

EDITORIAL ANALYSIS → 04 JANUARY 2023 → THE HINDU

WHEN DEGREES LOSE THEIR WORTH:

- **Introduction:**

- The Diploma Disease by British economist Ronald Dore offers a structural justification for the behaviour of getting more and more degrees, which is quite widespread. Dore connects the occurrence to the deterioration of credentials rather than emphasising the behavioural aspect as other experts do. Dore observed that the desire to earn more degrees and credentials was rapidly gaining popularity in a number of different countries.
- He selected Sri Lanka, South Korea, and Japan as his three study locations. Dore's sample did not include India, but his observations still hold true there as well, and their applicability there is growing swiftly. In this real educational bazaar, certificates, diplomas, and degrees have a very large market.

- **An educational bazaar for India:**

- Dev Lahiri's book, which describes his experiences as a prominent educator and principal, is titled The Great Indian School Bazaar. Because a variety of credentials have become available since the mid-1990s, the title is still relevant to higher education today. Its growth is self-sustaining since the more credentials are available, the faster the demand for them rises. A recent graduate doing one course would like to enrol in further courses. The ability to be admitted with a dual degree has increased the desire.
- The driving force behind this urge can be found both within and without the educational system. The system internally encourages students to earn more certifications by restricting the course's objectives and content. A response to the mystification of abilities as distinct from knowledge is the specialisation process. The phrase "job ready" describes the allure of programmes that are so intensely focused that earning one degree only serves to motivate students to pursue the next.
- The greater external driving force is the economy. Economic development has not always resulted in more pleasant employment opportunities. In many parts of India, including towns and villages, there

aren't many opportunities for finding suitable employment. The fear of losing one's job fuels the drive to get new eligibility. Candidates often choose the relevant domain of their numerous certifications in order to position themselves as qualified for a post. People are eager to become qualified for as many different sorts of occupations as they can because of how uncertain the job market is.

- **Delinking didn't work:**

- In the 1980s, detaching degrees from employment was seen to be a smart idea to reduce pressure on higher education institutions. The argument goes that separating labour from formal education would discourage young people from pursuing certificates and degrees.
- The idea was reluctantly investigated due to the concern that self-educated job applicants would not have trustworthy qualities. The pressure to enrol in a specific course persisted, though, in any case. Parents were eager to urge their children to stay enrolled rather than waste their time, and students were aware that they couldn't pick and choose.
- Numerous courses were offered by mail, sometimes known as "open" learning. Later, the Internet enabled the self-learning market as well. As a result, self-employment has grown a little bit, but regular employment hasn't lost its appeal. In actuality, the coaching industry has continued to expand with exceptional strength. As a result of competitive tests, a large number of young people are now drawn to what Craig Jeffrey, based on his studies in India, has appropriately dubbed the "politics of waiting."

- **The issue with standards:**

- It has proven to be true that Dore's theory that a drop in the value of degrees is strongly connected with a drop in standards is accurate. When a course does not give you the knowledge you expected, you enrol in a higher level of the same course. When organisations are struggling financially, a downward spiral takes hold that leaves long-term job openings, scales back on support services, and lowers yearly library enrollment.
- Public higher education institutions have consistently lost students over the previous three decades. They are unable to maintain standards while being forced to accept an increasing number of pupils, which is the cause of the widespread exodus to expensive private schools and foreign systems. These possibilities are unavailable to students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. The offers from higher education began to drop just as they began knocking on doors.
- Naturally, there are a number of other reasons why expectations for students' devotion have decreased and teaching standards have fallen. Additionally, some of the apparent behavioural changes in pupils

can be attributed to digital technology. On a well-known open university's weekly consultation programme, I once overheard the following instruction: "Please read the programme handbook carefully. Reading is a healthy pastime for you.

- The fact that a university must stress the value of reading is a blatant indication of the continuous instability of the educational system. Numerous changes made notwithstanding the epidemic's impact on routines' deterioration may not be sufficient to address the fundamental issues and tendencies that Dore had outlined more than 50 years earlier.
- **Conclusion:**
- The change discourse and the reality of our higher education system are very different. The failure to acknowledge the lasting character of older problems is now contributing to systemic enervation. There is little doubt that taking into account the COVID-19 effect as well as the lingering effects of earlier issues will improve the nature and selection of reforms.



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