A STUDY OF CRITICAL COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF ANCIENT INDIAN EDUCATION AND PRESENT EDUCATION SYSTEM

Kalyani Tripathy Dubey[1], Akhilesh Arvind Nimje[2]

[1]Assistant Professor, Department of Applied Sciences and Humanities,
Guru Nanak Institute of Engineering and Management Nagpur, (India.)
[2]Associate Professor, Dean Research & Development, Department of Electrical Engineering,
Guru Nanak Institute of Engineering & Technology Nagpur, (India).

ABSTRACT

This paper presents comparison between the present and the ancient education system. It highlights the basic structure of ancient education which contributed quality manpower imbibing moral, social and civic values to the society. The present education system is plagued by several reasons as a result of which the outcome is becoming self centric. This calls for several reforms in present education sector which can be implemented from ancient education for overall development of students as a human being. The quality of education greatly influences the quality of manpower for the societal benefits.

Keywords- Ancient Education, Ethical Education, Gurukul, Knowledge, Veda.

I. INTRODUCTION

Gurukul system of education existed during ancient times where students used to reside at guru's place and learn everything which can be later implemented to find solutions to real life problems [1]. An emotional bond between a guru and shishya was must before practicing teaching learning process. The guru imparted the knowledge of everything such as religion, sanskrit, scriptures, medicine, philosophy, literature, warfare, statecraft, astrology, history and many more. The learning was not only to read books but correlating it with the nature and life. It was not memorizing certain facts and figures and writing the answers in examinations [2]. The education was based on vedas, rules of sacrifice, grammar and derivation, understanding secrets of nature, logical reasoning, science and skills necessary for an occupation. The ancient education system in India had explicitly recognized that the supreme goal of life is self realization and hence it claimed to be unique in the world in several aspects like the society did not in any way interfered with the curriculum of studies or regulating the payment of fees or hours of instruction [3]. The other aim of ancient Indian education included preservation and enrichment of culture, character and personality development and cultivation of noble idea. It being completely residential hence student had to live in the guru's house and learn from him not only what was taught but also observe how his teacher responded in different situations arising in daily life and learn from it [4]. Education was absolutely free. Each student used to meet the teacher separately and learn from him through separate instructions and guidance. Even student aiming highest philosophical knowledge was duty bound to do some manual labour daily such as collecting fuel, tending cattle etc. The quality of education was unparalleled i.e. the students from all over the world had their first preference to India for higher education.

II. BASIS OF ANCIENT EDUCATION

2.1 Personality Development

The foremost aim of ancient education system was to develop the overall personality and character. The moral strengths were induced that helped the society to be together. This was because the education started and ended with religious rituals with the sense of whole heartedly devotion for the cause of learning. The formal and informal education were given due importance. The pursuit of knowledge was pursuit of religious values. The personality traits such as self esteem and self confidence were tried to inculcate in pupils through education.

2.2 Perfect Teaching Learning Atmosphere

The classes were held in either open space on the bank of a river or in a jungle in quiet, calm and peaceful environment. Temple colleges were known for all the amenities such as hostels, classrooms, laboratories and residential quarters for teachers.

2.3 Personal Attention to Every Student

The gurus were spiritual father. They used to nurse, feed and clothe. The students were taught based on his learning ability. Teachers never assumed themselves in the position of authority but were very gentle and sweet while dealing with the students. Teachers commanded full respect in society and honored even by kings.

2.4 Discipline

The gurukul contained students from rich to poor families. Every student used to lead a very simple life in ashrama. The discipline, rules and regulations were rooted in morality and religion. Any violation of rules was treated as a sin and subject to punishment.

2.5 Low Student Teacher Ratio

Due to low student teacher ratio, the individual attention could be given. The number of students on roll was limited. In the extreme situation, when it was not possible on the part of guru to impart learning, the assistance from senior pupils was taken. In the absence of guru, senior pupils played the role of gurus [6].

2.6 Free Education

The education was absolutely free. The pupils from well to do families such as princes used to pay Guru Dakshina. It had perfect autonomy. There was no involvement of external beneficiaries. Access to good education was independent of wealth but the emphasis was on the learnability. Shishyas were never compelled to offer a field, cow, horse or vegetables to his guru. Thus financial position was never a barrier to get the best education. It enhanced originality of thinking among them. The varna was based on karma. One could choose his profession and accordingly, his varna was determined

2.7 Development of Civic Responsibilities and Social Values

The inculcation of civic virtues and social values was equally important objective of education in India. The Brahmachari after his education in the gurukulas went back to the society to serve the rich and the poor, to relieve the diseased and the distressed. He was required to be hospitable to the guests and charitable to the needy. Everyone had a responsibility to preserve the national culture and act as a transmission medium to spread the knowledge.

2.8 Convocation Address

The duration of education was not uniform and used to last more than 12 years for slow learners. After receiving education, teacher used to give few pieces of advices for happy and smooth running of their life. The teacher used to make the students feel how to lead life of a grihastha, how to take care of society and nation and how to serve the humanity as a whole. This ceremony was known as samavartan.

III. NEED FOR CHANGE IN MODERN EDUCATION

The best practices of ancient education system can be implemented in modern education system. Though we feel proud of our civilization but we still believe in our culture, religion, god and desire less deeds. The aim of modern education is also building character, spiritualism and philosophy rather than wealth and leads a simple life. However, the cordial relationship between a teacher and student is missing due to numerous problems that educational environment has encountered. The study of Sanskrit language needs to be given due care to preserve it because it is enriched by the sense of peace, humanity, brotherhood. There has been a tremendous improvement in quality of life with the advances in technology. The young generation must realize how to use this technology for spreading knowledge and culture. The education should be imparted in peaceful, clean and natural environment far away from towns and villages. The Indian constitution has recently adopted the principle of equality in the field of education. The present education prepares the students for their future career as it used to be in ancient times. The vocational subjects have to be included in curriculum but much is needed to be done to achieve the desired aim. After independence, government stressed upon providing free education to all children up to age of 14 and many programmes have been started but the desired objective is yet to be achieved. In the race of completing the curriculum, the practical aspects are missed many a times. The modern education system is plagued and blamed for several reasons [4]. Rabindranath Tagore had assessed it long back that the Indian education system needs to change. We live in a society where child spends his parent's earnings and still not getting the standard education and struggling to get the desired employment. The increased competition in education sector sometimes crushes the creativity of millions of students and drives them to commit suicide. Education is treated as a means of achieving wealth. There is a need to redefine our education system. Some of the initiatives have been listed below.

3.1 Skill Based Education

The modern education system is tested on the basis of examinations conducted by boards and universities. The method of teaching is mostly one way but it has to be ensured "Are they learning?" If not, which method of teaching suits an individual has to be focused upon? This requires identification of skills in individual and moulds them into their direction of interest. It is same as "Give a man a fish and you feed him one day, teach him how to catch fishes and you feed him for a lifetime." Similarly, if you teach a skill, you enable him for a lifetime.

3.2 Encourage Research and Innovation

The testing and marking system needs to be built to recognize originality, creativity, problem solving approach and valuable original research and innovation. India lacks high quality research, weak ecosystem for research and low level of industry engagement.

3.3 Recruitment of Competent Teachers

Teaching is an honorable profession and hence it has to be preserved. Few teachers blame students for their performance but hardly introspect what and where is it going wrong? They feel it as a safe, well paid, low pressure and unaffected by recession. It is time to recruit competent and superstar teachers. The teaching community needs leaders, self motivated and entrepreneurs in teaching position.

3.4 Interactive Classroom

An interactive classroom intellectually engages the students as active participant with teacher as an engagement trigger that captures and maintain students' attention. The teacher allows the students to apply what they have learnt and give them a context for upcoming lecture material. The teacher feels enriched with students' participation and thinks upon the blend of interactive techniques for next class.

3.5 Time Management

The syllabus coverage is given the utmost importance in most of the schools and universities. This needs time bound completion of several academic activities. Lecturing is a time honored activity which can be effectively accomplished using Socratic lecture model to deliver large content within optimum time frame.

3.6 Teacher is not Devil's Advocate

"If you affirm it, I deny it. If you deny it, I affirm it." The teacher is not an opponent in an argument. The teacher plays more than a teachers' role such as friend, guide, philosopher, facilitator, guardian and role model. In fully residential schools/ universities, the teacher has many other roles to play. He asks questions not only to test the students but helps him/ her to arrive at meaningful answer [2].

3.7 Students' Participation

The teachers are encouraged not to teach the content but to teach the students how to learn. Because learning is a process of actively exploring information and validating with previously acquired knowledge and experience and creating new knowledge or re-evaluating existing knowledge. Socratic method substitutes self directed learning opportunities instead of classical lecturing practices.

3.8 Feed Students with Endless Content

Sometimes, deep questioning drives the thought underneath the surface of things force students to deal with complexity. The questions on interpretation help to examine and organize meaningful information while the questions on assumptions help to examine what is taken for granted. The questions on implications examine the orientation of discussion.

3.9 Provide Essential Tools

The conventional lecturing is very common teaching tool to use for all classroom situations. If on the other hand, if you have several tools in your toolbox, you will have the opportunity to pick up the most appropriate tool for the task at hand. The well crafted questions act as tool to generate a more sophisticated and self directed learning. The students are trained to become independent of the teacher, who models how to ask appropriate questions. An effective teacher gives students the tools requisite to formulate their own ideas and thoughts. Teachers are supposed to inspire their students, giving them academic wings.

3.10 Focus on Moral Education

A good teacher forms strong relationship with his/ her students and show that he/ she cares about students as individual. The substance of socratic enquiry is the belief and values the participants. The Professor is a participant in dialogue and is always open to learn something new and does not seek difference to his/ her authority.

3.11 Redefine the Purpose of Education

Our education system is still a colonial education system geared towards generating babus and pen-pushers under the newly acquired skin of modernity. We may have the most number of graduates in the world, but that certainly has not translated into much innovation here. Rather, we are busy running the call centers of rest of the world – that is where our graduate skills end. The goal of our new education system should be to create entrepreneurs, innovators, artists, scientists, thinkers and writers who can establish the foundation of knowledge based economy rather than the low-quality service provider nation that we are turning into [4].

3.12 Deregulation in Education Sector

Until today, an institute of higher education in India must be operating on a not-for profit basis. This is discouraging for entrepreneurs and innovators who could have worked in these spaces. On the other hand, many people are using education institutions to hide their black money, and often earning a hefty income from education business through clever structuring and therefore bypassing the rule with respect to not earning profit from recognized educational institutions. As a matter of fact, private equity companies have been investing in some education service provider companies which in turn provide services to not-for-profit educational institutions and earn enviable profits. Sometimes these institutes are so costly that they are outside the rich of most Indian students. There is an urgent need for effective de-regulation of Indian education sector so that there is infusion of sufficient capital and those who provide or create extraordinary educational products or services are adequately rewarded.

3.13 Personalized Education

Teaching is often considered to be delivering lectures for 60 minutes, perhaps ask few questions that are answered by few assertive students in the front rows. This kind of teaching enables the students to take notes in less time and more time testing their understanding of content. Such a teaching strategy does not guarantee that students learnt everything during lecture or learning at home. The teaching philosophy that may work in one situation may not work for all and therefore it is individual and site specific. If however, we can effectively decentralize education, and if the government did not obsessively control what would be the syllabus and what will be the method of instruction, there could be an explosion of new and innovative courses geared towards serving various niches of learners. Central regulation kills choice, and stifles innovations too. As far as education is concerned, availability of choices, de-regulation, profitability, entrepreneurship and emergence of niche courses are all inter-connected.

IV. CONCLUSION

The level of education is one of the major indicators of welfare, prosperity and security of people in any society. Education is a process by which individuals are equipped with the skills of everyday life. More than a mere system of imparting and acquiring knowledge, education is regarded as an attempt to transmit the cultural norms of the group to its younger members. Thus, it ensured the continuing of social traditions and customs. Education

can be a powerful instrument for shaping and modernizing the society. It is a mechanism by which the quality of manpower is determined, which in turn, leads to qualitative transformations of society as a whole [8].

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