

# Philosophy of Education

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There is a craze for Western type of English medium education even in our schools. This disease is highly prevalent in bigger cities. The Delhi school admission scenario is for all to see. The disadvantages of such elite education are there for all to see. Firstly those students become cocooned in a shell far removed from the millions of their peers who cannot afford such education! They develop a holier than thou attitude towards the other section of society. They truly believe that those who did not go to such elite schools are lesser mortals who are incapable of joining their elite club. Doon schools, St. Stephen's college etc. in India assume that they are the Eton, Cambridge and Oxford of England or the Ivy League institutes of the USA.

Such pig headed individuals demean others who have not been to such institutions little realising that some of the great thinkers of this country had no idea about those institutions. Our political class, a minority though belonging to the Doon Club, think that others cannot reach their level because they cannot talk distorted accented English and be able to belittle others that had a poor upbringing. On the contrary,

those who came up the hard way in life are best suited to rule this country as they have experienced poverty personally to know where it pinches and how to alleviate poverty. Our elite do not know what poverty is and what to do about it, save lecturing on economics of living on five to twenty five rupees per day in India today! With some of our best elitists in charge of governing India, the inflation rate went through the roof making it impossible for the poor to survive. A study in the USA showed how the Ivy League institutes are churning out mediocre students at the tax payers cost. In an article entitled "Close Harvard to save America", an economics professor in Ohio has shown how these elite institutions are being favoured by the tax authorities. Citing an example the Professor shows how five of those institutions in the last one year collected \$ one billion in endowment funds on which they do not pay income tax. Neither do they pay income tax on their huge endowment fund fixed deposit interests while the ordinary citizen pays nearly 25% of his income in taxes from which the government has to fund hundreds of state colleges which educate almost 75% of the country's students. The latter also give

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scholarships to the poorest of the poor to the tune of 75 %.The following paragraph from an economics professor at Ohio University tells it all: *“A student graduating from Yale or Princeton, with their roughly \$2 million endowments per student, has a ticket to a well-paying job, while one graduating from the College of St. Joseph in Vermont, with its \$29,000 endowment per student, does not. Only 12 percent of the Yale and Princeton students have Pells, compared with 71 percent at St. Joseph. (Pells refer to US Federal govt.) Pell Grant is a post-secondary educational Federal grant sponsored by the U.S Department of Education-enacted to help undergraduates of low-income families in receiving financial aid.” The difference between elite and non-elite/ commoner colleges in the USA seems to be stark.”*

Perhaps if somebody does (or has done) a similar comparison in India the difference between elite and non-elite college education would be similar. The people who give large endowments do not do it for nothing. They have an eye on seats for their progeny and friends in the long run. This breeds mediocrity. That is what is happening these days.

The other big blow for good teaching is the undue importance given to research in western universities. There are these ace Professors who live on grant collection, paper production on a mass scale and lecturing and conference attending. They rarely have time to spend with students to teach. Teaching has taken a back seat. Even to get tenure positions in Ivy League institutes, it is the research CV that matters. No university gives importance to cultivate a good teacher who has a flare for teaching and making students feel comfortable. The other side of the coin is that standards of research

have come down so much that a recent study showed that more than 95% of research done in these universities does not take knowledge forward and in many cases, is not even worth the paper on which it is written. Professors have little time left to guide their doctoral students properly and Ph.D. thesis standards are falling.

Adam Smith had noted similar trends in Oxford of his days! With tenure posts of Professors and the latter receiving their salaries from the tax payers’ money, teaching standards had fallen there even at that time. Adam Smith had shown how job security removed the need to work hard to please the students’ curiosity. In the past the Professors had to get their salary from students when the latter were satisfied. If you compare this with the present western fad for big salaries in tenure posts and job security there is no incentive for good teaching at all. To keep up the belief that these great institutions get only excellent students they practice grade enhancement methods. So no student who gets into Harvard gets anything other than “A” grade! Even the grades have become very liberal. In the 1950 the average GPA was 2.5. Today it is in the range of 3.5-3.9 out of 4! It is not that western students have become super intelligent in forty odd years. It is a proof that grade meddling is accepted in those institutions.

Now we come down to our institutions. If that were the scenario in the west one can only shudder to think of the goings on in our institutions including the large private institutions where all these and more should be going on. The same applies to Indian elite institutions. The matters in our burgeoning private universities would make the angels weep.

