

NOTION OF QUALITY IN EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

In this era of globalisation, education has a crucial role to play in preparing the learners not only to face the future with confidence but to build it with purpose and responsibility. The importance of the role of education as an agent of change promoting tolerance and understanding has never been more obvious than today. This can be brought about only through quality education. Quality in education is difficult to define in tangible terms. The present study was aimed at identifying the indicators of good quality education. Since the teachers play a vital role in imparting education to the learners, their notion of quality will ultimately determine the character of an institution. The study was thus undertaken to understand the teachers' notion of quality and identifying their role in ensuring the quality of instruction imparted to the students. The study was conducted in 10 public schools of Delhi. After identifying the indicators of quality through review of related literature and discussion with eminent educationists, an opinionnaire and a semi structured interview schedule was used for data collection to understand the notion of quality through the perspectives of teachers. The study revealed that the teachers perceived quality institution as one which prepares students for life. The students must be helped to prepare themselves not only for their personal lives but be equally prepared to participate in economic and political life of their societies. Values such as discipline, honesty and respect for elders must be understood as basic fundamentals for quality education. Increased quality awareness among teachers and helping teachers to improve their teaching methodology and skills may lead to quality in education. Quality is not infrastructure dependent but largely depends on the teachers' knowledge proficiency and teaching skills and sound management of the institution.

KEYWORDS: Indicators of Quality, Stakeholders, Involvement of all

INTRODUCTION

'Each child should receive an education suited to develop his particular and individual faculties. Such an education should be imparted which will make him useful as a citizen in his community and his country.' (Annie Besant) What Annie Besant had said is possible only when our education is constantly upgraded, refined and modified in tune with the changing circumstances. So as to achieve this very arduous objective, it is very essential to have a good educational institution for the fact that the quality of good schooling is necessary for national development. There is no place in the world which is succeeding without the assistance of good educational institutions.

Quality in education is a global quest, for India this quest is all the more important for it to become a global player. In order to succeed in this and to attain global standards in local settings, it is necessary for Indian educational institutions to both improve and sustain quality.

In this interwoven world, people from all walks of life demand "QUALITY" in thought, processes and outcomes but different people understand the term differently and individual satisfaction becomes an important aspect of any quality

check. Therefore one, who provides quality, needs to understand the concept of quality. In India, we have been a part of quality movements in many areas including education. In our country one can find world class work in the field of Science, Literature, Arts etc. Once upon a time we had many educational institutions like Nalanda, Takshila and Vikramshila. Quality in academic environment is a fundamental principle embedded in the roots of the educational process and the multidimensional relationships between the students and the academic staff. Managing successfully the quality of different aspects of the education system from administration to research and teaching may prove vital in an era of international cooperation, continuous evaluation and competition for limited resources without oversimplifying the academic structure.

India is currently undergoing a huge makeover in educational sector. The burgeoning demand for good quality education is matched by equally great expansion of educational institutions. Needless to say that it is the quality of education that determines the future of a country and its people.

A student can become a well informed citizen if the education that he gets is provided by good faculty. Many institutions stress on quality education which is only possible if the quality of teachers is maintained. Teachers are the core of any school and their role in quality improvement becomes paramount. Quality in education cannot be defined in tangible terms and different people understand it differently. For example, one goes to buy a computer and when it's said 'Intel inside', many of us do not understand what it means but it is a stamp of quality and one buys it without going into minute details/ specifications. Like every computer every school has a hardware and a software. The hardware refers to infrastructure and the software refers to various programmes and activities but actual processor 'Intel' of the school are the teachers which determine the quality of the institution. Since teachers play a key role in imparting education, their notion of quality will ultimately reflect the philosophy of the school.

In order to define Quality in Education the study attempted to answer the following research questions:

- What are the indicators of quality in the system in education?
- How are these indicators of quality implemented in schools?
- What is the notion of quality envisaged by teachers?

OBJECTIVES

To answer the above questions the following objectives were framed.

- To identify the indicators of quality in education.
- To study the feasibility of implementation of the above indicators in the context of the Indian education system.
- To study the notion of quality envisaged by the teachers.

SAMPLE

For the present study a random sample of 50 teachers teaching in Public schools was chosen. 10 teachers from each school were taken for the study. All schools were affiliated to CBSE.

Four teachers who were looking after the administrative departments were chosen for interview as they may clearly and distinctly express their views on quality and their vision would affect the overall quality of the institution.

METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted in three phases.

- In the first phase the indicators of quality were identified after going through review of related literature and discussions with some eminent educationists
- The second phase of the study was planned as a follow up to the first phase. This micro level in depth approach was undertaken in order to understand the inner dynamics of administration in education at the school level. Semi structured interviews were conducted on four heads in two schools. These people were heading different departments such as academic supervisor, house in-charge, activity in charge and a vice principal.
- The next phase was an exploratory study to identify the notion of quality envisaged by teachers teaching in reputed public schools. Principals of these schools were approached to seek permission to carry out the study. 10 teachers from each school responded to the opinionnaire which was constructed to identify the notion of quality of teachers.

TOOLS

As the study was qualitative, an opinionnaire and a semi structured interview schedule was prepared.

- Keeping the following parameters in mind an opinionnaire was developed.
 - Parents and learners satisfaction;
 - **Leadership:** Leaders establish unity of purpose and direction of the organization. They should create and maintain the internal environment in which people can become fully involved in achieving the organizations' objectives.
 - **Planning;** Systematic planning is important
 - **Continual Improvement:** Continual improvement of the organization's overall performance should be a permanent objective of the organization.
 - **Involvement of All:** people at all levels are the essence of an organization and their full involvement enables their abilities to be used for the organization's benefit.
 - **Management:** Adequate utilization of the available resources.

The opinion of teachers were taken regarding setting of targets and steps taken to achieve those targets, identifying the needs of the learners, assessment of their own teaching, adequate use of resources, advantage of faculty meetings, values being imparted by the school, rapport building with the students and parents, learners and parents expectation from the institution, school alumni feedback, goal(s) set by teachers for themselves and how school helps in their professional development, their own strengths and weaknesses and how school helps them in developing their strengths, opportunities provided by the school , willingness to innovate, updation of knowledge and teaching skills.

- A semi structured interview was designed to study the feasibility of quality indicators identified. The interview was conducted on administrators who are responsible for the smooth functioning of the institute and play a vital role in conveying the school philosophy to all the stakeholders.

The interview addressed important parameters of continual improvement, involvement of all, method of feedback and suggestions for improvement, planning and review.

FINDINGS

The study aimed at identifying the indicators of quality in a good educational institute and the analysis and interpretation of the data resulted in the following findings:

- A quality institution is one which prepares students for life. Students must be taught useful and essential skills to deal with different tasks that they will need to perform in their lives. They must be helped to prepare themselves not only for their personal lives but be equally prepared to participate in economic and political life of their societies. As citizens they must learn to be critical and responsible. In today's world there is also need to prepare young people and children to participate in and understand activities at an international level.
- Values such as discipline, honesty and respect for elders must be understood as basic fundamentals for quality education. Teachers must teach about values not just through substantive content of their teaching but also by using teaching methods which will integrate democracy, equality, respect and cooperation.
- Education must aim at giving the students opportunities for personal development and confidence to adapt to new situations as well as change these, according to the demands of time. There should be a balance between the curricular and co curricular activities in school and all students must be given equal opportunities to exhibit their talents.
- In a quality institution the management strives for satisfaction of all the stakeholders which refers to a notion of quality where those who receive education make explicit their expectations and quality is defined in terms meeting or exceeding the expectations of the stakeholders.
- Another important feature of a quality institute is that it provides excellent teaching learning environment. The academic year and all activities are planned at the beginning of the year in consultation with the teachers. The management provides opportunities for professional development. Teachers are given autonomy to adopt any methodology best suited to the needs of the learners. The management reposes faith in teachers. All teachers are given responsibility according to their abilities. The relationship between the teachers and the students is cordial. Teachers interact with the students informally to understand their needs. The school has a discipline policy according to which no corporal punishment is given. Teachers act as counsellors and students feel free to approach the teachers any time. Teachers are friends, philosophers and guides to the students.
- The principal recognizes the strengths of the teachers and gives opportunities to convert their weaknesses into strengths. The school formulates student friendly policies and strives to provide the students with the best facilities.
- For parents according to the teachers, a quality school is one where students are safe and can learn in a stimulating environment.
- Another important finding of the study is the important role the teachers play in improving quality of education. Increased quality awareness among teachers and helping teachers to improve their teaching methodology and

skills may lead to quality in education. The professional freedom of teachers is of crucial importance. In service training and professional development workshops must be organised to give different approaches and models for teaching, but it must never turn into a process of dictating which method to use. Teachers must be actively engaged in the process of improving the quality of education.

- The highlight of the study was that Quality is not infrastructure dependent but largely depends on the teachers' knowledge proficiency and teaching skills and sound management of the institution.

CONCLUSIONS

Quality education is the education that best fits the present and future needs of the particular learners in question and community, given the particular circumstances and prospects. The quality concept also has to embrace the development of the potential of every member of each new generation.

Quality cannot be seen as a static concept. Quality and standards are relative to the particular place and time and to particular learners and their circumstances. One important aspect of quality is the relevance of the subjects taught and the objectives of education. Quality education is an education that provides the students with the tools to deal with and find solutions to the challenges confronting mankind. In a changing world this means that what was considered quality yesterday might not meet the standard of what may be understood as quality tomorrow. This is particularly true at present if we take into consideration the rapid changes created by new technologies. There is need to discuss this concept continuously and to define and redefine it.

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