Assessment of Faculties in Higher Educational Institutions in India

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Abstract

In view of global competition amongst various HEIs {Higher Educational Institutions} to have their students placed, and also to gain limelight in the fields of research and innovation, a recent trend has been to evaluate the research and scholarly contribution of their teaching faculties, the world over! Every country's higher education system is going through rapid changes in the processes of recruitment, evaluation and promotion of faculties, and upgradation of facilities in their schools, colleges and universities to meet international standards. As a part of this greater initiative, several top universities in the United States, for example, Wharton and the Michigan State University are advising their faculties to strengthen their research outputs!

At this instance, it must be noted that India is the most populous nation in the world, its population crossing 1.4 billion, and in the field of education its population stands third after United States and China.

Assessment of faculties vary by the way it is done, by various countries on the basis of their priorities – gain universal ranking, placing their students in prime establishments, admitting candidates of high academic rating, ensuring that their students understand what they learn and above all keeping their institutions much ahead of others, and their research standing and contribution! This in turn, increases the affordability levels of students to get into such institutions as fees become the factor to reckon! Though several academics / administrators are searching for ways to refine the current method of faculty evaluation, the ISTM {Integrated Teacher-Scholar Model}, as indicated by the evaluation of the multi-faceted work suggested by Salvatore et. al, though not a complete solution, seems to be encompassing the contributions of faculties, could be an 'equitable approach" to faculty assessments! The ITSM seems to be a different approach when compared with the SOLO {Structure of Observed Learning Outcome} by Collis and Biggs, PCK {Pedagogical Content Knowledge} of Schulman, and the API {Academic Performance Indicator} of the UGC.

India's Diasporas

India has a vast population to cope with. India's GER {Gross Enrollment Ratio} has risen from 26.3% during the period 2018-2019 to its present level of around 29% in 2021-2022 for the age group 18-23. It is being aimed to be at around 50% by 2035,

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which is probably attainable, as at present about 50% are already at the higher secondary stage; 50% of which are women! India's problems are different. Most of this is in the villages! India has the third largest public funded educational systems after United States and China, with over 1000 Universities, and about 52,627 degree granting colleges and stand-alone Institutes, as of 2020. The problem is huge when compared to other countries! Press Trust of India, of July 18, 2018, has quoted more than 19,500 languages or dialects spoken in India as mother tongues, according to the latest analyses of a census released this week - 19,569 mother tongues, 121 languages, as indicated by Registrar General and Census Commissioner, India. From these figures, it can be seen how difficult planning becomes!

Mushroom Growth of HEIs in India and its Effects on Teaching Communities

Singh and Sarkaria, Rao and Reddy, Singh, have all voiced forth their views on the existence of HEIs which are basically profit-making machines, with perhaps excellent infrastructure but lack of good quality academics. This of course is a serious thought-provoking point, unanimously made also by a large number of researchers in this field. This has also been reflected in a large number of publications, of mediocre faculty being employed for low salaries, while very good highly qualified teachers are employed for short periods to convince the public that they have maintained high caliber teachers in their institutions! If this be the case, then

the question of remunerating teachers poses a big question – or more so, obviously related to employment of teachers in Business Schools! Attrition rate is quite high in most of the HEIs.

In view of this development in the past few years, there has been a scarcity in locating and recruiting qualified teachers in higher educational institutions. This has led to unscrupulous managements of these institutions recruiting under qualified teachers at very low salaries, while at the same time charging higher fees from the students!

Assessing Faculties in Higher Educational Institutions Abroad

University of Glasgow has been committed to a system which throws open assessments pertaining to developing younger generations of research and teaching faculties on their campuses; and thereby classify contributors for recognitions and awards! In the University of Glasgow – "Professorial Zone Descriptors Research & Teaching, current assessing methods" - Professors at the University of Glasgow are assessed on the basis of the following, "*Research and Scholarship Outputs, Award Generation, Supervision; Impact; Learning & Teaching Practice*; *Leadership, Management & Engagement and Esteem*".

On the other hand, theories have been expounded towards assessing the teaching learning processes and also assessing the contribution of teachers. Structure of Observed Learning Outcome {SOLO} by Collis and Biggs and Pedagogical Content Knowledge {PCK} by Shulman, were the two base theories by which the teacher and the teaching content were to be assessed. To quote Shulman, "*understanding of the content being taught, a mastery of the illustrations, examples and explanations that best support students' learning; and an understanding of what makes learning the content easy or difficult for students of different ages and backgrounds*". Most of the higher educational institutions in the United States have been for long experimenting and investigating procedures for assessing the contribution of the faculties and their outcome. It could even be said that {OBE} Outcome Based Education could as well be construed as an offshoot of these two ideologies.

SOLO conceives understanding as an increase in the number and complexity of connections students make as they progress in learning. SOLO focuses on the most sophisticated response that a student can provide to a task to be done at a particular time – vis a vis understanding what is taught.

According to Darling Hammond, the quality of teachers remains to be the most important contributor of student outcomes. In fact, teachers have more impact on student learning than any other factor of the educational system. Teacher quality is often measured using common indicators, teacher's years of experience, and possession of relevant degrees.

Internationally, it is a recognized fact that teacher quality and competence is the most important and influencing factor in a student's progress. The literary meaning or a broader definition of competence could be taken as one's capability to handle complex assortment of problems pertaining to knowledge, appreciation of values, specific attitudes and desires and a proper understanding of his domain or field of work- submitting to a test of what teachers really know – Pedagogical Content Knowledge. This school of thought was originally put forth by Lee Shulman, stating that it is this practical "pedagogical content knowledge", the teacher employs to teach students in the classroom!

Another acceptable school of thought arises from the fact that faculties must be subjected to assessing their contributions to teaching, research contributions and service leadership etc., is the ITSM model enunciated by Salvatore et. al. – the "integrated teacher scholar model", which encompasses the overall contribution of the teacher!

Assessing a teacher's competence could be varied depending on the academic environment in which the teacher teaches! In a country like India, with over several dialects being spoken "verbal ability" or perhaps generally speaking, the fluency in the medium, with which the teacher handles the classes, varies. The hypothesis that "verbal ability", in such cases, cannot be the yardstick to judge a teacher's competence; beyond doubt, language fluency does help the teacher to convey material in a convincing way in the classroom! In academic circles the world over, it has been established that even qualified teachers with less than three years of experience are less effective, and after five years or so the benefits of experience levels off. Older teachers continue in their usual ways and are mostly tired and not exposed to newer developments or technologies.

The Indian Scenario

A cursory look at the AISHE 2020-2021 report and the UDISE data, the following reveals a strong academic base; the story continues…

Teachers in HEIs number ~ 1.61 million, of which 60.5% have a Ph.D. degree.
Teachers in all schools' number ~ 9,507,123
Figures refer to an All-India summary of teachers in position

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{Some data could be subject to slight corrections}

School teachers undergo assessments during the Inspection of the school, normally controlled by the local State Government's Department of School Education, and held once every year. It is during these visits; teachers are interviewed selectively by the Inspector and at times some of the teachers are also asked to take classes.

In the case of collegiate/university teachers, the assessments are carried out within the college or university itself. Managements take recourse to the API{Academic Performance Indicator, formatted and circulated by the UGC/AICTE through a Gazette extra-ordinary – API}. The respective Head of the Department is supposed to get the format filled by the college / university teacher. The Head of the Department and the Principal / Vice Chancellor of the Institution are requested to fill in their opinion and forward it to the Registrar of the college / university. However, this procedure created a mad rush amongst teachers, to gather points rather than put forth realistic contributions! Based on this format, all promotions, salary increments are recommended or dismissals undertaken, with the formal approval of the management. The college/university managements are free to amend the API formats to suit their individual conditions.

Research and Innovations

Of late, during the last decade or so, all schools, colleges and universities in India have started realizing the necessity of creating newer things and systems, thereby going in for publications, patents and setting up incubation units / startups. As a result of these developments, the word of assessing and rewarding researchers, gathered pace. Faculties getting involved in such activities, trying to garner projects and grants became a necessity of the day. Some of the managements have therefore started evaluating innovators and teachers getting grants. Therefore, it seems that it is time, the major statutory bodies, should now introduce a fresh *Academic Performance Indicator Format*, incorporating these attributes as well.

Conclusions

India is now the third largest country in the field of education, after US and China. This means a lot for India, to now maintain and improve its infrastructure in the field of education – which can come from providing a solid quality academic base. This implies that India to take advantage of the *Demographic Dividend* mustprovide quality academic professionals capable of competing in an international scenario.

Assessment of faculties in Schools and HEIs should be taken up in earnest, so that the upcoming intelligentsia in the country could be educated, to serve both India and globally, facing international competition. Need of the day is to come up with worthwhile innovations, and start-ups to face international competition.Of the several faculty assessment methods, like the 'SOLO', 'PCK', 'API', the 'ITSM' seems to be a slightly improved one, in that it compares the contribution of the faculty towards society as well – a holistic assessment!

Acknowledgement

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