

## QUALITY TEACHING AND LEARNING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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### *Abstract*

*In higher education, student learning outcomes is essential and it can be possible only with quality teaching and learning. A range of challenges are there to address for fostering quality teaching in higher education institutions. In fact higher education is coming under tremendous pressure from different directions. It is the need of the hour that the institutions ensure that the education provided by them meet the expectations of students and the needs of the employers. Bottom up practices and innovations are required in teaching and learning for making institution wide vision and strategy fit to the needs and missions of the institutions and stakeholders. Leadership, collaboration and plan are required to address tensions between innovators and the people who are unwilling to change in order to develop the effective pedagogical practices in institutions.*

**Keywords:** *Quality Teaching, Learning*

### **INTRODUCTION**

As per the sustained growth and diversification of higher education is concerned, quality of programmes provided to the students in institutions are of high importance. Society is very much concerned about these programmes. Therefore, there is increasing competitions, public assessments and comparisons between higher education institutions. Research is given more emphasise by the evaluation methods and research performance is used as a yardstick or measurement tool to evaluate value of an institution. If these evaluation and assessment processes are found to be failed in determining the quality of teaching, it is because of the complexity and difficulty in measuring it. It is crystal clear that we need to focus on the identification of schemes or evaluation strategies for the institutions to implement them to promote quality teaching practices. It also highlights the importance of institutional environment of higher education institutions which can further leads to the enhancement of quality of teaching in higher education set ups through various means. We can take into consideration the goals of the OECD-Institutional Management in Higher Education (IMHE) project on quality teaching. The project was developed to highlight effective quality initiatives to encourage practices that may help other institutions to improve the quality of their teaching and thereby, the quality of their students. The detail description about the goal and scope of initiatives, the role of the faculty members, the department, the central

university and the state is analysed and given in the project. The discussion here provides exposure to new approaches and practices and the corresponding policy levers likely to help improvement in teaching learning process in the field of higher education.

#### **WHAT IS QUALITY TEACHING AND WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?**

Use of pedagogical methods and techniques for creating effective learning outcomes and the environment that address personal needs of the students all together refers to quality teaching. Quality teaching is very important to meet current challenges in the education system: the internationalisation of higher education, the increasingly broadening scope of education and greater diversity of student profiles, the rapid changes in technology, which can quickly make programme content and pedagogies obsolete, the demand for greater civic engagement of graduates and regional development of higher education, the increased pressures of global competition, economic efficiency and the need to produce a skilled workforce to meet the challenges of the 21st century.

Students come from different backgrounds both socially and geographically and with different needs and capabilities. Students demand for new teaching strategies which is both meaningful and interesting. Modern technologies have entered into the classroom which has changed the ideas and viewpoints of both students and professors towards education system. It thus, modified the nature of the interactions between students and professors. It includes the effective design of curriculum and course content, a variety of learning contexts (including guided independent study, project based learning, collaborative learning, experimentation, etc.), soliciting and using feedback, and effective assessment of learning outcomes. Institutional environment is created in such a way that it provides student support services. Research shows that good and quality teaching learning depends on various factors and endeavours like teacher's pedagogical skills, learning environment that must support student's personal needs and adequate support to staff and students (financial support, social and academic support, support to minority students, counselling services, etc). All of these factors are important for improving learning outcomes. Research states that intellectual interaction like collaborative learning between students and professors helps them build knowledge and enhance learning outcomes and satisfaction of the both as well.

Quality teaching learning takes place at three levels which are depended upon each other. First level is institution wide level which includes projects such as policy design, financial and technical support to the institutions and internal quality assurance systems. Second level is programme level which includes steps to measure and enhance the design, content and delivery of the programmes within the institutions. Third level is individual level where initiatives should be taken in order to help professors achieve their goal; encourage them to innovate and to encourage learner centred approach for improving student's learning. All the three levels are equally essential.

### **HOW CAN TEACHING CONCRETELY BE ENHANCED?**

Attention should be given to a wide range of activities in the institution with the purpose of improving the quality of teaching learning process, of the programme content and the learning conditions of the students. Institutions can take initiatives like creating a centre for teaching learning development, conducting professional development activities for professors (e.g. in-service training), giving teaching excellence awards and conducting competitions for remarkable improvements, providing teaching innovations funds, modifying teaching recruitment criteria, giving support to innovative pedagogy, providing facilities to the communities of teaching and learning practices, creating suitable learning environments (libraries, study rooms and computing facilities in them), organizing and managing effective teaching and learning process, supporting students to achieve their goal significantly (e.g. counselling, career advice, mentoring etc.), creating efficient techniques to evaluate student's progress (programme ratings, evaluating learning experiences etc.), helping professors in self evaluation of experiments, peer-reviewing, benchmarking of practices, developing community service and work-based programmes, development based programmes and developing programmes for competence based assessments. All these factors are required to bring quality teaching to the forefront of higher education policies. Every education system has experienced increase in diverse group of students in the recent years. Simultaneously higher education system is facing challenges from various fields like from students, parents, employers and taxpayers regarding their performance and quality of teaching.

As per the increasing challenges are concerned, institutions are required to engage in fostering quality teaching by taking appropriate initiatives. Institutions are needed to respond to the growing demand for meaningful and relevant teaching. It is the responsibility of the institution to ensure their students and employers that the education provided by them will lead to professional development and will provide them with the skills needed to evolve professionally over the lifetime. Apart from this, it is essential to prove that the concerned institution is a reliable provider of good quality higher education, and meeting expectations of multiple stakeholders like ministries, funding agencies, local authorities, employers etc. It is also required to balance performance on teaching and learning achievements along with research performance efficiently to maintain the reputation and dignity of the institution. Institutions for higher education should stand against the backdrop of higher tuition fees and greater student mobility. Along with this, there should be an improvement in teaching learning process as financial spur become more strict and uncompromising.

### **MEASURES TO BE TAKEN FOR ENSURING EFFECTIVENESS OF TEACHING AND LEARNING**

Responsibility of institution is not only confined to take initiatives for making teaching and learning effective but also it is essential to measure the impact of the quality teaching initiatives in order to be able to improve these initiatives further. Well, it is difficult to

assess the quality of teaching. Because of this challenge and difficulty, famous international rankings of institutions are based on research which determines the value of universities and educational institutions and leave aside the quality of teaching. As we know that life does not get better by chance but it gets better by change. Therefore the base of these rankings may however change in the future, as the concerns about quality teaching and student learning are increasing to a large extent.

When we talk about assessment of quality teaching which drives effective learning, we take teaching methods of teachers and professors, the value of graduates, satisfaction of teachers, retention rates of institutions etc. into account which can be proved useful but carry various meanings and can even lead to various misunderstandings. Most of the researchers state that using student questionnaire can be logical enough to draw conclusions about the quality of teaching. Student questionnaire can be proved more effective because of the various reasons like students are the most exposed to and the most affected individuals by the teacher's teaching. Many teachers are regarded as biased by the students because they give little credit to the answers of the students. It is seen that students blame their teachers for all problems, forgetting the role of the administration or the infrastructures.

Besides this, peer-in class evaluations can be used as a technique in focusing on the process of teaching, not merely the outcomes. But these evaluations by peers can be influenced by widespread conservatism of judgement and may lead to self-congratulation and may hamper teaching innovations (the teacher being evaluated fearing to be poorly judged if too creative).

Using teaching portfolios can be proved useful in evaluating quality teaching more effectively because many sources of evidence are considered. But again challenge remains that how much weight should be given to each source of evidence.

The results of quality teaching initiatives are difficult to assess and hence this issue has received increasing attention in research. Many researchers have stated various paradoxes which sound reasoning from true premises, leads to an apparently self contradictory or logically unacceptable conclusion that the measurement of quality teaching sometimes induces. For example, a well rated programme or a rewarded teacher feels it less important to take initiatives for change and becomes therefore more likely to maintain the status quo. The teachers who attend quality assurance schemes believe that they have enough power to change everything to improve student learning. But the truth is that teachers will only try to improve the quality of their teaching only if they feel that the education institution cares about teaching. The institution, hence must give concrete and tangible signs to the teachers and students that teaching really matters a lot.

**WHO IS A “GOOD” TEACHER?**

**ENNOBLING TEACHING IN HIGHER EDUCATION**

The role and status given to the teachers are considered as external demands for quality increase. However the quality of an education system cannot exceed the quality of its teachers. Boyer (1990), in his study stated that teaching profession should be given a higher status in the society and should assume a specialized role as one of the four types of scholarships included in by the modern academic. He also emphasized on the embedment of the “scholarship of teaching” in the field of academia.

**WHAT IT TAKES TO BE A “GOOD” TEACHER: SENSITIVITY TO CLASS LEVEL AND PROGRESS, EMPATHY WITH STUDENTS...**

Before enhancing and rewarding teaching excellence, it is necessary to understand the features of good teaching. Scholars have identified numerous features that constitute good teaching. Feldman (1976), in his study has listed some of the main features of a good teacher. They are sensitivity to class level and progress, clarity of course requirements, understandable and meaningful explanations, respect for students and encouragement of independent thought. In a study conducted by Shulman (1987), he emphasized on pedagogical and content knowledge of the teachers. Marsh (1987) has also listed various characteristics of a good teacher like management of workload, clear explanations, empathy with students, openness on the part of the teacher and quality of the assessment procedures. Apart from this, some of the features of good teacher have been also listed by Entwistle and Tait (1990) like clear goals, appropriate workload and level of difficulty, choice in assignments, quality of explanation, appropriate pace in teaching, enthusiasm of teacher and empathy with students as essential traits. All of the features mentioned by the scholars are equally required to be a good teacher.

**LEADERSHIP, MODERN MANAGEMENT, GLOBAL UNDERSTANDING OF THE UNIVERSITY'S MISSION...**

Good teaching is a type of teaching which is positively correlated with the mission and goal of the educational institution (Webbstock, 1999). Four components like lesson organization, lesson clarity, interest in learning, and positive classroom climate are emphasized by Hativa et al. (2001). Besides this, Thirteen abilities needed for quality teaching and learning and they are: Engagement locally and globally, Engagement with peers and colleagues, Equity and pathways, Leadership, Engagement with learners, Entrepreneurship, Designing for learning, Teaching for learning, Assessing for learning, Evaluation of teaching and learning, Reflective practice and professional development, Personal management, and Management of teaching and learning (Taylor, 2003). These capabilities of teachers not only enhance traditional discipline and pedagogical knowledge and skills but also create an understanding of the global and connected nature of education and skills in leadership and management (Radloff, 2004).

**EXPERIENCE**

According to Chalmers (2007), experience of teachers matters a lot for making teaching

effective. More than 400 empirical studies reveals that year of experience and specific teaching qualifications of teachers are significantly correlated with better student achievement (Greenwald, Hedges & Laine, 1996). According to the studies, organization and expressiveness are the two pillars of good teaching which are highly correlated with student achievement (Feldman, 1989; & Murray, 1991). According to Kallisson (1986), good organization of the subject matter and planning of the course are essential components for student learning. Student's learning experiences can be enhanced through well-structured presentations, lecture-outlines, headings, subheadings, and syllabi (Feldman 1989, Murray 1991). Outlines can be play role as an advance organizer which transfers knowledge structure and provides students with effective and interesting strategies and contribute to more efficient learning (Perry and Magnusson 1989). On the other hand, expressiveness enhances motivation and desire to teach (Murray, 1991). It is also called as enthusiasm including the use of eye contact, appropriate physical movement and change in tone wherever needed while delivering lesson can also has great impact on student's learning outcomes. It encourages students to attend the lectures, to complete the homework and achieve learning goals effectively (Perry and Penner 1990). In Psychology, it is very well said that "Good teaching" depends on whom and what is being taught.

But Schönwetter, Clifton & Perry (2002) have different views regarding this statement. They stated that "good teaching" might be somewhat different in function of whom and what is being taught. Schönwetter, Clifton & Perry studied the needs of different student during their entry into new class and teaching behaviours of teachers to meet their needs. It is stated in their study that all students have different needs and it is the responsibility of the teacher to modify their teaching strategies according to their needs. Students who are familiar with the content of the course have pedagogical needs and therefore they are more sensitive to the professor's expressiveness than to their organizational skills. Whereas students who are not familiar with the content, their perception of learning is more positively influenced by the professor's both expressiveness and organization. The study then concluded that the most expressive and the most organized professors to introductory classes are recommended. It not only will increase their knowledge content but also motivate the students to take more advanced class. The researchers also stated that an expressive instructor seems to be more effective for more advanced courses.

#### **VARIOUS TYPES OF LEARNING AND CHANGING TRENDS**

There have been no end to the variations, deviations and differences present among the creations of God in the form of living and non-living and thus, individual differences in students. The process of acquiring new or modifying existing knowledge, skills, behaviours, values and preferences is learning. Way of learning differs from individual to individual. It may occur as a result of habituation, or classical conditioning, operant conditioning or due to more complex activities such as play. Heredity (level of intelligence, abilities, rate of grasping etc.), status of students (physical and home conditions) and physical environment (design, quality and setting of a learning space)

are some of the external factors which influence student's learning. On the other hand, internal factors also play a major role in learning. Some of the internal factors are goals or purposes, motivational behaviour, interest, attention, drill or practice, fatigue, aptitude, attitude, emotional conditions, speed, accuracy and retention, learning activities, testing and guidance. Therefore, there are wide individual differences in the field of learning. For some, one method of teaching is more suitable, while for others, a different method work more effectively. In the same way, suitability of the learning environment also depends on the individual nature of the student. Over the past decades, ways of learning have been changed in students due to technology, change in the course and the curriculum, early and extra involvement in learning, changes in teaching models and activities in the education system etc.

It is stated in multiple intelligence theory that there is no one method of teaching applicable for each and every student. Teaching strategies varies according to the needs, capabilities and requirements of the students. Quality teaching depends on all these factors. Therefore, it is important to understand different types of learning and teaching in order to understand the concept of quality teaching. According to Marton and Saljo (1979), there are two types of student's learning approaches. They are deep approach and surface approach. Deep approach focuses on understanding the course material and surface approach deals with memorising the material itself. Student's conception of learning has influence on student's approaches to study (Van Rossum & Schenk, 1984). Lecturer's theories of teaching and student's perception of the learning environment influence student's beliefs about the structure of knowledge (Sheepard and Gilbert's, 1991).

Teachers identify the gap between teaching and theory and continuously facilitate them in connecting their learnt theory and practice which leads to better teaching strategy in the class. Teachers in order to modify the teaching strategies as per the requirements of the students should know that learning about teaching involves continuously conflicting and competing demands. It requires a view of knowledge as a subject to be created rather than as a created subject and requires a shift from the curriculum to the learner. Apart from this, learning about teaching is enhanced through teacher research and it requires an emphasis on those learning to teach working closely with their peers. Meaningful relationships are required between schools, universities and teachers. When the teaching and learning approaches advocated in the program are modelled by the teachers in their own practice, it enhances teacher's learning about teaching. And thus, teachers modify their strategies in different contexts.

With this, learning environment plays a significant role in determining students' academic achievement and learning. In order to make teaching and learning more effective, teachers and course managers are required to take initiatives toward observing principles of instructional designs, to create an appropriate educational environment, and to reduce deficits in order to provide a better learning environment with more

facilities and supportive systems for the students.

According to Kember & Kwan (2000), there are two types of teaching approaches. The teacher chose one of those methods to teach. These methods are content centred approach and learning centred approach. Different teaching strategies used by them are based on these two teaching approaches. Differences in teaching strategies are based on the way of instruction, focus, assessment, accommodation for student characteristics, source of experience and knowledge. For example, teachers who adopt a content-centred approach believe that teaching is primarily the transmission of knowledge and those who have the learning-centred approach, they consider teaching as “learning facilitation”.

Teachers who are content-centred rarely become learning-centred and vice versa. According to Kember & Kwan teacher's teaching strategies are generally remains stable and doesn't change as easily, just as their conception of good teaching is. Teaching strategies are changed less easily than students change their way of learning.

Teachers, in fact change their teaching approach and adopt alternative one depending upon the demands of the learning environment. For example, teachers often switch to content centred approach because of the large number of students, big teaching classrooms, and heavy teaching loads (Kember & Kwan, 2000).

#### **WHAT MAKES SOME TEACHERS “EXTRAORDINARY”?**

Researchers have not only focussed on good teaching but in parallel research on extraordinary teachers have also taken their own toll. Extraordinary is something very unusual or remarkable. When we say extraordinary teachers, we mean those teachers who produce unique and memorable educational experiences for students. Extraordinary teachers are energetic, enthusiastic, effective, egoless, empathetic, engaging and entertaining as well. They know what to teach, how to teach and how to improve. They have passion for learning, their fields, their students, and teaching (Stephenson, 2001). Yair (2007) in his study, have stated that those who have symmetric and personalized relations with their pupils, thus helping them to decrease their uncertainty, suspicion and disengagement, and providing them with the courage to raise innovative ideas, are regarded as extraordinary teachers by the adult students. Emotional attachment and relationships between teachers and students plays an important role in making key experiences in higher education. The extraordinary teacher not only considered as knowledgeable expert but they are also the memorable figures who are passionate about their subject matter, toward their duties, and most significantly toward their students. These teachers and their teaching strategies are not confined to rules and regulations of the institutions. In fact, they are innovative, creative and always think beyond the books and boundaries created by the institutions. They always look forward for academic freedom for more and more innovations. According to Yair (2007), increasing standardization hamper individuality, freedom to do work and

readymade curricula restricts initiative and creativity of the teachers.

In Times Higher Education Supplement (Nov 16th 2007), Skelton states that individual effort of teachers can lead to teaching excellence. But this idea of individual excellence can only be fruitful if basic material conditions of teaching and learning (e.g., staff-to-student ratios, sufficient time to think seriously about teaching and learning processes) are achieved. It is expected from the individual teacher to play a wider role than only teaching the concerned courses. The teacher should seek to innovate, initiate change, mentor and provide leadership whenever and wherever required. Teachers should adopt a wide range of delivery methods and supporting materials in order to maximise each student's learning. A good teacher will also be aware of students' specific needs and disabilities such as dyslexia, dyspraxia and other hidden disabilities. Finally, one of the characteristics of a good teacher is to seek feedback from students, use this to analyse critically their teaching styles and methodology and actively make improvements on an ongoing basis. The teachers are then required to provide results of such feedback to students. The positive changes should also be communicated not just to students but also to other teachers of the institution. The very best teachers are not only passionate about improving their own techniques but also in improving those of their colleagues through mentoring and similar schemes.

#### **THE RECRUITMENT OF GOOD TEACHERS: A CHALLENGE**

Criteria for recruitments of teachers have been a challenge for the educational institutions. It is beyond the scope of any literature. Criteria for recruitment have always been the same like the desired qualification, their content knowledge, and how long they will remain in the teaching profession to make a difference (Darling Hammond, Berry, Haselkorn and Fideler, 1999). Darling et al., (1999) issue of supply of teachers is not the matter to be concerned about because states can lower the requirement standards to fill the seats. Instead one should be concerned about the quality of teachers. It is a difficult task to find out the effective teachers who are perfect enough to teach in poor and high minority zones. Though their study was about secondary education, a parallel could be drawn to higher education.

However, a list of solutions is provided by Hirsch (2001) in order to improve the quality of teachers recruited to higher education level. One of all the solutions is hike in salary. But there is no proof regarding this that increasing salary of teachers can be a better solution that it will improve the quality of teachers. Some of the scholars don't agree with this. For example, in a study it was found that teacher mobility is nothing to do with the increase in salary because it is mostly affected by the characteristics of students (income of their parents, race, and achievement). Salaries of teachers have only a modest impact on the mobility of teachers and on the performance of the students. A significant relationship was found between salaries and the performance of students for experienced teachers, but not for new comers (Hanushek, Kain, Rivkin, 1999).

Apart from this, Hirsch has discussed about other solutions like collecting and analyzing teacher supply and demand data; strengthening early outreach; supporting effective alternative certification programs; integrating recruitment initiatives into comprehensive strategies to better address teacher quality; streamlining the hiring process; and evaluating and modifying recruitment policies based on effective practices (Hirsch, 2001).

#### **QUALITY TEACHING AND RESEARCH**

Defining the distinctive nature of the university According to Hazellkorn (2008), as international competition on innovation and international ranking are mostly based on scientific process carried out by the educational institutions and universities, research-intensive institutions and universities are highly challenged by the globalisation of research. Research is placed at the very top of the activities. While high level lecturers and professors have been hired for providing a wide range of scholarship activities and lab research opportunities, teaching process have been neglected considerably by the institutions and the universities. The universities argue that these scholarship activities and lab research opportunities have been provided to the students to create and transfer knowledge, which ultimately enhance the reputation of universities. Although these are one side of the academic coin, other side of the coin i.e. teaching is scarcely an issue and remains on the margin the academic thought.

The distinctive nature of the university as an institution can be defined fundamentally by the relationship between teaching and research as both are essential in the delivery of higher education (Taylor 2007).

Boyer (1990) has defined the scholarship of teaching differently from the scholarship of research. He pointed out that there four different categories of scholarships. They are: the scholarship of discovery (original research that creates and advances knowledge); the scholarship of integration (synthesis of information across disciplines, across topics within a discipline, or across time); the scholarship of application (faculty member involves themselves in the rigor and application of disciplinary expertise within or outside the university which goes beyond their service duties with results that can be shared with and/or evaluated by peers); and the scholarship of teaching and learning (systematic study of teaching and learning processes in the classrooms). Whereas scholarly teaching requires a format or structure that allow public sharing and the opportunity for application and evaluation by others.

The issue of relationships lying between teaching and research has become the most controversial issue among scholars writing Quality teaching. It happened ever since Boyer (1990) defined the scholarship of teaching as distinct from the scholarship of research. Some scholars states that there exist a strong symbiotic relationship between teaching and research, as both cannot be separated from each other. According to Benowski (1991), teaching should not be separated from research as both influences

each other directly or indirectly. Extraordinary teachers are found to be passionate about their subject (Stephenson, 2001; & Yair, 2007). Research could have helped professors to become better teachers. There is a strong relationship between teaching and research at the graduate level. In fact many professors emphasize on bringing research at undergraduate level. Some researchers also found that teaching helps professors to become better researchers in the long run.

For Benowski (1991), teaching should not be separated from research. Indeed, “professors teach best what they know best” (Benowski, 1991). Stephenson (2001) found that one of the characteristics of extraordinary teachers is that they have passion for their field. Yair (2007) also noticed that memories of extraordinary professors often described how these teachers were passionate about their subject matter. This passion may arise through research. Therefore research could help professors to be better teachers. Although the link between teaching and research is generally seen as stronger at the graduate level, many professors also insist on the value of bringing research to undergraduates. Interestingly enough, it is also possible that teaching can help professors to become better researchers.

**“GOOD RESEARCHERS ARE GOOD TEACHERS”: ONE OF THE MYTHS OF HIGHER EDUCATION?**

It is an assumption common in most of the universities that quality in teaching comes from quality of research and this assumption was proved wrong by Gibbs (1995). Gibbs gave evidences that quality teaching is receiving very less attention as compared to research. “The notion that teaching excellence flows directly from research excellence is absurd: they are in direct conflict, compete for academics attention and only one of them is rewarded” (Gibbs, 1995). According to Bauer & Henkel (1997), there are four reasons to say that teaching in practice or in theory is not a ground for promotion. It is difficult to evaluate a good teaching and moreover it is difficult to give a appropriate definition of good teaching than to establish a definition for good research. It is difficult for the good teachers to receive recognition for their efforts because it is uneven to establish and collect evidences or proofs of good teaching. There exist very few incentives for staffs to contribute their time and energy to improve the quality of teaching. Teaching is often considered as a duty or chore (Elton & Pattington, 1991) due to institutional rhetoric.

Gibbs emphasized on giving same quality enhancement processes already used for research to teaching, such as peer review, rewards for excellence, cooperative work, incentives to read and discuss the literature. He stated that it is the intellectual rigour and scholarship which shows and enhance the link between quality in research and quality in teaching involved in their enhancement processes.

Gibbs conclusions were supported by various other research scholars that there is no systematic relationship between teaching and research (Braxton, 1996; Patrick & Stanley, 1998) and no institution was found that has both a very strong research

orientation and a very strong student orientation (Astin & Chang, 1995). Therefore, the question of relationship between research and teaching remains the same which is open and controversial.

**Adopting a learning-centred approach**

According to the theory of constructivism, nowadays it is essential for the institutions to adopt learner centred approach in the process of teaching and learning. Gone are those days when students were used to be passive learners and professors were playing the roles of oppressors whose only job was to fill the empty brains of the students with their knowledge and control their thinking and action. It is already proved that student is an active learner and they have already stepped out of 'tabula rasa'. Tabula rasa was the concept given by Rousseau which is same as the banking concept given by Paulo Friere. According to thinkers like John Dewey, Rousseau and Paulo Friere, students are required to develop a critical consciousness through education. So, the main goal of education is not just transmitting mere facts, but to break the culture of silence and to bring change in the society through new discoveries and innovations.

As universities and educational institutions are adopting learner centred approach in their teaching learning process, learning communities are now taking their own toll in the education set ups. Learning communities is a group of people who share common academic goals and attitudes and discuss on various topics relating to the context. They engage in intellectual conversations and interactions for the purpose of learning in higher education (Cross, 1998).

Our notion about knowledge is changing and thus, the teaching learning process. The theory of constructivism state that knowledge is built by learners as they shape and build mental frameworks to make sense of their environment. Learning communities are involving themselves in collaborative learning through discussions, activities and experiments which makes teaching and learning process more interesting and meaningful (Cross, 1998).

According to Cross (1998), the students consider themselves as more satisfied learners and have better educational experiences than others who engage with professors and have more frequent contacts with faculty members in and out of the classrooms. They are less likely to drop out from the colleges and perceive themselves to have learned more than others who have less contact with the faculty members. Apart from this, being in learning communities, students learn various skills for their professional life and in order to become good citizens like teamwork, organization and management of work, multitasking, group dynamics, social and professional relationships and skills of communication.

Other researchers have also put emphasis on learning communities because they believe that learning communities can help students to have higher academic achievement, better retention rates, greater satisfaction with college life, improved quality of thinking,

and communicating, building an outgoing personality, a better understanding of self and other, and a greater ability to bridge the gap between the academic and social worlds (Lenning & Ebbers, 1999).

Not only students but also benefits also exist for the faculty members of being in learning communities like diminished isolation, a shared purpose and cooperation among faculty colleagues, increased curricular integration, a fresh approach to one's discipline and increased satisfaction with their students' learning (Lenning and Ebbers, 1999). In fact in order to test out new curricular approaches and strategies for strengthening teaching and learning processes, these learning communities can proved to be beneficial for the institutions (Washington Centre for Improving the Quality of Undergraduate Education, 2008).

Learning communities can be categorized into primary membership and primary form of interaction on the basis of two criteria. First, "primary membership" are formed on the basis of the characteristics of the group members like: some learning organizations are faculty learning communities, other student learning communities, etc. Second, "primary form of interaction" is formed between the groups on the basis of the method of interaction like: in person physical contact, non-direct interaction, correspondence, virtual interaction etc. (Lenning & Ebbers, 1999). On the basis of these two criteria, there are four basic types of student learning communities: curricular learning communities, classroom learning communities, residential learning communities, and student learning communities (Lenning & Ebbers, 1999).

It is the responsibility of faculty members to make sure that discussion, activities etc. in learning communities are student-centred and focused on a common goal in order to make learning communities effective (Lenning and Ebbers, 1999). According to Lenning & Ebbers (1999), activities should be scheduled outside the classrooms and the existence of these learning communities should be publicized by the institutions through attractive brochures, through the members of the communities themselves or through the internet.

#### **THE FUTURE OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND QUALITY TEACHING**

Globalisation is a means organizations develop international influence or start operating on an international scale. It is the internationalization of education which is integrating an international or intercultural dimension into the teaching, research and exercise function of the institution. The quality of teaching and learning could be improved because internalisation because internationalisation encourages acceptance of various culture and integrates this in the teaching and learning process. Many consequences of globalisation have been foreseen on higher education worldwide. International mobility; global comparison, benchmarking and ranking; and the internationalisation of institutions and system; are key policy themes of various educational institutions in many countries (OECD, 2007). Therefore, all higher educational institutions should be

prepared to changes. Global exchange is transformative and all policies and institutional habits are ready for reconsideration in the light of global challenge (OECD, 2007). All the institutions may have to think over who is being educated, by whom is the learner to be taught, what is to be taught, how are the learning experience to be provided, when and where are the learning experiences to be provided. This whole concept can improve the quality of teaching within globalisation.

Four possible scenarios for the future of higher education have been developed by OECD (2006). Two central variables were taken into consideration while constructing these scenarios. They were the extent of globalization and the amount of influence of state government. For example, the scenarios may help in the division between teaching and research universities or the increase of technology that might have an indirect but comprehensive impact on teaching.

Various reforms in education system may occur worldwide due to global changes and globalisation. The Education Ministers of the OECD zones have conducted a study in Athens in 2006 and identified six areas in which institutions and governments should engage in serious reforms for making higher education better (Giannakou, OECD, 2006). The reforms which were suggested were related to the areas of Funding, More equitable education, Research and innovation, Migration and internationalization. The two other reforms suggested by OECD were related to the quality of teaching. First one was to develop a clever focus on what students learn in universities and the second one was to promote reforms that would increase incentives to make institutions more accountable for quality and outcomes.

#### **WHAT ARE THE RECURRENT EXPERIENCES? WHAT ARE THE MOTIVATIONS AND METHODS USED TO SUPPORT QUALITY TEACHING?**

##### **DIVERSITY OF QUALITY ENHANCEMENT PROCESSES**

Quality teaching initiatives are different both in nature and in function. Some universities take initiatives from a top-down method, others start from a grass root level, some take initiatives by concerning on pedagogical methods, some take initiatives by improving quality of environments in Higher Education institutions; some give emphasis on the quality of teachers, and some on the whole university. Some researchers give more importance to team work and others give more importance to the improvement of the learning environment for quality enhancement.

There are various views of people and organizations regarding Quality Teaching. The roles played by them are related to each other i.e. from individual willingness to the formalized strategies used by the institutions. Not only is this but external incentive provided by the Governments or incentives from external factors like worldwide competition also interrelated. State believes that the initiatives taken in higher education by them can enhance innovations in teaching profession which can thus boost the job

market and the economy as well. Teachers most of the times, define perception for their students, set learning goals and objectives for their classes, and also modify their teaching strategies into theoretical framework of quality enhancement.

Initiatives taken for the enhancement of quality teaching differ from one university to another university. These universities operate in a specific regional or national context. Initiatives taken by a remote vocational teaching intensive university might be different from the initiatives taken by a world renowned research intensive one.

#### **SOME CONTROVERSIAL ATTEMPTS BY GOVERNMENTS TO PROMOTE TEACHING EXCELLENCE**

Quality of the learning experience can be enhanced by the states by improving the quality of the teacher's training. According to Richter (1994), it is required for the teachers to have a few years of probation and training before becoming professors in higher education setting. New teachers are required to rehearse their lectures in front of other professors of the universities. Another initiative i.e. endowment of prizes for efficient teachers can be taken by the states. These initiatives are currently promoted by Carnegie Foundation for Learning and Teaching, San Francisco. It attributes "teacher of the year" prizes to exceptional professors of American university or college every year.

Some countries like United Kingdom have taken initiatives to improve quality teaching at national level. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the British government had taken steps to look after the future of higher education. Dearing report was commissioned by the UK government which was published in 1997. 93 recommendations were made related to the funding, expansion, and maintenance of academic standards. National Teaching Fellowship Scheme was developed by this report and awarded three year fellowships worth £50 000 to twenty "excellent" higher education teachers per year between 1999 and 2003. But the strategies for quality teaching taken by British government had been criticized by some Quality Teaching specialists (Trowler, Fanghanel, Wareham, 2005).

There are two reasons for which these strategies were criticized were: (1) providing individual rewards to teachers may hamper collaboration and the sharing of best practices among them. (2) only some of the professors were provided with formation programmes by the government, assuming that these teachers would become the teacher leaders and would bring change in their own department. But this is difficult to happen without a complementary set of policies for departmental practices. According to Hannan and Silver (2000), the probability of success of individual innovation is very less because individual innovation takes place in isolation or in hostile environment. They stated in their study that there should be cooperation and trust between the individual innovation and the priorities of the institution or faculty members if individual teachers are to efficiently lead the change.

Some of the guidelines for awards in National Teaching Fellowship Scheme have

changed because of these critiques. Now “Commitment to continuing professional development and evaluation of practice” of the candidates is taken into consideration by the government. Nowadays, collaboration with other teachers or participation in seminars on teaching is considered important. Apart from this, British institutions remain autonomous in carrying out various incentives for quality teaching and learning. In “Programme specification”, institutions are free to choose activities and initiatives related to teaching, learning, assessment strategies and collect information regarding the factors which makes these programmes distinctive. Besides this, institutions are free to collect information regarding assessment regulation, student support, methods for evaluating and improving the quality and standards of learning.

#### **INTERNATIONAL DYNAMICS BOOST INTEREST IN SUPPORTING QUALITY TEACHING**

Various guidelines and frameworks have been made for enhancing quality teaching by governmental and international organisations at national level. International guidelines framed by OECD-UNESCO for Quality Provision in Cross-border Higher Education, The European Standards and INQAAHE have brought changes in the quality and accountability of all kinds of higher educational institutions on the march to autonomy.

These guidelines don't interfere in the field of programme design, programme delivery and teaching related affairs of the institutions and give emphasis to national sovereignty over higher education (OECD-UNESCO Guidelines for Quality Provision in Cross-border Higher Education). All of them have advised the institutions to take proper steps regarding the development of quality of faculties and the quality of their working conditions that boost independent and critical inquiry. Institutions are also advised to take all the relevant tools and facilities into consideration to provide good working conditions and terms of service, collegial governance and academic freedom to the teachers working under them (UNESCO Recommendation concerning the Status of Higher Education Teaching Personnel). Teachers and staff should be provided with the trust and confidence of the institution. Institutions have the sole responsibility to encourage teachers to innovate and come up with new ideas and support them in evolving as teacher leaders wherever needed (The European Standards and Guidelines for Quality at the level of the Bologna Process).

Internationalisation of education, mobility of teachers and students, new ways of education delivery such as distance learning etc. will call for strengthened quality assurance considerations. These will drive strict attention of the institutions and governments towards the relevance of the programmes offered.

#### **TEAM WORK, GOAL SETTINGS AND A FIVE STEP GUIDE TO CARRY OUT A SUCCESSFUL QUALITY TEACHING INITIATIVE**

Team work and goal settings are the potential indicators of making teaching successful and fruitful. Team work means a joint action by a group of teachers, in which each

teacher subordinates his or her individual interests and opinions to the unity and efficiency of the group to make teaching effective. A most effective teamwork is developed when all the teachers harmonize their contributions and works towards a common goal. A sense of ownership is felt by the members of the group towards their role in the group because they committed themselves to goals they helped create. They collaborate together and use their skills and experience to contribute to the success of the team's objectives and goals. In this team work and collaboration, all the members are given equal chance to express their opinions, varying views and questions. Their success is based on the trust they have for each other in the group. All of them make a conscious effort to be honest, respectful, and listen to every person's point of view.

A dynamic framework was made by Koch, Holland, Price, Gonzalez, Lieske, Butler, Wilson, and Holly (2002) in order to carry out a successful Quality Teaching initiative. First is identification of problem where the professor reflects on the weaknesses of his/her own teaching. Second is the professor gathers information through reading literatures, attending workshops, and working with mentors or student associates. Third is the professor must choose a specific project to work on in order to evaluate his/her own potential. Fourth is the professor must develop and implement strategies to meet his/her goal and fifth is the professor must evaluate project both qualitatively and quantitatively.

#### **WHAT ARE THE MAJOR DRIVERS THAT SUPPORT QUALITY TEACHING AND THE FACTORS THAT IMPEDE QUALITY TEACHING?**

##### **LEADERSHIP, THE KEY TO FOSTER CHANGE**

According to some researchers, leadership is required to carry out improvement in any given organisation (Zairi 1994, Taffinder 1995). Nowadays focus has been increased on professional development and leadership qualities of teachers as the achievement of students is related to the qualities of teachers (Penuel, Fishman, Yamaguchi, & Gallagher, 2007). Various keys have been found out by the researchers to increase the skills and knowledge of teachers in order to have a positive effect on student's achievement (Desimone, 2011; Penuel et al., 2007). In this case, adopting a deliberate approach to modify the strategic direction of the institution leads to effective leadership” (Osseo-Asare, Longbottom and Murphy, 2005). For instance, There is the need for autonomy, the need of competence and the need for relatedness so that university teachers may evolve as leaders who can actively involved in decide about the effective teaching learning process. It may help them in utilizing full potential of academic and non-academic staff at all levels of the institution (Osseo-Asare, Longbottom and Murphy, 2005).

Evan conceptualized professionalism as an ideologically, attitudinally, intellectually, epistemologically based stance which leads to development of leadership qualities in any profession. Self determination theory states that modification in behaviour is not possible unless one's attitudes and ways of thinking are changed. Trial and error theory

helps teacher to adopt different methods and create different types of learning environment for children in order to make the learning more interesting and meaningful. Teachers quality can only be enhanced by the process of reflection (see, for example, the work of John Dewey, David Kolb and Donald Schön).

### **HOW DEPARTMENTS SHOULD COMMUNICATE ABOUT QUALITY TEACHING**

Top bottom process is needed for teaching enhancement processes to be well-accepted by the professors. Internal communication between the various levels of the organization is of great necessity. According to Van der Wiele (1995), there are the instruments of the Total Quality Management framework which are essential to an educational institute:

(1) Professors should be provided with freedom by the administrators of the universities. (2) They should be clear that they are safe to express their ideas and take professional risks. (3) Administrators must come forward to help professors acquire the skills needed to grasp the opportunities of leadership. (4) Trust and cooperation between academic and non academic staffs and the administrators should be maintained. Faith and confidence of professors should be there on the administrators and other professors that they will not criticize them for expressing ideas that might seem unusual at the first instance. (5) Communication is to be given utmost importance. Vertical communication (top down or bottom up), horizontal communication (between organizational units) and communication with the external environment should be emphasized.

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