

Evolving A Smart College: Concept, Opportunities and Challenges

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Abstract

It is an attempt to present views to established a smart colleges or develop a college into smart college with an important responsibility to produce good positive citizens who are conscious for their duties towards nation and fundamental rights thereafter; to develop “basic and natural thinking capabilities” to “Socratic Mind”: person with logical mind with scientific approach to understand event with reason; to produce the quality of human resource who are politically conscious, socially responsible, possessing high HQ (Honesty Quotient), high IQ, ready to sacrifice for the nation and live life with mission to help others to come along and most importantly ‘Socratic Mind’; selection of teachers, at all stages, must be unbiased with an aim to search true thinker and motivating future teachers; and, need to start integrated MA PhD, Med PhD and MSc PhD programmes in all streams to attract only dedicated teachers who have aim to become teachers in Higher Education Departments. Only ‘Socratic Mind’ would develop ‘Socratic Minds’. This noble mission may pass through the rough patches in initial years.

KEYWORDS: Socratic Mind; Creative-middle Class; Teach-to-test; Employable; Integrated Courses.

“.....sector after sector is facing a supply constraint when it comes to skilled, qualified manpower.this is unacceptable in a country of over a billion people where many are still unemployed or are engaged in low-income activities.”

Introduction: Professional Institutions are working hard to attract students to their Institution in order to survive in this competitive world. Through catchy advertisements in electronic and print media, attractive institutions are increasing their catchment area. Such institutions are producing employable human resource as per requirement of market.

Maximum responsibilities are with the Central and State Universities and their affiliated colleges to produce employable human resource and at the same time he/she (the human capital should comprise confident citizens) should be confident citizen who can understand the socio-politico-cultural environ. Now as a teacher one may asked one important question to self that are we performing with ‘such responsibility’ to produce good positive citizens who are conscious for their duties towards nation and fundamental rights thereafter. But I got answer from Dr Manmohan Singh’s address to students of IIM Ahmedabad in 2007. He expressed his pain that *“our university system is, in many parts, in a state of disrepair...In almost half the districts in the country, higher education enrollments are abysmally low, almost two-third of our universities and 90 per cent of*

our colleges are rated as below average on quality parameters... I am concerned that in many states university appointments, including that of vice-chancellors, have been politicized and have become subject to caste and communal considerations, there are complaints of favouritism and corruption” (Excerpts from his address). In this context your attention is drawn to Mr NRNarayan Murthi’s 50 years dream vision, with a cost of \$5 billion per year, submitted to the Government of India as an “*innovative solution*”. According to his vision “*India and US should work on an agreement to send 10,000 Indian students to the US to do their PhD in important areas in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths) education every year over next 50 years*” with a clear term that such “*students would not be given employment in US once they finish their PhD*” and “*they have to serve in India for 10 years*”.

With this frame work, the present paper is highlighting the concept of Smart Colleges, opportunities to convert college into smart college and challenges to achieve desired results. Computer Labs, free WiFi enabled campus, comfortable furniture, greenery in surrounding area, proper sanitation, canteen to get healthy and fresh refreshment, motor vehicle free campus, etc. are required to attract students to pursue different courses of their choice. But most of these components are cosmetic in nature and contribute minimal in nurturing and developing “*basic and natural thinking capabilities*” to “*Socratic Mind*”: person with logical mind with scientific approach to understand event with reason.

Smart College: Smart Colleges require well qualified teachers who take this profession by choice and consider it their mission to produce the quality of human resource as required by the nation to be declared as Advance Nation. Quality Citizens means citizens who are politically conscious, socially responsible, possessing high HQ (Honesty Quotient), high IQ, ready to sacrifice for the nation and live life with mission to help others to come along and most importantly ‘*Socratic Mind*’.

All over the world, particularly developed nations of the West and the East are churning ideas to improve their Education System to meet the challenges of second half of the 21st century. Ironically, our social political and administrative thinkers are happy to see increasing literacy rate in states. Prof Yashpal Committee Report has been submitted to the Government of India in 2003 only to improve the standard of our higher education but outcome of the same are not known even after lapse of many years. What is this politics? Is petty politics above the development of nation? Who will take such revolutionary decisions? Several such questions may be raised by thinkers only. Question is raised on the acceptance authority about the delay – whether Prof Yashpal Committee Report has been discussed as a rubbish report or is there a deliberate attempt to not to understand the same for political gains? We experience continuum of British approach towards education in India to produce non-thinking-slaves to gain highest political dividend to achieve power positions. In practice we may see feudal continuum in way of teaching from school level to higher education level including professional education. In this process teaching is question based where student is forced to learn dictated answers to achieve high percentile to get admission in so-called good colleges or get extra push in getting job. It is ‘teach to test’ policy and in this process we are unable to produce logical minds who can raise question for any development. Unfortunately ‘*teach to test*’ is very

easy process for a teacher instead of dealing with the '*Socratic Mind*'. Dealing with '*Socratic Mind*' in class environ requires tremendous hard work by a teacher.

Important aspect for a Smart College is to deal with the difficult task of nurturing and developing "*basic and natural thinking capabilities*" to "*Socratic Mind*". In fact it seems to be difficult for policy makers (draftsmen) to draft syllabi for academic courses at all level. Political thinkers may also not be ready to face the challenge to deal with '*Socratic Mind*' during elections. After achieving this mammoth task, our enlightened citizens may be in position to raise question on present model of the democratic pattern where party is important and candidate is '*number*' to form the Government in State or Center.

Opportunities: It is right time to the like-minded thinkers to come on common platform to draft a design for nurturing and developing "*basic and natural thinking capabilities*" to "*Socratic Mind*" for the community, society and nation after keeping requirements of the Nation in second half of the 21st Century. Initially it may be mammoth and arduous task but if we start from schools, student would be ready to achieve further after 12 years in institution of higher learning. Select good qualified teachers who have mission to see nation in advanced stage in second half of 21st century and have zeal/courage to perform. This selection must be unbiased with an aim to search true thinker and motivating future teachers. Since universities are getting major share of budget for higher education and share from education cess, it is responsibility to select quality research students who are dedicated for extension of education and produce best teachers from education departments for schools. There is also need to start integrated MAPHD, MEdPhD and MScPhD programmes in all streams to attract only dedicated teachers who have aim to become teachers in Higher Education Departments. Such selected dedicated student must get respectable scholarship and contingency grants to sustain their studies without monetary crises. To prepare quality teachers there is need to start integrated BABEd and BScBED course programmes and only dedicated student may be allowed to take admission.

Challenges: Only '*Socratic Mind*' would develop '*Socratic Minds*'. This noble mission will go through the rough patches in initial years.

There is paucity of qualified teachers in present old and out dated education system and to create and develop quality teachers for educational institutions with a mission, will take more time. Dr Manmohan Singh ex-PM of India expressed his views that "*...many state university appointments, including that of vice-chancellors, have been politicized and have become subject to caste and communal considerations, there are complaints of favoritism and corruption.*" There is need to enhance budget many times for education. Teaching profession should be handsomely remunerated to attract and retain good talent with mission at every stage for nurturing and developing "*basic and natural thinking capabilities*" to "*Socratic Mind*" instead "*teach to test*".

There is need of establishing well equipped Libraries with quality printed and e-books with compulsory library periods to inculcate habit of reading. Every student at all level must submit book review to inculcate writing habit with original thoughts with positive and scientific expression.

Syllabus must be drafted centrally for humanities, science, arts, English and Hindi languages and law subjects and states must ensure quality syllabus for vernacular languages. All Schools, High Schools, Intermediate Colleges and Universities must adopt the syllabus to maintain and provide equal opportunities to learn and grow. This is the need of hour to teach languages, logic, philosophy and constitution to all classes at all level to develop 'Socratic Mind' and 'Creative-Class' without any discrimination on the basis of birth. Books, published by the Government Printing Press or Government approved printers, should be distributed to the students by the Schools, Colleges and Universities free of cost.

Conclusion: If we execute such plan in 2016, teachers would be ready for schools within five years and in next fourteen years we will have first batch of newly educated students to take higher education, and after eight years we will have true 'Socratic Mind's to take challenges of the world and by 2050 there would be 'new creative thinking class' to take India to different sky in all spheres of life. In fact, when the Government of India announced concept of 'smart cities' unfortunately there is no mention of smart educational institution in this programme. In fact if planners prepared a road map to spent \$5 billion per year on educational institutions to create infrastructure for an innovative development of science and technology with placement of original thinkers, Indian Educational Institutions will start getting students from US for higher studies.

APJ Abdul Kalam ideologically expressed his views that "*developed India by 2020 or even earlier, is not a dream. It needs to be a mere vision in the minds of many Indians. It is a mission we can take up - and succeed*". It is right time for Legislators, Independent Thinkers, Policy Makers and Government Departments and HRD Minister to pledge to work for this noble cause to create a 'creative thinking citizens' to meet all challenges of second half of the 21st century. Teaching community at all level must come forward to take a challenge to convert today's orthodox education system from 'teach to test' to 'teach to create thinkers'. With the help of present thought, it is urged to all scholars and teachers to start this campaign from your institution. To begin with, promise yourselves that you will not involve in question based teaching, not teach to test but will teach to inculcate thinking ability basically for nurturing and developing "*basic and natural thinking capabilities*" to "*Socratic Mind*" and pledge to make your college a smart college a model collage of the respective university despite lack of modern amenities.

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