

NEW CURRICULUM FOR THE CHANGING WORLD AND THE TEACHERS' RESPONSIBILITIES

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We are living in an ever changing world demanding simultaneous changes in curriculum designing. We cannot swear by the existing curriculum as it will be dubbed as stale and outdated. The changes the world has witnessed in the last two or three decades are enormous and amazing. The changes are visible in all compartments of life with higher education as no exception. Needs, demands, requirements and expectations are different in the ICT driven modern world of technology. These changes exert massive pressure on higher education which faces the mammoth demand from the world to cope with the changes.

The world that was giving importance to knowledge till the first part of the twentieth century, slowly started demanding skill from the younger generation. This made a strong impact on higher education in all its components and educational planners and thinkers realized the inevitability of bringing about revolutionary changes in curriculum planning, teaching-learning and also testing and evaluation.

Today the world has shrunk into a global village and higher education is expected to cater to the requirements and stipulations of global job market. This made policy makers of higher education all over the world give a serious thought to curriculum designing. What the world expects today is a curriculum that is relevant, useful and challenging which satisfies the expectations of the younger generation and caters to the needs of the world.

Curriculum designing in the new era

Higher education in India has experienced a rejuvenation in the post accreditation era. Instituting National Assessment and Accreditation Council has prompted institutions of higher learning to strive for quality and excellence. Institutions are made to move forward according to the vision and mission statements they are encouraged to design road maps for themselves. Universities and colleges started discussing Core Values and Graduate Attributes realizing their responsibility towards the younger generation. This impacted all compartments of higher education, especially curriculum planning and designing. The academia realized its greater responsibility in offering challenging curricula that meet the needs and demands of the ever changing world and naturally teachers as the backbone of the educational system realized the vital role they have to play in designing relevant and appropriate curricula.

A new feature of curriculum designing in India today is that it has to bear in mind the global job market. The changes to be brought about should therefore be raised to global standards and the students who pass through the portals of our institutions should have global competency. The curriculum and the transcripts job seekers from India present in the international job market should have the quality and content that can be equated with any university that is considered to have world class standards. This challenge and

competition have made the role of teachers in curriculum designing very important.

In the University system of India of the past, the responsibility of curriculum designing was restricted to a few in the designated bodies and planners and policy makers of higher education. Today with the conferment of the status of autonomy and university to institutions, the responsibility of teachers has become greater.

Internationalization of Higher Education and the Need for a New Curriculum

Modern world, with its easy access to media looks for and verifies the quality of institutions before opting for one. International student mobility is made easier today and many Indian students opt for foreign universities. The Indian Government has allowed foreign universities to have their campuses in India. Many foreign universities find in India rich market potentiality and it is expected that many world class universities will vie with each other in establishing their campuses in India. In fact, this process has started, posing a great challenge to Indian institutions. The early birds are the University of Chicago and Virginia Tech with their centres in Delhi, Harvard Business School with its Indian research centre in Mumbai, and Australia's Deakin University having its campus in New Delhi.

This scenario and reality make us ask very seminal questions: What qualitative change should be brought to the curricula offered by Indian colleges and universities? Are our teachers informed of this development? Have they realized the inevitability of offering a curriculum that will have a world class standard? Are our teachers competent to respond to the challenges and competitions posed by the changed situations?

Though objected to by a section of people and some student and teacher organizations, presence of foreign universities in India has become a hard reality. Whether their campuses are present in India or not in the globalized world, students from India opt for institutions that have established the stamp of quality and proven track record. It must be admitted that in spite of all attempts of UGC and NAAC to ensure quality in higher education, only a negligible number of Indian Institutions find a place in the findings of the study of the world-class universities conducted by Center for World Class Universities of Shanghai Jiao Tong University (CWCU) and published as Academic Ranking of World Universities (ARWU). The same disappointing state of Indian institutions is reflected in the annual publication of university rankings by Quacquarelli Symonds Company known as QS World University Rankings.

From the above facts it is evident that the path Indian higher education is treading is not smooth and to mend it, it requires the contribution of teachers. This contribution is not limited to teaching-learning, but also is perceived as vital and inevitable in curriculum designing. Needless to say, teachers get a central position in raising Indian higher education to a respectable pedestal that will be considered a fitting match to the education offered by any world class university including those campuses of foreign universities in India. This points to the vital role to be played by teachers in curriculum designing.

Role of Teachers

It is against this backdrop that every teacher should realize the significance of the role he or she has to play in ensuring a quality highly rated and globally acclaimed curriculum

in Indian colleges and universities. It is the responsibility of the faculty as members of boards of studies, be it in autonomous colleges or universities, to design a curriculum that rises to the expectation of students and employers and also is comparable to the curriculum of any world class university. Curriculum is not just prescribing texts and syllabus and deciding on unitization. It is a highly responsible work that has to conceive a course design that addresses itself to the needs and expectations of the technology driven and globalized world. It is not just changing the syllabus or pouring new wine into old wineskins.

It is the willingness to take up the challenges and readiness for updating that serve as the basic requirement of the teachers. Teaching is not the only task of the teachers. They should realize that they are responsible for the destiny of the future generation and curriculum designing gains its importance in this role of teachers.

Responsibilities before teachers as curriculum designers

No curriculum can be considered good if it is designed without understanding its suitability and relevance to the needs of the ever changing expectations from the world. Learners should be helped to be prepared to face and react positively to the challenges of the world. The requirements, prescriptions and anticipations of the international job market are to be satisfied by the students who roll out of the universities. The knowledge acquired by students through stale and outdated curriculum most often are fit only to be thrown into the waste basket of companies and organizations that offer jobs not to merely knowledgeable young people, but to smart, talented young persons with a wholesome personality.

Comprehending such stipulations and anticipations of the job market, curriculum designers are expected to adopt a proactive approach.

Satisfying job market though is one of the most important components of curriculum, it alone should not be its *sumum bonum*. There are many other needs of man that are to be addressed by higher education. The world is in need of pure knowledge and research that play a pivotal role to any change. The new curriculum should churn new knowledge so as to stimulate thinking resulting in innovations and inventions needed for the steady and undisturbed growth in all segments of life.

The challenge before faculty does not end with designing a new, innovative, useful and relevant curriculum that is on par with the best in the world. It is only the beginning of a great task. Teachers should get ready to put into practice what is suggested and expected in a new curriculum. A shift from teacher centered to student centered methodology is obligatory and no doubt the change has to start from the teachers. The present day teachers, who probably were taught through teacher centred methodology need training and orientation and also a willingness and readiness to accept changes. Any new curriculum should aim at imparting education that is a pleasant experience to the teacher and the taught. Hands on experience to students should be encouraged and their creativity, innovations and originality should be encouraged. Students as well as teachers require a lot of freedom and flexibility today to make education an experience of wholesome development of a person. Prescribing water tight compartments of pedagogy kills the creativity both of the teacher and the taught and teachers who know the

ground realities and aspirations of the students and demands of the world, no doubt will make successful curriculum designers.

Further, learning cannot be tested through the age old testing and evaluation system that is in vogue in many universities today. It is the responsibility of the teachers to rise up to the occasion and make revolutionary changes to design a testing and evaluating system that suits best.

Summing up

It is the responsibility of teachers, governments, universities and other curriculum designers and policy makers to ensure that the teachers who have realized the importance of these challenges are roped in and encouraged to contribute to a curriculum that is the need of the day. Contributions of teachers with competence and readiness to design instructional content, resource materials, with novel, imaginative and participatory teaching-learning process and an objective and fool proof testing-evaluation system, no doubt will ensure Indian universities possessing a curriculum worthy of global acclaim.

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