

# **Do we need more traditional Universities or more modern I.T.I s ?**

**(I.T.I : Industrial Training Institute)**

**By Hemanta Kr. Sarmah  
Professor, Dept. of Mathematics  
Gauhati University**

Einstein once said *"Everybody is a genius. But if you judge a fish by its ability to climb a tree, it will live its whole life believing that it is a stupid"*.

We also strongly believe that each one of us was endowed with some inborn 'special quality'. In our later life, It depends on our 'home' and 'social' environment, our own sincerity, hard work, exposure to different situations etc. whether we could unfold those 'special qualities' for the benefit of ourselves in particular, and the society and the country in general.

For students in our state and the country at large, we generally declare those as 'brilliant' who secure good marks in some examinations where 'memory power' plays a bigger role than 'creativity'. Of course exceptions are there. Ramanujan, whose mathematical genius is still keeping the mathematical world spell bound, on whose unexplained formulae research is still going on in many internationally prominent institutions, failed in our system of examinations. Had Professor Hardy, the great British Mathematician not been there, probably nobody could have ever heard about Ramanujan, who for sometime worked as a lower division clerk in an accounts office at Madras. One can find many such examples.

If someone takes statistics from SEBA, we are almost sure that most of the students who failed in HSLC examination, failed either in Mathematics or in English. Our society label them as 'poor' students and in the process they get socially ridiculed. It leads those students to low self-esteem, frustration and ultimately they fall prey to negative forces and become 'socially disturbing elements' and even 'terrorists'. Though these students failed in Mathematics or English, it is almost sure, they had some other gifted qualities (maybe some types of craftsmanship or artistic qualities) to offer for the benefit of our society. Our education system have no provision to spot out those differently gifted students who could be used for the future welfare of the society and as a result not only we are wasting our 'human resources' but at the same time indirectly contributing towards the process of creating some 'anti socials' and 'anti nationals'. The need of the hour is to think about these so called 'poor students' who, we think will form the majority of the student community. One should not forget that though Bill Gates was a 'school dropout' and Steve Jobs was a 'college dropout' in foreign countries, yet they made seminal contributions to technology and humanity in their future life and established themselves as modern day icons throughout the world. In our view, the above mentioned problem is a more serious problem than the often discussed problem of 'brain drain'. Because, to which country the 'drained out brain' has gone should not be of much concern to us; they will definitely contribute positively towards humanity

but the 'stagnant brains' amidst us can destroy our society and humanity by producing 'viruses' and 'germs' in their brains as it happens in case of 'stagnant water bodies'.

Any solution ? In our opinion, the solution lies in opening up more and more Industrial Training Institutes or such types of institutes rather than traditional universities. Though we have some I.T.I s at present, we believe, most of these have become outdated due to long time negligence of our society. Generally accepted norm of our society is that 'intellectually poor' students go to these institutes. We will have to change our social outlook regarding these institutes. If failing in English (a foreign language) makes one 'intellectually poor' then how many 'brilliant' students passing out from English medium schools can write and read their mother tongue correctly will also be an equally important counter question to be reviewed. But we never declare these students to be 'intellectually poor'.

Leaving all these aside, let us look for some solutions to the problem confronting us. We have to open up more I.T.I s or I.T.I like institutes to accommodate these students and rejuvenate old ones by giving top priority in terms of supplying more funds to these institutes for augmentation of their existing infrastructure and for opening up new and modern courses. We must be very careful in designing the syllabus for those courses. Haphazard formation of the syllabi will not solve our problem. Unnecessary theoretical portions should be eliminated and should be replaced by technical and practical portions which have direct applications for the welfare of the society. Probably the syllabi in force in the 'community colleges' of the advanced countries can guide us, but we have to modify those according to our existing resources and prevailing social and cultural situations. People from different industries should be consulted in framing such syllabi because they know what types of 'skills' are required for their industries and can incorporate those for the students of these institutes. If possible Study and Learning Materials (SLM) should be provided in mother tongue because these are meant for those who are supposed to be weak in English.

The PPP (Public Private Partnership) model may be a fruitful one for opening up these I.T.Is or I.T.I type institutes. In Assam, if Oil, ONGC and Tea industry join hands with the Assam Government in developing such institutes, we think, it will be a revolutionary step in this direction. These industries can help the Government right from framing the syllabi to providing experts for training. This will definitely improve the quality of training imparted to the students and will make them skilled ones as per the actual requirement of the industry. The students can be exposed to the actual work situations of these industries time to time during their training. This will give a tremendous boost to the 'confidence level' of these students.

Big Industries probably can also open up such institutes under their 'corporate social responsibility' scheme. It will help these industries to build up a pool of really skilled workers for their own industry in case of future requirements.

According to the information with us, there are several administrative flaws in the existing system under which the I.T.I s are running. The I.T.I s and other vocational training institutes are under an administrative structure where policy matters are governed by DGET (Director General of Employment and Training) but the implementation is done through DTE (Director of Technical Education) of the concerned states. Again, the duty of standard setting and accreditation is at the hand of NCVT (National Council of Vocational Training) and its state counterpart SCVT. This fragmented system of management has lack of coordination among its various wings causing inefficiency in the system and delay in implementation of the policies taken and as a result fail to deliver the desired goal. Necessary remedial measures should be taken by the Government so that the system works more properly and efficiently.

We foresee the following immediate positive impacts if more and more I.T.Is or I.T.I like institutes grow up soon :

1. It is often said 'idle brain is devil's workshop'. These so called 'poor students' will be able to save themselves from the 'devil' within which ultimately can help us in lessening 'socially disturbing factors' and even 'terrorist problem'.
2. It will lessen the 'unemployment' problem.
3. It will narrow down 'economic disparity' in the society.
4. It will give 'financial empowerment' to the people who ultimately will give a positive impetus towards opening up of new trades and businesses.
5. Once we become a 'developed country' by the 'financial growth' of the citizens, our 'higher education and research' will become more fruitful in real sense. Right now, we feel, many of these Institutes of 'higher education and research' are merely imparting 'degrees' thereby producing more and more educated unemployed youths in the society.
6. It will help us in making an atmosphere where people will start talking about 'skills' instead of 'degrees'.

At the end, it is to be mentioned that we are not against 'higher education and research' which is so essential for scientific and technological development of a country. English, Mathematics etc. will be indispensable tools in such a pursuit. But, at the same time these institutes of 'higher education and research' should not grow 'horizontally' and we cannot remain oblivious of those whom our society labeled as 'poor students'. We have to take them with us in the process of 'nation building'. The structure of the pyramids should be in our mind. They are not 'top heavy', but 'bottom heavy' and so those are still standing high and stable on the earth from time immemorial.

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