Politics of Education System

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Abstract

This article is a fair attempt to highlight some issues to improve the education to create 'creative class' which will help in achieving overall growth of the nation in the 21st century. A 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 pretty many years. However, other developed and developing countries have changed their education pattern basically to retain basic thinking ability of Generation X. It seems policy makers, still believing in the philosophy of the 19th and first half of the 20th century, are interested in huge vote bank instead of 'creative voters'. The politics of education, philosophy of rulers since Shunga period, is still creating new age obstacles to hamper the suggested way to improve our education system.

KEYWORDS: creative minority, brahmanical, moksha, pathshalas, madarsas, examination hell

Introduction: Shri A P J Abdul Kalam, former President of India, professed while expressing his views with positive note that "*a developed India by 2020 or even earlier, is not a dream. It need not be a mere vision in the minds of many Indians. It is a mission we can all take up - and succeed.*" Every genuine thinker would like to experience progress of her/his nation in future. Is it possible for our country to achieve such ideal goal in a true sense? Planners have to give logical answer if it is not possible to achieve such desired 'aim and objective' with in specific time period. Here, as a student of history, even as a citizen of our mother land, one has to analyze the situation and express her/his intellect, it is a fair attempt to highlight some issues in the form of this article. Of course, one must think that some '*creative minority*' always tried to improve the education to achieve overall growth of the nation. But it seems to be *politics of education* which always created obstacles to hamper the way.

Dr Manmohan Singh while addressing professionals expressed his ideas in IIM, Ahmedabad in 2007 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.*" It seems that the Prime Minister of our nation has shown the

same feeling about our education system amongst professionals and also at the same time, in other way, one may judge his inability to take positive steps to improve the system. 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 pretty many years. What is this politics? Is petty politics is above the development of nation? Who will take such revolutionary decisions? Several such questions may be raised by thinkers only. Another pertinent question is 'what is the need to change our education system' particularly higher education. Here come politics of society, culture and religion and even politics.

Historical Period: From pre – historic period education was always controlled by the state. In our country it was basically controlled by the 'brahmanical order of society' through its nexus with the rulers. Because, perhaps they wanted controlled and limited thinking power of even so-called educated people. In fact, it seems as if, they avoided so many questions on our socio–cultural base of the social structure. Under this process God and Goddesses are carefully created in present shape perhaps only to scare middle and lower classes of the society and for that purpose they created shapes of Gods and Goddess in a very systematic and logical ways and consciously associated them with number of places and nature and framed very interesting stories to impress common man. Buddhism gave new light to the society and it followers, even rulers while spreading the new sect, knowingly or unknowingly, gave emphasis to the 'thinking'. Bhuddha might have analyzed the brahmanical order of society – religion, division of society, rigid religious belief, control of a particular social class over rituals and certain practices in the name of controlling first an individual's life in particular to attain moksha and society in general during present birth and also after death. Hence, this new branch of thinking basically raised several questions on the distortion of social order by brahminical order of society and for so many years there was peace under the influence of Buddhisim which finally resulted in prosperity. This process was once again challenged by the Brahmins with the help of ruling class (Shungas) in a more rigorous and meticulous way particularly after fall of the Buddhist period and eventually annihilation of Buddhism from India. It gave birth to new ruling class – the Rajputs. Rajputs and Brahmins recognized each other, in fact this mutual understanding was required for their survival in new political order. To have better control over the society perhaps they gave birth to 'temples'. Temples may by looked as 'omniscient eye' to scare the society. In other words rulers ruled over the large population of their kingdom through 'the temple' which further strengthened the status of Brahmins and weakened the social fabric. When Muslim invaders attacked on India, primarily for spread of Islam in India and political control over her as well, people from lowest of social group adopted new religion as per perhaps their choice and people from upper strata of social group through the sword. Due to rigidity of the Hindu religious practices, established by them upper strata of society, people who wanted to re-adopt 'Hinduism' could not dare to go through 'heinous and filthy religious procedure'.

Post 12th Century: Education during this period – Sultanate and Mughal – was mixed through traditional Hindu pathshalas and Islamic madarsas. The British initially did not dare to disturb the native education system. Indian elite class admitted their ward

in the English schools opened by the English for children of their employees and after establishment of English East India's rule in India, people who wished to be part of new ruling class learnt English Language. In fact, in a very systematic way, the British first established English schools and then on demand of the Indian English Educated class, they established new education system on the model of Oxford University. But it was just to create new class – '*Indian by blood but English by soul*'. This new class gave strength to the English Rule in India which continued till 15 Aug 1947. It is also to be noted that during this new education system, there was no scope to maintain '*natural ability to think*' but to create a class mainly loyal to the Raj. Lord Macaulay in his famous minute on the Education policy dated 02 February 1835 clearly mentioned, "*it is impossible for us, with our limited means to attempt to educate the body of the people.*" Here it must be clear that this new education system was enacted with a political agenda to create 'a class of interpreters' with a goal to create a class of persons who should be "*Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinion, in morals and in intellect.*" (Ibid) Sir Charles Wood's Despatch (1854), Hunter Education Commission (1882 – 83), the Indian University Act (1904), the Sadler University Commission (1917 – 19), the Hartog Committee (1929), Wardah Scheme of Basic Education, and Sargent Plan of Education (1944) basically tried to implement the Education system with a basic aim to create more strong base and support from the 'particular class'. After independence on the recommendation of the Radhakrishnan Commission, the Government of India established the University Grants Commission in 1953 to look after higher education. Kothari Education Commission (1964 – 66) and the New Education Policy 1986 and amended thereafter time to time with an aim to improve it to face new challenges inherent in modernization and globalization of economy. But none of the Commission and Committees established by the Government, even in the New Education Policy, there is hardly any scope to develop thinking skills or retain natural thinking ability even our traditional 'teach to test' practice adopted by the educationists spoiled the basic spark of 'thinking skills' of young generation. Throughout the academic year till completion of studies teachers had hardly any time to talk some sense with the students because they are busy in completing the syllabus and students to remember the lessons. Here, in this system there is hardly any time to sit and think about the nation, various policies adopted by the Government, value degradation of social order, economic exploitation, corruption, value less political structure, etc. since teachers and students are busy in completing the syllabus to take test to judge the mugging skills on the basis of bookish language. Here it is not important whether students understood the concepts properly or not.

21st Century Concern: Academic Standard may be developed further (This is suggested by Prof Yashpal in his report) by adopting the following –

i.   Reorientation of Higher Education by addressing health consciousness and physical fitness as a part of university curriculum to develop a multifaceted personality to cope up with the rapid change in the world at large.

ii.   More emphasis on professional ethics and value education while keeping pace with the scientific and technological developments in terms of building the skills and knowledge.

iii.   Incidentally there is the need to address the more fundamental issues of the social and moral consequences of such unregulated activities.

iv.   There is need to take immense care so that students studying in undergraduate classes should not 'lack in independent thought' at the time of execution of proposed Government reforms. Evaluation and assessment system is being changed in the manner students' academic performance is evaluated needs to be changed by introducing internal continuous assessment and seminars as a part of evaluation and scientific question banks should be prepared (and distributed to students) in the direction of assessing overall mental development of the students mainly to maintain the 'basic thinking ability' to perform better during hardship.

v.   The latest survey conducted in three schools in London clearly indicated that pressure of examination "is rippling out to the universities where the loss of that independent spark, which is such a valued attribute of undergraduates, is a cause of concern". Even in our country, the culture of 'teaching to test' has left a number of students struggling to cope with the demand of degree courses. (Ibid) One should always learn from others mistakes and try to improve the system, as Japan is also undergoing and facing the same challenges: "Japan's education scene lies in the sharp contrast between stringent schools and slack universities……… Japan's universities remain a resting space or "leisure land" for many youngsters." Further, in this prospective the standard are "exhausted both mentally and physically by 'examination hell', (and) they seek relaxation, enjoyment, and diversion in their university life

vi.   To maintain quality assurance in higher education, it is necessary to understand an environment of global competitiveness as well. We should therefore understand that Indian products of the higher education institutions are as competent as graduates of any other country, not only in their scholastic attainments, but also in terms of the value system and richness of their personality. Unless the quality and standard of Indian higher education institutions is enhanced zealously and sustained at a high level through innovation, creativity and regular monitoring, it seems to be difficult for the Indian academics/professionals to compete in the World scene. Eventually regular assessment and accreditation of the institutions as per the expectation of the society need to be generated through mechanisms to be available in the country to ensure the quality and standard of the academic/training programmes at higher educational institutions.

Conclusion: There is need to have a debate on the Yashpal Committee Report, submitted in 2003, among the honorable and educated members of both the Houses of our Parliament and adopt the same to improve the higher education in India. It important to note that all developed and under developed countries including USA and England are thinking seriously to modify the assessment system to 'retain the basic thinking ability' of students so that they would plan future of the nation with more strong base. It, perhaps, the only way to remove social evils, create solid economic base, controlled population,

optimum use of natural resources, pollution free environment and positive politics. Our present political system might be speculating that there would be loss of political base if 'such educated and creative class' is created with new education policy adopted under 'National Commission for Higher Education and Research'. For this our own political leaders are scared and are playing politics of education.

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