

IQAC Initiative on Improving the Quality of Higher Education

In response to a educationists, stakeholders being invited to give their suggestions on the draft law, the Higher Education Commission of India (Repeal of University Grants Commission Act) Act,2018,the IQAC initiated a process of organizing a discussion on what we ,the faculty at RADAV college had to say about the state of Higher Education and issues relevant when drafting a new law. Given below is our response sent to the MHRD on 7th July, 2018.

The feedback sent was as follows:

Stakeholders have been given 10 days' time to respond to the proposed bill on Higher Education. A bill which has such a major impact on Education would be better off with much more of thought, debate and discussion. Why this haste in passing the law? There are so many critical issues being raised regarding this bill.

Academics who are well qualified with years of experience in the teaching learning process are the persons best placed to decide on question of credibility of institutes of higher education, the courses they conduct, the teaching methodologies and the learning outcomes. Once academics with credibility monitor and scrutinize and thereafter rank institutions, funds must be given based on this ranking and rating and result. If the MHRD does not accept the reports given by academics, it amounts to political interference in the functioning of Educational Institutions. We oppose any such control by politicians in the functioning of educational institutions once they are established and have competent and well qualified faculty. The release of funds depends on an outcome of an academic exercise. After release of funds, the monitoring of the use of funds is also based on an academic exercise.

There lies a problem in this highly centralized and uniform approach the government is proposing. India being a country of diversity, it all the more calls for decentralization and delegation of powers to states as well as a democratic and participative approach. This top down approach with all the powers concentrated in the hands of one centralized structure is not suitable. There should be region wise bodies set up to monitor the functioning of institutes of higher education. The lacunae in the existing system need to be worked on and solutions found rather than scrapping the UGC.

Coming to the issue of Learning Outcomes. First of all in India, very few students are able to pursue programmes of their choice due to various reasons such as lack of resources, lack of opportunity or simply that there is no program made available in their area of interest in the country. As a result a student ends up taking a course more out of compulsion or default rather than interest. Learning outcomes cannot be measured using a standard yardstick in light of the above. It is but natural that when a student is forced so to say to take up a programme for lack of an alternative, he or she would not fare as well as a student who is happy to choose a programme. After years and years of being in this field of teaching, we find that there are so many students who are good at cultural activities, excel in sports and yet end up being evaluated on certain fixed subjects they are not interested in. Can we not think of solutions to these problems rather than a one size fits all approach? The approach seems to be that of standardization of institutions throughout the country. Whereas there is no standardization with regard to what we eat, what we wear and the conditions in which we live and further, the income our parents earn and the school level learning opportunities.

There is a shortage of teachers in many institutions Teachers are forced to do non-academic work such as election duty. Very often teachers do not receive a decent salary. Appointment of teachers is not being done as required. Students are bound to suffer in such a scenario. The student teacher ratio needs to be much lower if we aspire to improve the quality of education. With the dismal learning outcomes at the school level, students who are promoted without merit and reach college level suffer a setback and not able to reap the benefits of higher education. They are barely able to cope.

There is no mention of inclusion and access in the present bill.

All sections of society need to find representation in the 12 member committee which is proposed in the draft bill, specially the poor and the marginalized.

Responses from faculty compiled by the IQAC Coordinator.

Janine Almeida
Associate Professor