ✓ Should develop Life Skills, Soft Skills and Domain Knowledge.
- ✓ Industrial Interface.
- ✓ Adaptive to the Global trend.
- ✓ Vocational education.
- ✓ Syllabus to be prepared in consultation with the specialist in the chosen field.
- ✓ Work shop to be conducted with eminent and chosen people from respective field.

ON THE EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS/ UNIVERSITIES LEVEL

- There must be adequate academic and physical infrastructure facilities.
- Faculty development programs.
- The teachers should be given academic freedom.

- Encouraging constant innovation in curriculum.
- Continuous updating in teaching and learning methods, for ensuring excellence in research and teaching.

SWOT ANALYSIS

<p>Strength:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Step by step learning process. • Easy to access. • Teacher friendly system. • Strong theoretical knowledge 	<p>Weakness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Theory oriented • Does not focus on future • Core competencies not dealt • Designed by academicians • Bench marking done with indigenous system already available • Practiced for years and followed meticulously • No changes for decades • Monotonous • Boring to the teachers and hence lack of enthusiasm • No motivation
<p>Opportunities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Web Learning • Interactive session through video conferencing. • Pooling of experts from different fields. • Tailor made curriculum. • The global trend is changing 	<p>Threats:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current system cannot hang on for a long time with new scenario. • Only theoretical system without proper practical knowledge will not help and the system will have a natural death • Compatibility problems will arise as the trends are on the change

MEASURES TO BRIDGE THE GAP BETWEEN SOCIETAL NEEDS AND QUALITY OF EDUCATION

India is witnessing a tremendous progress in achieving the quantitative expansion of education and more emphasis is to be given on improving the quality of education

- Higher education should focus its contribution to the development of the whole education system, mainly through improved teacher education, better teacher- student interaction, curriculum development ,educational research and total development of students
- The current teaching methodology of the teachers should be innovative in order to serve a better quality of education.
- To meet the global environment ,the teacher should be sent for various faculty exchange programmes conducted by different universities all over the world
- There is a need for students empowerment on various personality traits such as self-learning, self-initiative, self-confidence and innovation and sow the seeds for entrepreneurial skills and leadership qualities
- To promote the universal standards of students both the soft skills and life skills should be given top priority

- The higher education needs reexamining of curriculum to equip the students with independent and creative thinking

HIGHER EDUCATION SHOULD AIM

- To draw out, cultivate and inspire the full development of each learner
- To impart technical and vocational skills to students in order to develop employability
- emphasizing the industry-academia partnership ensuring the practical exposure to the students and to reduce knowledge gap

INNOVATIVE EDUCATIONAL APPROACH FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

- Higher education should enhance its contribution to the development of the whole education system, notably through improved teacher education, curriculum development and educational research, better teacher-student interaction
- It should not be the mere teaching of academic subjects. It should also include the activities and experiences which would promote knowledge, integrity, empathy, peaceful coexistence and tolerance.
- It should also help the teachers in their professional growth.
- Research should form an integral part of the teaching process for every teacher. Without the input of the findings of the research work educational innovations and developments cannot become an integral part of higher education.
- Student's feedback about teachers at a regular intervals should be carried out in order to evaluate teacher's performance and for their improvement
- It is important to provide supportive and healthy working environment to teachers in order to participate in research work
- student-teacher ratio should be maintained to give personal attention on students
- Periodical revision of curriculum without compromising the quality of education should be done
- Teachers should update their knowledge regularly by participating seminars, conferences and involving themselves in research work in order to impart knowledge to society
- Teacher should have the academic freedom to help students to become autonomous in the acquisition of information and knowledge.
- Proper incentive system should be implemented to encourage teachers and action should be initiated to upgrade the quality of teachers

Hence the curriculum and teaching methods needs to be changed in accordance to need of the hour to achieve the aim of quality in higher education.

CONCLUSION:

Education is an imperative tool to bring changes in the political, social and economical life. The present era of globalization requires the rejuvenation of present education system to meet the challenging requirements of global environment. As a Consequence of the impact of liberalization of trade, large number of nations is in favor of curtailment of the role of the government in the education. In this changed scenario, it is necessary that our planners and educational administrators must accelerate the process of reforms and encourage Innovation. It is the time to change the traditional British system of higher learning and adopt a new high dynamic educational approach that is a must for sustainable growth. Good teacher is the Kingpin of education system to ensure the quality of higher education. Each teacher should make their teaching attractive and Pursuit of excellence for the prosperity of the students is critical

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