

Education Manholes - Looking for covers

*“One child, one teacher, one pen and one book
can change the world.”*

~ Malala Yousafzai

Education system in India seriously lacks uniformity because of the prevailing practice of existence of various state boards and their diversified syllabi. Two recent announcements can be considered as mind boggling decisions in the history of Indian Education, as each of them attempts to bring uniformity into the system. First one is the announcement made by the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu to unify the existing three boards, i.e., Oriental Board, State Board and Central Board. It was a long awaited decision to remove the multiplicity of syllabus within the same State. The second one was of course the unprecedented bold attempt of Union Education minister, when he announced the formation of a common body that would regularize the technical education in the country.

A quick overview reveals that we have got two boards ICSE and CBSE at the national level that have got affiliated schools almost in every state. There are state education boards at the state level, which govern the system of education of that particular state. In the last 2/ 3 decades we have not been able to pay much heed towards reforming the existing education system. We could take some initiatives in the realm of management education, whereby the CAT or Common Admission Test has been accepted as the key entry criteria for most of the management institutes. AICTE had been formed for granting recognition to such institutes.

Traveling down the memory lane, let us turn down the pages of history all the way to the British Era. We had matriculation & IA or ISC in force. We have had the 10+2+2 and 11+3 format in the education system. While the senior secondary format used to enable a student to the college after 11; the 10+2+2 format entitles one to the college after the 12th class. We can find the same system of education even today in the state of Maharashtra whereby the student earns the gate pass of the junior college only after matriculation. A unique set of nomenclature is used for 3years graduation for different streams like for Arts; they are FYBA, SYBA & TYBA that signifies first year, second year and third year of arts graduation. The existing 3 years graduation system came in late 70s. The current system is that after 10+2 everyone needs to have 3 years graduation or technical education which is of 4 to 5 years.

Thanks to these coaching shops preparing students for IITs and MBBS as the system of Plus 2 studies are no more in existence. It is just for sake of the name. You join a coaching center and they will give your attendance for regular 11 & 12 classes of a reputed school in few lakhs! Let we lift our eyes to various Governing bodies. There are

State Boards which control the primary and secondary education of that state. When the picture of Universities come in fore, we can find varieties like Central, State, and even the concept of Deemed Universities has come off late.

In the system of technical education, there exist Diploma courses which are governed by the Boards of technical education. The engineering colleges are affiliated to the respective Universities or autonomous bodies such as Indian Institute of Technology, Indian Institute of Science, etc. When we talk of the medical education we can find, it is strictly covered by Medical Council of India and Dental Council of India. When it comes to the Deemed Universities, they need the recognition of UGC and for medical and dental courses by their respective council.

The liberty and flexibility extended during the last two decades has deteriorated the standard of education in our country to a great extent, especially in the field of management education. Plenty of Mushrooming Management Institutes have emerged, both recognized and unrecognized; they have been distributing the degrees and diplomas in abundance even without proper infrastructure and faculty. The concept of distant education has fueled fire because these private shops started selling education at heavy cost by offering degrees after having affiliation to otherwise unknown universities. There is still no control in place to stop this menace. As a result, we produce managers who are not equipped with the required knowledge and skills. It generated a great amount of dissatisfaction and frustration among the younger generation, when they secure even the Class IV job with the premier Post Graduate qualification.

Let us touch another important area, i.e., national language and regional languages. It is a historical fact that Hindi was made the language of the union of India without voting. It was the year 1949; Tamil had been scoring more marks with regard to the richness and age. It is worthy mentioning that Both Tamil and Hindi are dear to Sanskrit and for that matter, almost all other Southern Indian languages follow the trend. Whether it is Malayalam, Kannada or Telugu, there is abundance of Sanskrit words in their vocabularies. Hindi has already accepted Sanskrit as its mother.

We must respect the idea formulated during the era when the concept of three language formula emerged for the secondary education in the country. We must accept the fact that national language cannot be imposed, though with the span of time, Hindi has automatically become a language for communication across the country. We have to respect the regional languages since these are notified in our constitution as Indian languages.

Coming back to three language formula, which worked in real sense, when in Karnataka and Kerala, the students were made to have Hindi and English with Regional language compulsory up to matriculation. Some how, Tamil Nadu never followed the three language formula and stayed on 2 languages, that is, English and Tamil. It is surprising to know that Urdu was compulsory language in British Era. My father was a graduate from Allahabad University who never read Hindi, but even as a student of English Literature, he

was having full knowledge of Urdu because it was his subject till matriculation. It is really a question why Urdu was not given its status in the Northern States such as Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, etc.

Let us hope that we develop the pragmatic and progressive thinking in the matter of languages by following 3 language formulas in all the States. A student may be allowed to take Tamil in Kerala or in Uttar Pradesh. The third language may be any official language provided by the Constitution.

With a vision of promotion of national language, a separate department has been formed in all the Ministries of Central Government. The Ministry of Home Affairs is responsible for this task and even Presidential directives are in vogue to ensure official work in Hindi all over the country. So far, we have not achieved the desired result because we have not taken care of this important aspect in our education system. We are not going to achieve anything by opposing English. Rather, we have to continue with English and also promote the regional languages side by side. Any formula should be made in such a way that a student is made to learn several Indian languages in his curriculum, at least up to matriculation level. It has been found possible as we have seen that in South, we have Hindi in three language formula. I need to emphasize that languages cannot be imposed. It should come from within to have interest. Hindi is known and understood all over the country which does not require any proof as you can find houseful picture halls for Hindi movies all over the country.

The new Education Minister with revolutionary ideas seems to have the concept of one single board in the country, since we have Central Board of Secondary Education with number of schools in almost all States. Now Tamil Nadu has come up with the idea of one single board abolishing the multiplicity of boards.

It is indeed not an easy task to abolish the State Boards. Every State says that the standard of their particular board is high. West Bengal is not ready to compromise with its State Board in spite of having the old syllabus which has not been revised for decades. The same concept goes in several other States. The students suffered a lot when they try to equalize the marks for having comparison with national level CBSE & ICSE. Nobody can deny that ICSE syllabus is quite tough. The marking system still persists. A student securing 99% marks in Tamil Nadu, may get only 78% marks in West Bengal and with the same caliber, he may get 92% marks in CBSE. But, are we really ready to accept this fact? Certainly not. Because in Tamil Nadu, one can score 99% marks, whereas no one can dream to secure even 90% marks in the West Bengal Board. The record books will affirm the fact.

Now we can succeed in abolishing the mark system by introducing the grade system, i.e., A++, A+ and so on, because number of suicide cases has been reported in the recent past due to the rate race of marks. I clearly recall that I had lost first division by 0.01% in my LLB. I required only one mark to reach the landmark of 1080 marks out of 1800. When approached, the Vice Chancellor was very right in saying "Why should you lose first class by one mark? Why not to secure 5 marks more?"

The proposed changes coming in the education system are going to benefit the younger generation. It is a great progressive step because such a vast change was never thought of before. Look at the syllabus of Class 10 and 12, you will observe bounty of knowledge and exposure. Let the State Boards have the open mind to have brain storming sessions of concerned people attached with the education system in different States. I am optimistic that it may take some years, but generic ideas are bound to emphasize the need for one single system with common syllabus for all the States so as to have uniform standards, so that a student after schooling may be able to get seat of his choice on merit in the prestigious Institutions of the country.

Let a brilliant student from Kerala or Tamil Nadu may get a seat in *Sriram College of Commerce* or *St. Stephen*, Delhi, *Loyola College* or *Stella Maris*, Chennai, *Presidency College* in Kolkata or *N. M. College*, Mumbai and so on. There is a long list of prestigious colleges in our country in almost all the States which are reckoned for imparting quality education. Let there be equal opportunity for all, strictly based on merit.

I treat myself as an educationist while writing this article; I have the conviction that my statements, observations deserve consideration on merit in the eyes of avid readers. This is for information that besides having strong academic base I counsel students in all metros and also act as a visiting faculty in several premier institutes.

In a career span of over 3 decades, I have certainly interacted with over 2000 students, who came out from the colleges of different States. It gives me the confidence to talk about engineering, medical and management education in the country for past, present and future. It may raise an acrimonious debate, since I am going to advocate about nationalization of universities in the country specially for so called "Deemed Universities". We can find a resemblance when in the year 1969, Smt. Indira Gandhi as Prime Minister took the step of nationalizing 14 private banks. We all know the fruitful results. Now, it is the high time to have a serious thought for nationalizing the education system as a string of irregularities have been downgrading standard of education at exorbitant cost.

One way, I am advocating the nationalization of education, for keeping standard of education to make it comfortable for every eligible candidate irrespective of financial background but on the other hand, I would like to advocate the participation of foreign universities, mainly due to the reason that there are many educational institutions in India having collaboration with foreign universities for award of degrees and diplomas. The large number of counseling centers has been opened up especially in the metros, who have been engaged in imparting directives about how to go abroad for education.

We do have *Kendriya Vidyalaya* in different countries and even IGNOU has opened its centers abroad. I know a lot of management institutes having their branches in other Asian countries, though the management and technical education abroad is a costly affair. The "M.S." degree after graduation normally costs Rs.30-40 lakhs in U.S. and other countries.

The medical education is also very costly. One needs to have at least Rs.60-70 lakhs to have medical graduation from developed countries.

Education in the private institutes in our country is very costly. You can have B.Tech, M.B.B.S. and M.B.A from Government Universities by spending some thousands per year, but when it comes to the private institutions, the rates become exorbitant. The capitation fee for medical education is Rs.30-40 lakhs which is totally unauthorized and illegal especially when it is in addition to authorized annual fee of Rs.3.50 lakhs per year. Same is the case for engineering, where depending upon the branch, the capitation fee ranges between Rs.5-10 lakhs with an annual fee in the range of Rs.1.50 lakhs. On the contrary, AIIMS Lady Harding and *Maulana Azad* Medical College charge only in thousands for MBBS and the same is the case for B.Tech course given by Delhi and Bombay University. Look at the fee for MBA degree.

It is a matter of great surprise that IITs have also increased their fees, though they are Government Institutions but the fees remain still in thousands. Bombay & Delhi Universities, Tata Institute of Social Sciences, even for PG degrees NITIE and Indian Institute of Sciences, Bangalore are still charging the fee in thousands only for MBA courses. I can realize that income levels have gone up; thereby yesterday's middle class man has become the upper class today, so as the standard-of-living. One can afford higher cost of education with the inception of educational loan facilities. The IIMs would afford their fees in lakhs because they know about the placements which will bring decent salaries, may be in crores for the student who are studying in their institutions. The education loans from the banks are quite handy with flexible repayment options. Why should we think only about the rich people who are sending their children abroad for education by donating handsomely?

Let me strongly advocate that the permission should be granted to the foreign universities for opening their Institutes in India with a promise that they will be allowed to open the Institute in the suburbs of metros. It should be the responsibility of the foreign university to develop the township and create necessary infrastructure. We have over 400 air strip in the country created by Britishers for Army. Therefore, the foreign Universities can be compelled to open the Institute in otherwise remote places having air strips. Let me take the name of Jaisalmer, Bikaner, Behala, Pondicherry and so on.

Why should I confine these stations only for foreign universities? Let it be the criteria for IITs, NITs and Government medical colleges also. We can develop small towns only by way of having reputed educational institutions there, especially when it is not possible to create industrial base. We should not forget that Bhilai, Rourkela, Durgapur and Visakhapatnam have come in prominence when the remote areas of these towns got steel plants. It was a pragmatic step of the Government which should have been continued. Why should there be mushrooming of engineering and medical colleges in metros only? Look at Delhi and its surroundings which are having medical and engineering colleges in 100s. Same is the case of Chennai and Bombay.

I need to touch some other areas connected with the education system. The most important area is international schools. Think about the air-conditioned international schools in Hyderabad, Mumbai and Delhi. You will find beautiful air-conditioned buses in the morning with nice advertisements. Yes, these are the international schools for primary and secondary education. Fees are taken in lakhs per year. They are only following the teaching pattern of U.S. & U.K., since they are affiliated to foreign boards. It has become easy to get your child in Cambridge and Oxford once they get educated in the international schools in India.

Earlier, we were having the British schools or American schools mainly for the children of the employees of Embassies. The situation has been radically changed with the emergence of big business houses in the field of education like *Birlas*, *Goenkas*, *Ambanis* etc. There is no dearth of secondary schools affiliated with foreign boards, since the fees and cost of living is quite cheap in India. Therefore, the foreigners are also sending their children to have their education in these schools. I am not here to talk for and against these international schools, because in one way, it is good if you are having a plan to send your children abroad for education. Rather, it is an easy way with less competition. Delhi Public School has become a big name having franchise in India and abroad. Educational institutions are now coming as a mode of business. It is no more a noble job of serving the society. But it is an industry with less control and regulation by the Government. All India Council for Technical education is a small body with less than 100 people in it, but it is responsible for monitoring, controlling, recognizing and supervising thousands and thousands of technical institutions at every nook and corner of country. No one is concerned as to whether it is humanly possible or not? But it is there in the form of Government control on education. Slowly the Medical Council of India and Dental Council are coming in the same way to have the regulation and control for the institutions imparting branches of medical education.

Fortunately, we have started talking about one single authority to govern the technical and medical education. Let us hope some systematic and effective control at least in the matter of recognition of institutions for maintaining the standard of education in uniform manner throughout the country. It all started by Delhi University two decades ago, with the Bachelor Degree in Business Administration, i.e., B.B.A, mainly due to the reason that there was a great demand of trained managers in the country. The private sector had been feeling great vacuum, since limited number of management institutes were there in existence for Post Graduate Degree in Management. Therefore, the need of the management education at graduation level for B.B.A. degree had been evolved. The syllabus for this programme was more or less the same as that of MBA. Some other universities also followed the same practice and started the BBA course. These young management graduates ventured in the market seeking the managerial positions. But the intake by the industry was very poor. The graduates with BBA degree could not stand on their own and turn out to have the status of simple graduate. Therefore, majority of these management graduates opted for MBA studies.

While teaching post graduate students, I have observed that these BBAs are trouble-shooters in the class, which is not at all in the positive sense. They were quite familiar with all subjects of MBA during their graduation; but the conceptual level was really poor. I analyzed the reasons for this sad fate of BBA degree. My discussion at various levels in the corporate sector as well as with the students revealed that it was totally a mismatch of expectations. The MBA studies are little different from other streams of education. These are based on practical experience of the experts. The theories have been evolved from practices in management stream. We need managers with maturity who have the capacity to implement the theories of management depending upon the situation. The MBA course is open for all graduates.

I have seen M.B.B.S. doctors, going for MBA, besides engineers and other graduates from all disciplines. Most of the institutes in the country offer MBA for the students preferably with 3-5 years experience after graduation. The reason is simple as envisaged above. It must be noted that the student is going to learn the application of concepts in the MBA course. Therefore, we need a student with lot of appetite in the form of questions, queries, uncertainties, innovations, original ideas, hypothesis, imaginations etc. for solving the problems. Whether it relates to human relations or concerned with other fields of management like finance or marketing. Today, we, the professional managers, with hands on experience in the industry are in great demand as visiting faculty members for the business schools. The primary reason is that we are able to teach students with practical orientation and our teaching is based on case studies, which have been devised by us from our experiences. There is a need to teach management from the practical implementation point of view. It is not a bookish knowledge. It is not just for passing the exam. It is not just a showpiece of reading and writing. The management education is for developing ideas, grasping case studies and also to understand and formulate strategies depending upon the situation. These are some of the important factors that made the Bachelor Degree of Business Administration an utter failure.

The news of degree in Law at graduation level had appeared to be of utter surprise. The law is a common sense. Every manager needs to have knowledge of law. Since we require maturity level of graduation for understanding law concepts and still need 3 years studies after graduation. Somehow, 5 year course after 10+2 is not a bad idea because we are giving enough time to a student to attain maturity for understanding the concepts. As I have already said that Law is for everybody. Therefore, the ideal situation is to continue 3 years for Law qualification after graduation. If I ask the question as to whether we are going to make advocates after graduation, I feel the reply will be negative. We should not compare legal and management qualification at par with engineering or MBBS degrees. These are entirely different fields.

There is a great diversity in the subjects as per the syllabus of law and other qualifications at graduation level. There is an old saying that education never goes waste. I feel it is not only a saying, but there is a great amount of truth in it. I consider myself as an example to prove it. As a practicing manager at senior level with an international

designation of Human Performance Technologist, I am a biology graduate with Post Graduate degree in Management having degree in Law and other specializations like in the field of training and development, personnel management & industrial relations and labour laws with my research for Ph.D. in the area of psychology. How do all these qualifications fit in for me? Well, in my 3 decades of long experience, I experienced that though each of these qualifications seem to be apparently different but are being practiced purposefully by me in one way or other. I hope the readers will agree with my view point.

I have endeavored to touch various dimensions of education system in our country and I feel like concluding with the statement that strategy without an intense analysis is not going to yield in the long run. Therefore, we need to rationalize and streamline the thoughts probably by raising debates at intellectual and academic levels by the people who have got the required expertise. The need for national commission of education may be evolved to take care of the questions raised by me. The questions had been meant to touch different edges of the corners created by the multiplicity of education standards in our country. The nationalization of education system is probably the need of the hour.