

the total number of temporary teachers employed at provincial institutions, compared to an increase of 52 percent at federally funded institutions.

CONCLUSION

Provincial institutions in India require urgent policy attention—and more than piecemeal efforts—from both the federal and the provincial governments. In particular, it is unfair to judge their performance according to parameters meant for assessing global research universities. Provincial public institutions must primarily address the needs of the young population in terms of affordable degrees. While India embarks on the journey of developing a few world-class research institutions, it should not ignore the need for quality but affordable teaching in its provincial institutions. ■

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.6017/ihe.2018.95.10692>

Teaching in Indian Higher Education: Six Principles for Improvement

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Effective teaching in higher education plays an important role in promoting the development of learners, societies, and countries. Surprisingly, until recently there had been no large-scale empirical study in India on how to improve teaching in higher education institutions (HEIs). For the first time, the Centre for Policy Research in Higher Education (CPRHE) has completed a major study, titled “Teaching and Learning in Indian Higher Education,” which collected empirical data from both undergraduate and master’s level programs and across major disciplines. The study shows that there are considerable differences between teaching at the undergraduate and at the master’s levels, with an acute disconnect between teachers, students, and administration. This indicates why instruction in India’s higher education sector is largely ineffective in promoting learning. Our analysis proposes six key principles to improve teaching in Indian HEIs.

TEACHING AT THE UNDERGRADUATE AND MASTER’S LEVELS

As a common practice, instructors of Indian HEIs rush to complete their syllabi and tend to use suggestive teaching (focusing on end-term examinations), while analytical teaching takes a back seat. In the majority of undergraduate courses, teaching is therefore noninteractive, unidirectional, and monotonous. Digital information and communication technologies (ICTs) such as computers and projectors have merely replaced traditional blackboards and are rarely used beyond providing textual information. Regional languages are mostly used during lectures for the ease of understanding, although most study materials are available in English.

Another step toward inclusivity is feedback from students.

At the master’s level, teaching takes place through a combination of information-oriented and interactive lecturing. Teachers often encourage discussions in the classroom and are more willing to incorporate and integrate students’ prior knowledge. Although many continue teaching in traditional ways, some teachers modify their style according to the students’ requirements. Unlike in undergraduate classes, English is used as the main medium of instruction, alongside regional languages. However, the use of ICTs remains largely similar to the undergraduate level.

THE DISCONNECT

Interestingly, teachers who teach both undergraduate and master’s level courses change their teaching style from information-oriented, unidirectional teaching for lower degree classes, to a more interactive style at the graduate level. Students of both levels, however, want interactive teaching. To be precise, they all prefer knowledgeable, interactive, motivating, friendly, and open-minded teachers—the top-five preferred characteristics of an effective teacher by students across case-study HEIs.

Institutional administrators place blame on teacher shortages and large-size classes (with sometimes 150 or more students in a single classroom) as two major reasons for ineffective teaching. Instructors, on the other hand, blame the cumbersome syllabi, excessive administrative workload, and lack of student English language proficiency. These factors often force them to rush and practice prescriptive and routine teaching using regional language(s).

THE CORE REASONS

The study in focus here has found that since the late 1960s, HEI management in India has substantially reduced the autonomy of college teachers. Their role has, over time, been reduced to mere employees of large hierarchical organizations. This, along with the lack of rigorous teacher training, results in less effective teaching, especially at the undergraduate level. At the master's level, teachers use different methods, but there is limited follow-up assessment on whether these methods result in effective learning. Students are rarely consulted for detailed feedback and open discussion of challenges. The lack of training in and exposure to modern interactive teaching pedagogies, as well as continued traditional practices, have also resulted in a culture of information-oriented teaching, which has gained passive acceptance. The large-scale recruitment of meagerly paid contractual teachers without proper training has further worsened the situation.

SIX PRINCIPLES FOR IMPROVEMENT

- **Managing information-oriented teaching:** A major challenge for teachers and teacher trainers is to manage information-oriented, theory-based teaching with an instrumental approach. It is important to build strategic plans to redesign teachers' role as mentors, facilitators, and collaborative professionals. Mechanisms and administrative setups at the national and state levels should be (re)developed.
- **Promoting interactive teaching:** Reversing the long-haul culture of unidirectional teaching with interactivity is extremely difficult. This challenge can be addressed by taking small, progressive steps connecting all levels of education. Instructors must upgrade their teaching practices by bringing in more interactive components. Needless to say, teacher training focusing on analytical and dialogic-teaching pedagogies will help.
- **Integrated use of ICTs in regular classroom teaching:** Improving the digital content repository for students and teachers with authentic online resources is necessary to help students prepare for classes in advance. Classroom teaching time can thus be used more effectively for discussion and critical reflection. Online inter- and intrainstitutional forums would be helpful in identifying challenges as well as innovative solutions.
- **Inclusive measures:** In the context of massified higher education, a teacher needs to manage diversified classrooms. Practical solutions such as the combined use of English and regional languages initially help students to understand the lecture; but for sustainable gains, it is imperative to improve their English language proficiency. Establishing language laboratories will prove

beneficial. Special training and support are welcome steps to equip students with diverse levels of competence.

- **Constructive feedback from the students:** Another step toward inclusivity is feedback from students. It will not only help teachers to improve, but also enable them to understand the students' difficulties. While open discussions and anonymous feedback may help identify the challenges students face, cordial meetings between teachers, students, and administration at regular intervals are essential to bridge disconnects. Noticeably, students open up more and provide critical feedback when there is trust.
- **Overall improvement of infrastructure, administrative awareness, and sensitivity:** At some institutions, basic infrastructure requires a complete overhaul; others need to upgrade laboratories, supply commonly used materials, and improve their ICT infrastructure. All need modern language laboratories. Critically, institutional administrations need to understand the crux of the teaching process in order to fully and effectively support it.

CONCLUSION

India needs to improve the quality of its higher education teaching without delay. The above six principles are only relevant if implemented with dedication and robust planning. There is hope, considering recent accelerated initiatives to reform teaching in India: a multilayered and progressive implementation will ensure success and sustenance. ■

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.6017/ihe.2018.95.10694>

Employability of Graduates in India—Hard Realities

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While a number of academics argue for the importance of a humanistic education, those who propagate the importance of a market-responsive, skill-based education