**A NEW ERA IN EDUCATION REFORM: PROFESSOR OF PRACTICE**

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***(Need Proper Policy and Guidelines for Appointment and Overall Development of University Education)***

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**INTRODUCTION**

Nelson Mandela has rightly said, “**Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world**.”In a historic move University Grants Commission (UGC) has proposed that PhD will not be compulsory to teach in central universities. UGC has proposed that new posts will be created in the form of Professors of Practice and Associate Professors of Practice to fill the gap between the academics and the industry.

**HISTORIC MOVE**

UGC was created to improve research, examination, coordination and to determine standards of teaching, in India. As a regulatory body, the step taken by UGC should be lauded. According to the Chairman of UGC, Professor M Jagadeesh Kumar, experts from industry can contribute in the improvement of education by becoming directly part of the University System.

As analyzed by the authors, this move can be revolutionary in the coming decades as government is committed towards implementing a **New Education Policy**. *Firstly*, hands on training can be provided to the students. Students can get the direct industrial exposure in the college without choosing the tortuous path of internships, articleship etc. *Secondly*, experts from industry can teach in the university without having PhD will improve teaching culture in the university and fill the gap between education and the industry. Teaching is incomplete without having practical knowledge which can be provided by the experts from industry. Thirdly, in the era of globalization, this is an accepted policy to bring experts from industry in the university system. In UK and USA all leading institutions have adopted this policy to make education system more vibrant and in tune with ground realities. *Fourthly*, if an expert from industry has implemented large projects on the ground experience and has demonstrated experience in a given domain he/she should be given an opportunity to share his/her experience. It is a win-win situation for both the students and the experts from industry. *Fifthly*, industrialists often complain that there is a disconnect between industry and the academics . They have to spend a lot of money on training a new recruit and recruit also complain that he/she has to sign a compulsory bond to serve in that industry for a long period of time. Experts from industry can work as link between industry and the academics. *Sixthly*, practical experience is always better than having superficial knowledge. Many a time what we hear and see is not correct. Many times we make mistakes and then we learn from it. What we are taught in schools and colleges is totally different from the ground realities. We are taught to become an ideal citizen but we can have broad outlook only if we have committed mistakes and learnt from it. All experts go though time tasted provision of hit and trial method and are in a better position to understand the ground realities. Bringing more experts from industry can bring diversity in teaching space and also practical knowledge can be imparted in a robust way.

**CONCERNS AND SUGGESTIONS**

It is a good initiative to bring experts from industry and make our education system diverse and vibrant but there are many roadblocks in the successful implementation of this initiative. The regulatory body must assure that Professors of Practice and Associate Professors of Practice must not be promoted to vice chancellors. If promoted the academic culture of the university might be compromised and it will lead to corporatization of education.

Many universities are occupied by ineligible vice chancellors. There is a proper policy for appointment of vice chancellors but the appointment of vice chancellors is not properly taken care of. It is to be noted that a search committee is constituted to appoint a vice chancellor. Accountability must be fixed on Search Committee if an ineligible vice chancellor is appointed. Similarly, what if an expert has submitted fake experience certificate to become Professor of Practice or Associate Professor of Practice? Who will be responsible for appointment of ineligible Professors of Practice and Associate Professors of Practice?

Appointment of ineligible persons indicates collusion between the appointing authority and the appointees. UGC must come out with detailed guidelines to stop malpractices in the appointment of Professors of Practice and Associate Professors of Practice.

In our country, appointment of Professors of Practice and Associate Professors of Practice is already there in many Indian Institute of Managements (Indore, Udaipur, Raipur) and Indian Institute of Technology (IITs). If we closely analyse the detailed guidelines provided by different IIMs & IITs, one thing is clear that there is a wide variation in the terms and conditions provided by different IIMs & IITs. In the absence of any regulation by UGC even private universities would start following different guidelines and it might promote nepotism in our education sphere and quality of education will be compromised.

It is also not clear at this point of time that the appointments would affect the existing faculty quota or new posts will be created. UGC has explained that a committee would be constituted to look into this matter. It might affect the work culture of the institution. It is widely believed that work culture is the most important part of professional life. If an employee has left the institution because of salary he might return but if the employee has left because of work culture, he will never return.

It is also true that there is a disconnect between academics and the industry but we still provide industry oriented education. Appointment of Professors of Practice and Associate Professors of Practice might dilute the quality of education imparted in the university.UGC while making such appointments must assure that focus must be on character building of students along with job oriented education. It is rightly said that character building is the most important part of the personality. The end of all knowledge must be the building up of the character.

It is also true that there is a symbiotic relationship between the academics and the industry and we should welcome more and more experts from industry but this is a kind of lateral entry. There is a debate going on that lateral entry not only in academics but also in civil services examinations compromises the reservation provisions enshrined in our Constitution. We should remember that India is a welfare State and proper representation must be given to every section of our society.

UGC must also assure that educational space is not occupied by the crony capitalists by becoming Professors of Practice and Associate Professors of practice. It will further dilute the quality of education in our country and ultimately the objective of the New Education Policy will be defeated.

There are some other genuine concerns as well. Firstly, it is very difficult to judge at this point of time that the posts created will be temporary or permanent or part time. UGC must clarify this provision on a timely basis. Experts might be discouraged to join academics in the absence of clear guidelines.

Secondly, UGC has said that a committee will be constituted and detailed guidelines regarding the appointment, remuneration etc will be rolled out in due course. We should wait for the committee’s constitution and its recommendation. Thirdly, the entire plan is in initial stage. In the absence of a concrete plan the outcome based education model mentioned under New Education Policy might be difficult to achieve. Lastly, there is an issue of pay parity. It is difficult to say at this point of time whether experts from industry will join central universities or not. People in corporate sectors are paid more than what an academician earns in the university. UGC must assure that pay parity must be maintained between academicians and the experts from industry.

The UGC has clarified that a centralized portal will be created to hire Professors of Practice and Associate Professors of Practice. This is a welcome move because it will limit the duplication process that other universities have to go through for the appointment of industry professionals, experts as Professors of Practice and Associate Professors of Practice. Father of Nation in one of his speeches has mentioned that, “*By education I mean an all-round drawing out of the best in the child and man-body, mind and spirit*.” Let’s hope the appointment of Professors of Practice and Associate Professors of Practice helps in fulfilling the dream of the Father of the Nation.

1. Indore Institute of Law [↑](#footnote-ref-1)