

## EMERGING TRENDS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

**Dr. GURURAJ KARAJAGI,  
Chairman, Academy for Creative Teaching,  
R.T.Nagar, Bangalore – 560 032.**

Many incidents keep happening everyday which touch our lives. But each incident does not indicate a trend. ***A trend is something that is happening now with sufficient frequency indicating a movement.*** A public sector company showing profit only in one year is exceptional but not a trend. A few students deciding not to watch T V is not a trend, but the fact that majority of them watch T V for long hours is a trend. People are realising the importance of education and are keen that their children should get education, even when, they are illiterate, is a trend.

Students' inclination towards professional and vocational courses, their keenness to take up assignments in commercial sectors than service sectors is also a trend. People now are quality conscious and do not mind paying more for a quality service than tolerate cheap but mediocre service. Students consider teachers as information sources and not as hallowed 'GURU to be respected. Money earning has taken precedence over respecting ethics and moral values. These are trends.

The above mentioned phenomena are all occurring at such regular periodicity that they strike you as a movement. That is why they are noted as trends and not as stray incidents. It is interesting to observe that trends are always bottoms up i.e. they always start at the

people's level and not at the top. For example, fashions, consumer awareness etc. These are not decided and planned by a few top level policy makers but are practiced by large number of ordinary people.

Education cannot be seen in isolation. Whatever affects society affects education as well. Some of the trends which are seen strikingly by all of us and alter education scenario are as follows.

**1. Inclusivity:** In its broadest and all encompassing meaning, inclusive education, as an approach, seeks to address the learning needs of all youth and adults with a specific focus on those who are vulnerable to marginalization and exclusion. It implies all learners, young people - with or without disabilities being able to learn together through access to common provisions, schools and community educational setting with an appropriate network of support services. This is possible only in a flexible education system that assimilates the needs of a diverse range of learners and adapts itself to meet these needs. It aims at all stakeholders in the system (learners, parents, community, teachers, administrators and policy makers) to be comfortable with diversity and see it as a challenge rather than a problem.

Research has shown that Inclusive education results in improved social development and academic outcomes for all learners. It leads to the development of social skills and better social interactions because learners are exposed to real environment in which they have to interact with other learners each one having unique characteristics, interests and abilities. The non-disabled peers adopt positive attitudes and actions towards learners with disabilities as a result of studying together in an inclusive classroom. Thus, inclusive education

lays the foundation to an inclusive society accepting, respecting and celebrating diversity.

As the country moves towards the universalisation of higher education, the needs of young persons with disability will have to be included as part of the programme as it evolves. Current activities will aim towards ensuring resource and other support within the education system in order for those wishing to access secondary education. Counseling and resource support will also have to be extended for those wishing to pursue vocational education at this level.

At the higher and technical education level, universities and colleges will be monitored to ensure compliance with the 3% reservations as recommended by the government. Setting up of disability cells, departments of disability studies will have to be taken up. The Department of collegiate Education will be the nodal agency overseeing the activities.

**2. Globalisation :** It can also be called as Internationalism. The whole world is shrinking into a global village. Thus, no system can stay in isolation. There has to be inter- dependence and nobody can boast of exclusive knowledge. Now people are willing to go to any part of the world to get new knowledge. The nationalism in the narrow sense is becoming meaningless. The information, skill, technology, resources- both natural and human are developed and harnessed better by sharing than by making them exclusive possession.

**3. Privatisation:** With the falling of socialistic pattern for various reasons and due to the pathetic performances of our public sectors, privatisation is being looked up as a panacea for all the evils. Private

organisations are considered to be more cost effective, more transparent and highly efficient as compared to their government counterparts.

It is a trend in belief that whatever the government does is mediocre. The government schools and colleges are generally considered inferior to private educational institutions. So far in the country, it is the private initiative that has met the requirements of the society in the area of higher education. Nearly 90% of the higher education is in the private sector. The successive Governments are now realising that large sums of money are being diverted to higher education while they are not able to meet the declared objective of providing free and good compulsory primary education. Thus, in future, higher education would not get a priority in budget allocations. Naturally, the higher education will have to survive and grow on private initiative. The Governments and the Universities will be content in giving recognition and a few guidelines for monitoring these institutions. In order to survive and attract better talents, the institutions will have to spend huge amounts on infrastructure and human resource. The privatisation would induce commercialisation to a certain extent and make higher education an expensive one. The ultimate beneficiary of the system, i.e., the student will have to bear this burden. The private institutions shall be free to design their curriculum, and can choose the faculty only on merit. Even when, the private education becomes very expensive, it will be preferred by the people because of the built in accountability.

**4. Technology as a way of life:** The progress of human beings has trodden an irreversible path. We have accepted the boons of technology as a matter of fact and the life is deemed to be

meaningless without these benefits. For example, transport, power systems, water supply, Audio visual equipments, Home comfort systems etc.,

We are so much used to the technology as a way of life that the new innovations are accepted as a logical consequence but not as a matter of thrill. This technology has made us more powerful than emperor Ashoka or Akbar. A few attendants had to run with torches in their hand to light up the Durbars of their emperors but the press of a bottom is enough to illuminate our houses now. This galloping technology would change the face of higher education. The students can have access to the best curricula and instruction methods available in the excellent Universities outside the country through internet. They can interact with the best brains in the world, sitting in their drawing rooms. The teaching methodology in the institutions will have to take cognizance of these changes and will have to adopt them to remain relevant.

**5. Education as an instrument of social change:** It is a trend that people are beginning to believe that education is a passport for prosperous life. People are also beginning to believe that things can be productive only in the hands of productive people. Hence, there is a greater stress on specialisation and greater emphasis on training and self development. Education is no more the noble pursuit of knowledge. It has become a vital investment that would bring material rewards later. That is why some of the courses with only knowledge as the objective are becoming redundant and those with emphasis on skills and vocation are becoming popular.

**6. Search for reorganisation:** Another important trend of this

decade is that there is lot of restructuring of old beliefs, old structures, and old institutions. All are being shuffled and altered to suit changing situations. The governments, universities, colleges, homes have all been restructuring themselves. In the absence of titans, visionaries and diplomats, we have only small time, not so broad minded, politicians necessitating regional parties and as a result coalition is accepted as a norm. Industries and universities are shaking hands to bring up an interface. Restructured courses are offered by the colleges in an effort to be relevant. Joint families are breaking up into unitary families. Villages are getting urbanised and there is an exodus from the villages to the cities. Colleges and Universities are introducing restructured courses. Like industries, the educational institutions are also entering in to collaborations with institutions in the other parts of the world.

**7. Quality:** People are getting quality oriented. With technology supporting and information base widening, quality has become the key word. Quality, like beauty, love and compassion is a value which cannot be defined but you identify it when you see it. Need for quality demands setting of standards to establish excellence. For each material and each concept, standards are being set and they become the guiding principle. For example a Colour T.V. should have at least 100 channels, an audio system should be digital and it should work on a compact disc(CD). Computer should minimum be a pentium and photographs should be coloured only etc., Quality will be an essential requirement of higher education.

Each institution will be competing with the other on the basis of the quality of infrastructure, faculty and the courses offered. As the industries are getting their standards established through certifications

such as ISO 9001, ISO 9002 etc., the institutions will have to get accredited by autonomous and international bodies to establish their credibility. Quality will not be a matter of luxury but an essential requirement for the survival of the institutions imparting higher education.

**8. Values:** - Ethics and moral values are becoming subordinate to personal gains. When money making becomes a prime motivator, values are a casualty. Money is tempting but values are haunting. Corrupt parents expect the colleges to teach values to their children. Corrupt teachers drown themselves under an illusion that they are imparting values to students. But students are realising that they have not much to learn about values either from parents or teachers. This is because, the Values are not taught, informed or preached. They are demonstrated. The older generation is not a position to set models before youngsters, worthy of emulation. The youngsters are clearly seeing the yawning gap between the thought and action in elders. That is a tragedy. The question now is, how much colleges can do and how much the family can do in this area.

However much we resist, the 21<sup>st</sup> century is knocking at the doors. The happenings of the 20<sup>th</sup> century have shocked us enough and have prepared our mind for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

In the background of the trends discussed so far, a few things are very likely to happen in higher education, whether we appreciate it or not.

- Education is going to be student centered which is inevitable. At present, it is only system oriented and student is never the focus

of attention. Education would be need based. Instead of fitting the students into the frame of prepared curriculum, we have to design the frame of curriculum that suits students' needs. In this context the concept of community college can be a pointer.

- Education has to be inclusive. It would not remain a prerogative of a select few. The buildings, curriculum and the teaching processes will have keep in mind the needs of students who have remained out of the purview of general higher education.
- Education is going to be self financing and expensive. Education shall be treated as service and the customer has to pay for the services.
- Education is going to be utilitarian. Unimaginative and irrelevant courses shall die a natural death.
- Education is going to be highly specialised.
- Multiple information centers get established. The teacher's role as only source of information would be corroded. Students will have access to different sources such as T.V., Computer training centers, tutorials, internet, etc.,
- The umbrella of grant-in-aid will vanish. Governments will not be enthusiastic in financing higher education and the subsidy granted so far will be taken out.
- The rigid boundaries between conventional courses would disappear.

- Teachers have got to be accountable. The life time guarantee of jobs as it exists now will go.
- The private universities will become functional due to private initiative. They will pick up the best and brightest teachers at a higher premium. Only the mediocre will be left behind to live a slow and inevitable decay. Nobody shall drop tears for them. Teachers will have to update themselves continuously.

This is the writing on the wall. If we, the teachers, the administrators, Managements and the Government do not wake up and become responsive to students' needs, we shall become a burden to society, ineffective and totally irrelevant.

Let us be wise enough to notice the emerging trends and prepare ourselves to face them.

\*\*\*\*\*