Chapter 5
Creating Relevance and Purpose in Postgraduate Education:
Focus on India

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ABSTRACT

Higher education in India faces many challenges. In order to provide for the requirements of socio-economic growth and international exposure, it is vital that the education provided by universities, business schools, and engineering colleges is brought up to international standards. There must be a thorough overhaul of educational methodology, away from outdated rote-learning and fact-cramming methods to contemporary learner-centric approaches that foster the growth of knowledge rather than information. Higher education must also develop more relevance to subsequent professional life in an increasingly international environment. Since the so-called economic revolution of the early 1990s, every facet of commerce and industry in India has been progressively exposed to the rigors of international standards and competition. Companies and professional organizations are partnered with or compete with their counterparts in the most advanced countries. Higher education must equip graduating students with the knowledge, competence, and global awareness to succeed in this environment.

INTRODUCTION

The higher education environment in India provides an ideal but challenging situation for developing advanced standards, and for creating teaching & learning methods and curriculum that are suitable for the coming decades. As the education and professional communities become more globally connected, it is imperative that standards are improved, and that Indian higher education develops to be at the same standard as its counterparts in other countries.

Relevance and purpose both need to be enhanced. It is difficult to engender a sense of relevance when education focuses on information and facts. Any sense of purpose is blunted by the humdrum routine of cramming facts and figures.

There are two main driving forces responsible for creating the urgent need to improve standards in higher education. Firstly, the modern Indian urban environment, including its commerce and industry, is on a par with western nations, and in some sectors is more advanced than many countries in the West. However, education still lags behind the progress in business and industry. Furthermore, all young professionals need to function in an international environment, either with partner companies or with customers and suppliers.

Secondly and on the other hand, there are a number of significant challenges. Much of the educational system remains embedded in the legacy of earlier decades. Very often, the curriculum is outdated. This is especially crucial in disciplines in which it is vital to be completely up to date, such as technology, science and commerce.

Focus on Developing the Creative Learning Ability of all Students

The structure and methodology of education at all levels in many schools and colleges is still grounded in teacher-based, rote-learning systems that have been discarded in most of the nations with which India must now compete. There is a vicious circle at play here. Today's learners will be tomorrow's teachers. Today's teachers were yesterday's students, and all too often base their teaching methods on those they experienced in their own education.

It is important to look at education in the early school years as well as higher education. It is commonly understood that a young person's creative and learning abilities are formed as early as three or four years of age. A vital component in stimulating this early talent is the creation of a vibrant and encouraging environment at school and at home. If creativity and a thirst for learning are not fostered at this early age, it is difficult to make up this deficit later on.

There are many elements that contribute to the early blossoming of creativity - an inspiring teacher, a lively group of fellow students, encouragement at home, and

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