

Role of Coaching Institutes in India

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Abstract : *The goal is to give the readers an insight on the role of coaching institutes in India. The aspects explored are the needs these institutes address, their impact on our education system and on our culture as a whole, as well as their role in the coming times. In addition to this a statistical analysis has also been done to compare coaching methodologies across different cultures and study the growth of these institutions in the past decade. A brief hypothesis is also discussed in the paper on ‘coaching institutes as a meme’, by drawing some analogies. Towards the end some conclusions have been drawn about the role they are likely to have in the future, their dynamic nature, how they reflect upon the aspirations and needs of ‘changing India. The findings and analysis provided in this term paper will make room for more discussion on this important yet very less discussed issue.*

Introduction

“**Coaching** is training or development in which a person called a *coach* supports a learner in achieving a specific personal or professional goal. Occasionally, *coaching* may mean an informal relationship between two people, of whom one has more experience and expertise than the other and offers advice and guidance as the latter learns; But coaching differs from mentoring in focusing on specific tasks or objectives, as opposed to general goals or overall development.” -**Wikipedia**

Coaching is a target oriented exercise wherein the primary goal is to achieve a particular target. This is quite different from mentoring which focuses on a bigger picture rather than focusing on one specific trait.

Here we are limiting our discussion to the coaching that is prevalent in the Indian education system for the preparation of competitive examinations like IIT-JEE, CAT, UPSC and many such similar competitive examinations.

The aspects that we are going to discuss are:

1. The weakness and the requirements that these coaching institutes address.
2. The impact they have on our society and our culture as a whole.
3. Relating the concept of ‘memes’ to coaching institutes.
4. The role that they are expected to play in future.

The Need

In India, there are schools which mentor the students for their “holistic development”. The school years are meant for the students to get a taste of everything and discover their interests. Here, students develop some elementary skills essential for their social as well as their professional lives. It is in these years that

they are exposed to the various aspects of our culture. They get to learn about the various disciplines in science, history, languages and social science. In addition to these, they get involved in many extra-curricular activities like music, dance, and drama as well. So, in a way we can say that the role of schools in India is to mentor the students and give them an essence of everything. After completing the high school, students are supposed to (rather made to) join a college or a university for pursuing higher studies. India has a large number of world renowned institutions like IITs, AIIMS, and IIMs etc. which conduct their autonomous entrance tests every year to select students for their institutions. In a country with a magnitude of **demographic dividend** such as India’s, the competition in these examinations is expected to be immense. Every year more than a million students appear for these examinations but only a small fraction get through. The success rate in such examinations is lower than 1%. So, the preparation for these requires a huge amount hard work and dedication. Usually, the type of teaching methodologies used in schools have over the years proven inadequate for the preparation of these examinations. Students do require some additional assistance to excel in such examinations as these tests require a deeper understanding and more extensive practice of the concepts, something which isn’t possible for the schools to provide in the limited time they get. That is where the role of coaching institutes become important. They are ‘highly professional institutions’ which cater students preparing for these competitions. They have increasingly gained importance in past decade. In the present time, there is professional coaching available for almost all competitive exams.

Coaching Institutes = “Parallel Schooling System”

Educationists believe the Indian schooling system, which is unable to keep up with the numbers, is the reason behind the burgeoning coaching industry. Is this really the case? We tried to get some answers.

We asked this question to Sanjeev Agarwal, a Computer Engineer himself and father of two IITians, He says, “Both of my sons have been brilliant in academics throughout their school time. I was initially hesitant to send my elder son to a coaching class for preparation of JEE as I believed that there was not much need of it and I was confident that he can do well without it. But his performance in class 11 started going down rapidly, though he was doing well in school but he was not able to follow the syllabus of JEE. I was initially confused as to what has happened suddenly but slowly I realised that the teaching methodology used in schools is inefficient and insufficient for

JEE and enrolled my son to a coaching class for JEE, after which he was able to perform well.”

(Source HT article on coaching classes)“It is really not an option anymore; It has almost become mandatory,” says Simi Valecha, Professor at the University of Delhi, about her son, Keshav, taking a ‘coaching class’. “He doesn’t feel confident about many concepts and sometimes I wonder what the teachers do in school.” A tutor visits her home regularly to help Keshav brush up on Biology. The 17-year-old, currently in the 12th standard in an eminent Delhi school, hopes to get admission into a medical college after a competitive examination. The Valecha family pays the tutor Rs.1,200 an hour for his trouble. They are no exception, either in seeking additional teaching for their child or in paying the tutor a handsome fee. Millions of families across India have been doing exactly this for years. Parents want their children to get on the fast track to prosperity and are pulling out all the stops to get them into the very best educational institutions.

Coaching Institutes have certainly raised the level of competence among students for these examinations. The cut-off percentages for IIT-JEE has risen significantly in the past decade. One of the major reasons for this hike is the increasing influence of coaching institutes. So, students who are reluctant to join these classes are often seen lagging behind in these competitive examinations.

Year	Marks	Percentage Marks
2014	176	57.51
2013	170	47.22
2012	197	48.28
2011	261	54.37
2010	216	45.00
2009	205	42.71
2008	193	40.21

The above table shows the trend of increasing cut-offs: Percentage Marks for obtaining a rank under 5000 in JEE (Source – Official JEE reports from 2008-14)

Also, coaching centres have resulted in the formation of a “parallel schooling system.” In the recent times, it has been observed that many students preparing for IIT-JEE are often irregular in schools and miss classes quite frequently to attend the coaching classes. Also, they hardly have any motivation to listen to school teachers as most of the stuff being taught in school has already been covered in a much greater depth in their respective coaching classes. So, in a way these coaching classes have formed a parallel schooling system. To attract more students, these institutes have even started taking students as early as class 6. In the quest of getting ahead in the competition the parents are more than willing to send their children to these classes as early as possible not realising that negligence towards proper schooling might hamper the “holistic development” of their child.

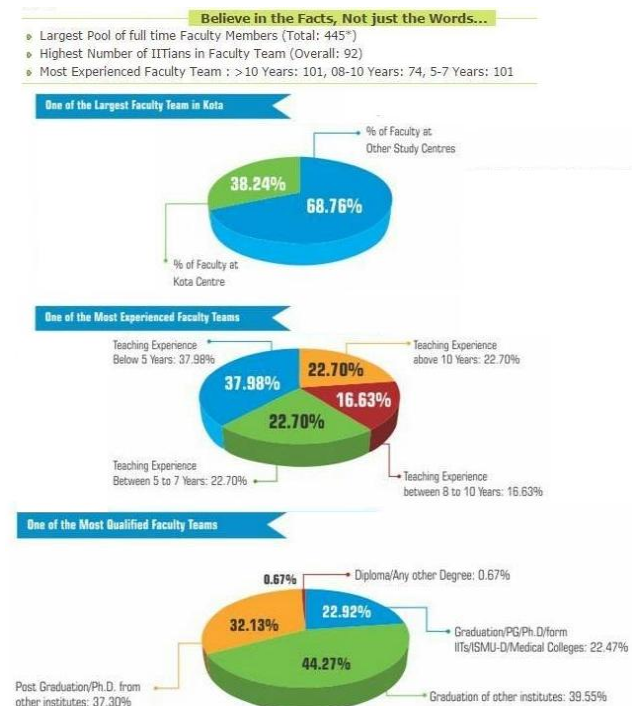
Due to the lost interest of students in school classes, the teachers teaching in these schools have also lost the motivation and enthusiasm to mentor the students. Thus, they are not able to give their best to the students and the students also start building a disbelief in their abilities. So in this manner this problem keeps on multiplying.

Here is what Mrs. Abha Agrawal who teaches Physics to class 12th students in a reputed school in Udaipur says about this problem,

“They don’t even want to listen to us, all they care about is attendance.”

Why highly professional?

Coaching industry has grown immensely in the past decade. The reason why we referred to them as ‘highly professional institutes’ are many. Let us have a look at some of the data we got from the website of ‘Resonance coaching institute’ which is a very popular name in the coaching industry and has its centres in almost all the major cities in India. Resonance has more than 20 study centres across the country and provides distance learning services in almost each and every town of India. The institute prepares students for IIT-JEE, AIPMT, Olympiads and many other competitive examinations. Though it is very difficult to predict the exact number of students enrolled in this institute but it can be estimated to be 20,000 at the very least. Also, the institutes provides many other facilities apart from just good quality education like hostel and mess facilities, counselling services as well as transportation. Some of the institutes have tie-ups with schools and some of the institutes even own a school themselves. All these factors suggest that they are something more than just “temples of education.” They have modified and adapted according to the needs of students and for their own monetary benefits. In that sense, they have been quite different from schools which haven’t changed significantly in the past decade according to the changing needs of the students. One other major point of difference between schools and these institutes is between the qualities of faculty, to illustrate this let us have a look at the pie chart given below:




Source: Resonance Eduventures 2015

The above pie charts emphasise on the educational background of the faculty members of the institutes. Most of them are themselves graduates from IITs and other reputed institutes of India. Faculty with such strong educational background is generally not available in schools. Also, the faculty in coaching institutes are paid far more than what an average secondary school teacher gets.

Also, there is a huge difference in the amount of money that these institutes charge and which has been a major reason that why we have repeatedly referred to them as highly commercialised bodies.

Given below is the fee structure of Resonance which quite clearly illustrates our point.



FEE STRUCTURE FOR ACADEMIC SESSION 2015-16

Yearlong Classroom Contact Programmes (YCCPs)				
Course Name	Class	Course Fee	Service Tax@14%	Total Course Fee
JEE (Main+Advance)				
VIKAS - JA	XI	96,000	13,440	1,11,440
VIPUL - JB	XI	96,000	13,440	1,11,440
VIJETA - JP	XII	98,000	13,720	1,11,720
VISHWAAS - JF	XII	99,000	13,860	1,14,860
VISHESH - JD	XIII	1,05,000	14,700	1,21,700
VIJAY - JR	XIII	1,90,000	14,000	1,16,000
JEE (M)				
AADHAAR - EB	XI	52,000	7,280	61,280
ABHINAV - EA	XI	52,000	7,280	61,280
ANOOB - EP	XII	50,000	7,000	57,000
AKHIL - EF	XII	50,000	8,400	70,400
ABHYAAS - ED	XIII	52,000	8,680	72,680
AJAY - ER	XIII	52,000	8,680	72,680

Source: Resonance Eduventures

The Sunny Side

The approach in these classes is may be centred towards marks and better academic performance. But it is our **education system** which is to blame since it weighs the students' standings on the brilliance of his score-card. These institutions provide an environment which motivates the students to work harder and expand their potential. One certainly can't deny the fact that school education and the way of teaching in schools is not sufficient for an average student to crack these highly competitive examinations. They do need professional assistance to increase their competence. Also passing this burden to high schools would be too much to ask for as their model is aimed to accommodate the aspirations of all students. Cut-offs for these

examinations have risen significantly mainly due to increasing level of competence among the students for these examinations. So, in that sense the coaching institutions have done no harm to the education system. Students are made to practice a subject very extensively which gives him/her a good understanding of the subject.

The Flip Side

Not everyone is born to excel in academics, some students are more inclined towards sports, music etc., but due to this sudden boom in the coaching industry many of these students are forced to go to these coaching institutions under peer pressure. It has now become a social obligation for many students to attend these classes. Due to lack of interest, most of such students face difficulties in coping up with such kind of an academic pressure. Also, these students end up spending most of their time in these classes without gaining much and also don't get enough time to pursue their field of interest. This develops a feeling of inferiority in them and they also lose confidence in their abilities. As someone has correctly said out "Everyone has a hidden potential for some or the other thing, but if you judge a fish by its ability to climb it will spend its whole life considering itself to be useless."

This has resulted in an increased number of cases of depression and suicides in the students preparing for these competitive examinations. Due to increased expectations of parents and the inability of students to cope up with them, they end up taking such steps. Due to the advent of these coaching institutions, a hype has been created among the students about these examinations. Students qualifying these examinations are projected as "heroes" and this affects the approach of students as well as the parents about the choice of carrier. Statistics show a fourfold increase in the number of students appearing for IIT-JEE in the past decade which is mainly due to increase in the number of such kind of institutions and the kind of image of these examinations that these institutes are forming on the minds of people.

Coaching institutions are highly professional and commercialised bodies. They usually charge a very high amount of money for the services they provide. Their increased importance has proven detrimental for the students who are not really able to afford this professional coaching owing to their financial condition. Also, there is hardly any assistance in this regard for such students from the government. Studies have shown in the past decade, more than 80% students coming to institutions like IIT had joined some or the other form of coaching. Also, small towns and villages are devoid these institutions and hence the talented students from these towns are lagging behind in the competition.

The graph below also proves our point as to how money is playing a crucial role in preparation of these examinations.

Table S-11: Distribution of Candidates according to Parental Income

Flncome	Flncome	Registered	Qualified	%Registered	%Qualified
-	No Data	16754	3282	13.19	12.09
1	UPTO 100000	36070	5063	28.40	18.65
2	RS. 100001 -200000	16179	2975	12.74	10.96
3	RS. 200001 - 300000	14161	2921	11.15	10.76
4	RS. 300001 -400000	11986	2735	9.44	10.07
5	RS. 400001 -500000	9906	2645	7.80	9.74
6	RS. 500001-600000	6693	2014	5.27	7.42
7	RS. 600001-700000	3300	1091	2.60	4.02
8	RS. 700001-800000	2518	840	1.98	3.09
9	RS. 800001 AND ABOVE	9428	3586	7.42	13.21
		126995	27152	100	100

Source - JEE 2014 official report

Coaching Institutes as ‘memes’

A **meme** is "an idea, behaviour, or style that spreads from person to person within a culture". A meme acts as a unit for carrying cultural ideas, symbols, or practices that can be transmitted from one mind to another through writing, speech, gestures, rituals, or other imitable phenomena with a mimicked theme."

“Memes that propagate less prolifically may become extinct, while others may survive, spread, and mutate. Memes that replicate most effectively enjoy more success, and some may replicate effectively even when they prove to be detrimental to the welfare of their hosts.” -**Wikipedia**

The Coaching industry as we know today is quite different from what it was in the early 80’s which were the starting days of this industry. There was not much professional assistance available for JEE preparation anywhere in the country. It was not before late 80’s that coaching classes came up. They made a very humble beginning. Very few students were enrolled in these classes and the faculty also consisted of a very limited number of people. The main motive was to provide the students good guidance preparing for JEE. Earning huge profits was never a matter of prime concern in those days. In the early years itself, coaching institutes started proving their mettle by showing high selection rates in these examinations. This formed the origin of this meme. As in case of any other meme, the propagation and survival depends upon how strong the origin is and how the evolution of the meme affects the people. Memes usually evolve or in some cases completely mutate over a period of time. So, the early success of these laid a strong foundation for this meme to propagate. In the early 90’s the propagation and the mutation rates of this meme was very small as compared to what it has

been in the last decade. Even 10 years after the advent of the first coaching institute in Kota, the concept of coaching classes was only popular in a very limited regions .Most of the aspirants still resorted to self-study as that was the only option for them because coaching institutes were only centred in cities of Kota and Delhi. The concept of coaching gained more popularity after 2000 and has increased ever since. This increase in popularity can also be attributed to the advancement in technology (particularly the IT industry) which has resulted in easy access to resources and information and thus have increased the general awareness among the masses. Sharing data, advertising, availability of better communication services have proved very vital in the propagation of memes in the past decade. The concept of coaching classes is one such meme whose propagation have been facilitated by all these factors.

Another major reason why this cultural meme was able to cross various geographical and cultural boundaries is the change in the general mind-set of the Indian youth in the past decade or so. With the advancements in technology and increased influence of western cultures there are two things that have happened. Firstly, the youth now is more attracted to materialistic things than they were say 15 years ago, simply because of the fact that there are more such things that are available to them, that they wish to acquire. Now the question arises what does it have to do with coaching institutes?

Coaching institutes provide a relatively simplified and promising path to success in examinations like IIT-JEE, AIPMT, CAT etc. and success in these examinations in turn opens a world of opportunities to them. Usually, people from IITs and IIMs receive those “good jobs” which pay them quite well and in a way guarantees (or at least as they perceive it) a satisfying and comfortable life. That is why more and more people want to go to IITs and IIMs and that is the reason more and more people join coaching classes. Also, this route to “success” has become so popular now, that parents start sending their children to these institutions in a very early stage and are more than happy to spend their money on coaching.

Secondly, the advancement in technology has increased the general awareness among the masses. Parents from rural areas too have started investing their money in their children’s education. That is why there has been an increase in the demand of such institutes and more and more institutions have come up in different parts of the country

In this way, this cultural meme has crossed many geographical and cultural boundaries.

Given below is a table showing the number of students appearing for JEE and we can clearly the hike in the number of aspirants.

Table T-2: Category wise trend of Registered Candidates

Year	GE	%	OBC	%	SC	%	ST	%	Total
1997	81990	89.8	0	0	7235	7.9	1742	1.9	91279
1998	84951	88.9	0	0	8282	8.7	1942	2.0	95517
1999	99171	88.3	0	0	10036	8.9	2382	2.1	112344
2000	115319	89.7	0	0	9951	7.7	2495	1.9	128625
2001	131706	89.1	0	0	11796	8.0	3141	2.1	147775
2002	158994	89.3	0	0	14224	8.0	3597	2.0	178043
2003	157542	88.0	0	0	15914	8.9	4033	2.3	178940
2004	154811	88.3	0	0	15294	8.7	4041	2.3	175355
2005	175331	88.5	0	0	17304	8.7	4717	2.4	198059
2006	264536	88.4	0	0	26800	9.0	6707	2.2	299087
2007	222515	88.4	0	0	22049	8.8	6519	2.6	251803
2008	208328	64.8	74404	23.1	29829	9.3	9092	2.8	321653
2009	239917	60.2	107285	26.9	37825	9.5	13237	3.3	398264
2010*	268684	59.0	128114	28.1	42800	9.4	15973	3.5	455571
2011	276239	56.9	142297	29.3	47358	9.8	19242	4.0	485136
2012	294333	58.11	143264	28.29	49087	9.69	19780	3.91	506454
2013	51180	40.38	47092	37.15	20054	15.82	8423	6.65	126749
2014	50123	39.47	48222	37.97	20331	16.01	8319	6.55	126995

* The data for 2010 is based on appeared candidates

Source - JEE 2014 official report

Conclusions

We have discussed all the major aspects of coaching institutes in India. From our analysis and discussion it is quite conclusively shown that they are an integral of our education system. In spite of this they are still not a part of mainstream discussions about the Indian education system. It is one sector which government has always neglected. As these institutes become increasingly more important, it becomes a duty of the government to make these coaching services to the poor and deprived as well, for which first the government has to first acknowledge the importance of these institutions.

Also, coaching institutes would also have to adapt and modify according to the changing needs of students, something which they have succeeded in doing till now.