

**The Growth Delusion.** David Pilling. Bloomsbury Publishing, London, UK. 2018. 352 pages. Price: £8.99.

World over, one of the foremost issues extensively and intensively discussed is economy and development. That is followed by issues such as environment, war and peace, human development, global governance, etc. Development, be it economic, political and social, is widely presupposed to be the meaning of growth; economic growth gets pre-eminence, while all the other aspects of development gets pushed on the back burner. Growth, essentially perpetual quantitative growth, is considered as the keystone of the prevailing notion of quantitative growth by almost all – the economists, policy makers and even lay public. The need to account for the national income, especially during the post World War I, brought in Gross Domestic Product (GDP), i.e. the value of all goods and services minus the wear and tear. GDP was formulated by Simon Kuznets, a Belarusian émigré, way back in 1934 for a US Congress report. Kuznets himself was not pleased with the method of its computation; he had rightly warned that the index cannot be used as a means of measuring welfare. However, GDP became the mainstay, the tapeline for discussion in the due course on development. He also argued that wars do not contribute to the welfare of people and hence should not be part of the growth measure. It is known that many a times, the measure is ironic; even damaging actions add up to the GDP; if one buys a car it adds to the GDP; if he crashes it getting seriously injured, this also adds to the GDP; however, the latter does not reflect welfare or development or growth in the real sense.

GDP is internationally adopted as a tool for sizing up a country's economy after the Bretton Woods Conference in USA in 1944. GDP became one of the main features of discussions whenever the concept of development or the health of an economy came up. Political parties argue for higher development or robust economy; those in power boast that growth during their regime is higher than that during their predecessors, or that growth rate is higher than that of the neighbours. Even if there is a fall in GDP during one regime, they find ways and means to ascribe it to policies of the previous regimes. GDP in due course of time has thus become the only means of growth measurement. The 'economy' has been considered as a black box for most of history and since economy is defined by the size of its GDP, David Pilling (a senior economics journalist associated with the *Financial Times*) has used the terms GDP and economy interchangeably in this book. According to Philipp Lepenies of Free University, Berlin (2016), GDP is the 'world's most powerful statistical indicator of national development and progress', and hence it has been a regular topic of contention during and after most national elections. Nevertheless, it is considered insufficient to reflect the state of an economy with respect to its overall development.

In this universal context of wide-ranging contentions, regarding the current development paradigm anchored on the perpetual growth of economy and on the GDP as a comprehensive index of growth, this book is worth reading. It is deeply engaging, informative, insightful and is a succinct treatise on various issues related to development, primarily focusing on GDP. The book is divided into three sections; the first section addresses problem with growth, the next one on growth in the developing world, and the last is a discourse on the theme beyond growth. Under these distinct sections, issues associated with growth, as a challenging topic, are elaborated under 14 chapters. Typical of a seasoned journalist, Pilling has handled each sub-theme in a comprehensible and lucid manner. The opening chapter of the first part of the book is a clear critique of the culture of growth. Thereafter, each chapter titled in a prodding manner such as 'Kuznets' monster' and 'wages of sin' urges the reader to carry on. While the former talks about Kuznets' role in for-

mulating GDP, the long drawn out efforts to quantify national economies and history of the measure, the latter discusses how British statisticians were attempting to value illegal activities, including prostitution. The subsequent chapters deal with various intricacies, such as invisible works (largely of women – a reflection of patriarchal attitude on assessing economy?), US health industry, anti-welfare changes in banking industry (also techno-centric and bureaucratic innovations coming up in India post the demonetization, seemingly a dash of bankocracy?), how internet stole GDP, and so on.

The second part is also equally interesting. Adorned with anecdotes, the book proceeds deliberating upon why growth is not an end in itself, growthmanship, Chinese economic miracle, and its green economy (China has doubled its life expectancy from that in 1949, but with the increasing number of 'cancer villages', air and water pollution and such like) and so forth. Incidentally, the book also discusses about the intellectual/academic spat between prominent economists of Indian origin, Jagdish Bhagwati and Amartya Sen. According to the author, their difference is 'with the order in which things take place than with the desired outcome', an opinion contestable in view of the activities and contributions of these contemporary giants in developmental economics.

The last section of the book discusses wealth, accounting human and natural capital, knowledge, sustainability, crash of civilization (like that of Easter Island) probably with a 'resigned croak' (reminding us of the line by T. S. Elliot in *The Hollow Men*, viz. 'this is the way the world ends, not with a bang but with a whimper'), Partha Dasgupta's (University of Cambridge) concerns, Robert Costanza's valuation of natural systems (landmark, but debatable), and so on. Amidst these, the author warns that 'pricing nature might not only be meaningless, but also reckless', and legitimizes commoditization of nature; but 'if you can't measure it, you can't manage it', according to Peter Drucker, a management guru, as quoted by the author. Pilling commendably brings out the dilemma in the larger context of wealth (growth versus wealth perspectives, inter-generational commitments and possibly sustainable development) saying, 'Philosophically, let alone economically,

it is a practically unanswerable question'; maybe human kind will find a way. He also talks about other issues and indicators of welfare, human development, well-being, life-satisfaction, maximizing happiness rather maximizing growth, Gross National Happiness index (as practiced in Bhutan according to government policy), Canadian Index of Well-being, and related issues of their practicality.

The last chapter, apparently the conclusive one, is a discourse on GDP 2.0. It states that Genuine Progress Index (GPI), Maryland's alternative, is close to Kuznets' spirit. It incorporates social, environmental and economic indicators, in total 26 in number. Another widely used index, viz. Human Development Index (based on income, literacy and longevity, and an index of human welfare that better reflects inequality), but partially based on GDP, is also discussed in contrast with GDP. In effect, Pilling concludes that 'the economy is not real', 'indexes have their place', and 'growth is an invention. Now get over it'.

We recommend this book to all those concerned with development in the larger context, in the context of its sustainability, and within the limits of nature and the ecosystems.

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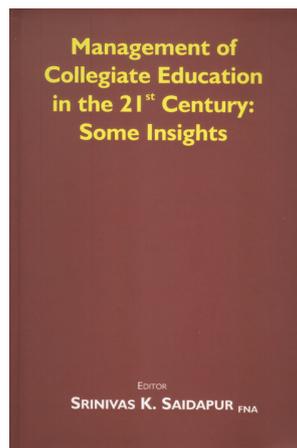
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**Management of Collegiate Education in the 21st Century: Some Insights.**

Srinivas K. Saidapur (ed.). Gyan Publishing House, 5, Ansari Road, Daryaganj, New Delhi 110 002. 2019. 353 pages. Price: Rs 1390.

An accepted reality of the Indian higher education, especially college education is the decline in its qualitative relevance with respect to the curriculum, method of delivery, value system and skills. Another area which requires immediate attention is the ever-widening gap between some of the 'islands of excellence' and other higher education institutions. Therefore, it is imperative that we as a nation address this issue and reform the higher education system thoroughly in order to arrest the declining trend. In order to undertake such a redesigning of the system, it is essential to understand the complexities that exist and have a comprehensive overview of changes that need to be made to address individual issues. In this context, this book is extremely relevant to the present higher education landscape of the country, with specific reference to collegiate education.

The book contains contributions by some of the most well-known experts in the field of education, science, technology and social sciences with an important message not only for educators and administrators, but also for students and industry. It subtly but surely conveys that technology has proved to be the biggest disruptor for higher education and thus it is time to rethink on the current model of passive absorptive learning for a more dynamic and skill-based experiential learning.

The book has 25 chapters that cover different aspects integral to the manage-

ment of collegiate education like higher education and its dimensions, leadership, governance and quality assurance, library resources and digital literacy, student support system, all round development of colleges, and future prospects for higher education in India. The topics also cover issues like meaning and history of higher education, role of teachers in the ever-changing field of knowledge-generation and dissemination, good governance, stability in the policies, fostering quality, equality, demands of the leadership and administrators, importance and the process of accreditation, mobilization of resources for quality research and having a strategic plan document to implement the vision of the institutions.

Further, this book has been written with the objective to address diverse issues confronting college and university education in India. The contributions by an array of luminaries provide a basic as well as critical understanding of higher education needs of the country, summary of the findings of various education commissions, academic and research obligations of college and university teachers, quality assurance and most importantly, the need for appointment of motivated faculty.

Different chapters penned by experts give an understanding of the disruptive technologies of the future, and ways and means for colleges to adapt for the same. In addition, some of the contributors have eloquently described rapidly changing higher education needs and patterns across the world. This book could serve as an interesting briefing for changing the present narrative on higher education in the country and also for extensive as well as a robust orientation of faculty in colleges and universities. The chapters in the book have been divided into six main theme areas as described above and all the chapters underscore the fact that a paradigm shift is needed in order to address the dynamic knowledge ecosystem and also the demographic advantage that our country holds.

Briefly, the contributors through their chapters espouse the following thoughts:

- The meaning and core objectives of higher education, role of teachers in capacity-building, providing value-based and holistic education, and building a humane society.
- Evolution of the Indian higher education system.