**Ayurveda Education in India: Who is there to deliver it?**

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Abstract

Despite Ayurveda (alternative health care in general) riding a high wave of popularity globally, looking back home at its torch bearers holding the responsibility of spreading its education is desperate. A large proportion of Ayurveda teachers are unhappy for multiple reasons and eventually delivering substandard education. Heavy and war footed efforts for awareness promotion of Ayurveda have been made in the country, it is almost dismal at the front of improving the quality of actual deliverance in Ayurveda. In particular, negligible efforts are made to ensure a quality driven human resource development in Ayurveda. It is for this reason the quality of ayurvedic education, practice and research could not improve much in the past. Ayurveda is still striving to achieve the basic level of uniform standards of education, research and practice which otherwise is commonly seen in health care and science streams. Highly discriminatory recruitment and promotional policies, erratic salary structures, minimal opportunities for early and mid career advancements and negligible resources for in job skill enhancements are few among prominent reasons of teacher’s unrest in Ayurveda.

Ayurveda can be promoted genuinely by keeping its wisdom at the forefront. The goodness of Ayurveda should be projected through its tangible evidence based performances lying on its own principles and there can’t be any shortcut to prove the worth of Ayurveda.

Without any hesitation, we strongly propose that teachers are the actual spine of any proposal related to re-establishment of Ayurveda in the world map and hence their miseries are needed to be fully accounted and addressed allowing them to be nurtured to bloom to their fullest potential for ultimate service to Ayurveda.

**Introduction**

Ayurveda education in India is currently facing an all time high human resource crisis. This crisis is multidimensional spanning through the facets of quality and quantity. A recent in-house look at Ayurveda educational institutions in the country has shown a deficit of over 50 % in teaching faculties and over 80% in higher faculties. Comptroller and Auditor General of India, 2018 report on social, general and economic sectors in National Capital Region points soaring 37-52% deficit in the sector ( 1). In a similar situation, as a consequence, Maharashtra University of Health Sciences (MUHS) recently stopped considering applications to open Ayurveda colleges in the state for next two years (2). Multitude leading to the faculty crisis in Ayurveda include poor recruitment policy, erratic and malignant growth of new institutions, non functional promotional opportunities and highly discriminative salary structures in Ayurveda teaching fraternity across the country. It is worst in private institutions hiring ghost faculties having no actual role to play in quality of Ayurveda education.

Besides the crisis of numbers, the quality of what is delivered is more worrisome. Education in Ayurveda is therefore facing real doldrums in terms of its quality and eventual utility (3). The quality of Ayurveda education in the country remained questionable for long and was attempted to be reformed earlier also. All such attempts however remained focused upon curriculum and pedagogy without heeding seriously at its human resource management reform needs( 4) .

In India of our ages, for someone seeking a career in medicine, Ayurveda sparingly comes as a primary choice. Unfortunately, this feeling of disowning of Ayurveda do not change much during the course of studies for those who somehow enroll them in Ayurveda and eventually bag the basic and higher qualifications in Ayurveda without feeling truly connected with the subject.

In the absence of other reachable avenues to build the career, teaching comes as an achievable career choice to Ayurveda post graduates. Sprouting private institutions fuel this and subsequently the one who never wanted to study Ayurveda, becomes a teacher having primary responsibility of teaching Ayurveda. This is not much difficult to speculate the outcome of the scenario where education is imparted by an unwilling teacher ( 5, 6 ). In the forthcoming passages various factors related to the poor state of Ayurveda education in India are enumerated and their possible remedial measures are suggested.

**Current infrastructure of Ayurveda education in India and its governance**

India is the largest human resource producer in Ayurveda. This seems obvious for a country which is the land of its origin and where it enjoys an officially recognized status at par with modern health care. Officially adopted pluralistic health care model in India eventually permitted the growth of all traditional and alternative health care practices prevailing in the country under the ambit of AYUSH by giving them equal opportunities of practice, research and education. As a result, quantifiable number of educational institutions belonging to various health care systems got established and run across the country. Ayurveda emerges as one largest stake holder among all such systems. Ministry of AYUSH, Govt. of India reports 338 under graduate Ayurveda colleges ( on 1.4.2017) in the country having an yearly intake capacity of 21387 students. Similarly, 138 Ayurveda colleges having intake capacity of 4269 students are running PG courses. 7.2 % growth in number of Ayurveda educational institutions is reported during last 25 years (between 1992-2017) (7 ) . The standard of Ayurveda education in the country is largely maintained by Central Council of Indian Medicine (CCIM), functioning as a statuary body responsible for bench marking and uniform deliverance of Ayurveda education in the country. CCIM executes its function by enacting regulations which are mandatory in nature for the educational institutions belonging to Ayurveda.

**Measures to standardize Ayurveda education: Proposing the benchmarks like minimal faculty requirements and student teacher ratio**

To ensure quality driven education in Ayurveda, Indian Medicine Central Council (Post Graduate Ayurveda Education) Regulations, 2016 (8) proposes the teacher student ratio in PG education proportionate to the number of intake capacity in respective PG departments. In case of lecturer the ratio is 1:1, whereas for reader and professor it is 1:2 and 1:3 respectively. Taking this as a primary parameter for quality of Ayurveda speciality education, it can easily be inferred that approximately 4269 lecturers, 2134 readers and 1423 professors are exclusively required to cater to the needs of 4269 PG students in Ayurveda yearly enrolled in the country .

Although, any such teacher student ratio is not proposed for the undergraduate education in Ayurveda, Indian Medicine Central Council (Minimum Standard Requirements of Ayurveda Colleges and attached Hospitals) Amendment Regulations, 2013 ( 9) proposes the need of minimum 27 faculties to run an undergraduate college in Ayurveda having an intake capacity of less than 60 students. Out of these faculty positions, minimum 12 are required to be the higher faculties (reader or professor). Calculating the minimum faculty requirement in Ayurveda UG colleges considering them having a minimum intake capacity, we need 9126 teachers comprising of minimum 4056 higher faculties. For the convenience of calculation, if the higher faculty positions are equally divided among readers and professors, this figures out to be 2028 each for reader and professor positions respectively (Table 1). Summing the needs of UG and PG education together, about 16979 teachers are required to fulfill the minimal requirements of UG and PG education of Ayurveda in the country. Of this total, 3451 professors are needed to comply with the existing norms . This is important to see here that what we calculated is the minimum requirement i.e lowest figure essential to run a college. Obviously, this figure cannot be equated with the quality of education in case if greater numbers of faculties are available to share their wisdom.

**Table 1. Minimal Faculty requirements in Ayurveda teaching institutions as per the existing CCIM norms**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Number of colleges | Required Lecturers | Required Readers | Required Professors | Total faculty positions minimally required |
| UG colleges | 338 | 5070 | 2028 | 2028 | 9126 |
| PG Colleges | 138 | 4296 | 2134 | 1423 | 7853 |
| Total |  | 9366 | 4162 | 3451 | 16979 |

**Handling the faculty deficit: CCIM and administrative approaches**

Faculty deficit in Ayurveda education is a long recognized fact which is rampant despite the large number of qualified post graduates in various specialties emerging every year. Recognizing this CCIM MSR 2013 proposed special relaxations to meet such deficits at large and to allow the colleges to run despite being unable to meet the desired faculty number. Most notable among these provisions is to allow the colleges to run with 90 % of the faculties needed as per the MSR. Seeing the unavailability of qualified professionals in various subject areas, teachers are allowed to be appointed in allied subjects despite them not possessing the essential qualification in the concerned subject. Increasing the age for retirement, allowing the teachers to work till 65 years of age at private institutions, filling the posts on contractual basis and opening the teaching positions for people from research and holding the analogus positions have been other approaches to meet the both ends however did not help much.

Despite such flexible measures, over 80 % senior teaching positions in ayurvedic colleges are still lying vacant making the faculty deficit as one single largest factor for non grant of permission to run an ayurvedic institution in India. In 2018-19 academic session, over 26% (88) Ayurveda colleges have not been granted to run the courses on account of their faculty deficit ( 10 ) .

**Finding the fit: essentials and desirables for recruiting Ayurveda teachers**

CCIM in furtherance to its powers of assuring quality education in Ayurveda prescribes the minimum qualifications and experience required for various teaching positions. To become a teacher what required in Ayurveda is a post graduate qualification in the concerned subject. For higher faculty positions, additional teaching / research experience and publications are required which is 10 year and 5 papers in case of professor and 5 years and 3 papers in case of associate professor. The publications are is required to be in recognized journals keeping enough room for debating what a recognized journal is. For entry positions however there are no such bindings of publication or experience. For administrative positions like Director, Principal or Dean of Ayurvedic colleges, no specific desirables are recommended by CCIM and their essentials are similar to what is needed to become a professor.

What actually is missing in the current methods of faculty recruitment in Ayurveda is to see the teaching acumen in the candidate. Research and publications although appear to work as the filter to choose the one with desired abilities, in the absence of clear guidelines, this actually becomes a bonus for unsuitable candidates by virtue of publications in bogus journals or mass media. Review articles in Ayurveda are mere often a straight reproduction of classical wisdom without any novelty. Plagiarism is a terminal illness in publication industry and is on high rise in Ayurveda. This is obvious to see that unless the mechanism to check ‘what is published’ and ‘where it is published’ is developed, such parameters will remain deceptive to work as benchmarks of desired abilities.

Moreover, once recruited, such candidates do not get any opportunity to learn the teaching methodologies. Magnanimous changes and advancements have occurred in the current teaching technologies. Unless the aspiring teachers are exposed well in such technologies , they may not efficiently use their knowledge and skills to spread the knowledge of Ayurveda. At the same time subject related competency has also been a matter of concern and in the absence of any mechanism to improve the competence, what delivered remains of substandard quality.

**Recruiting Ayurveda teachers: Discrepancies across the country**

Despite the recommendations of CCIM about recruitment of Ayurveda teachers for different levels, various states in India and center follow the policies of their own on such matters. All India Institute of Ayurveda (AIIA), a recently established apex teaching and training center for Ayurveda has its own rules for recruiting the faculty positions which are much higher than the norms laid by CCIM

.( 11) AIIA justifies its higher entry benchmarks by proposing that it is a super specialty teaching institution at par with AIIMS. This is however noteworthy to see that currently nothing like a super specialty really exists at AIIA in any of the domains related to education, practice or research in Ayurveda. In this context, this is also important to note that in most Ayurveda colleges, this is hard to find a regular faculty on research methods and biostatistics which otherwise seem essential to ensure the research quality. AIIA is no exception to this common observation.

The experience of recruiting faculties at AIIA has shown that merely increasing the entry level qualification, experience years and increasing the number of publications desired to enter a premier institute actually did not help as neither it could filter the best among all nor it eliminated the possibilities of choosing the wrongs in the absence of a mechanism to look at the quality and not the quantity.

Parameters sounding similar have also been adopted by universities, central institutes and states with little modifications in the recruitment rules without any real idea of whom they are actually looking to hire.

**Inequity at workplace: salary structure of Ayurveda teachers across the country**

Despite the uniform essentials and desirables for various teaching positions in Ayurveda proposed by CCIM, we see that salary structure in Ayurveda teaching cadre is highly variable across the country ( Table 2 ) . Currently AIIA offers highest pay slab in the country to its faculties. Second in the pay slab comes the universities like BHU , Rajasthan Ayurveda University , Uttaranchal Ayurveda University and also the national institutes of Ayurveda like IPGT& R, Jamnagar and National Institute of Ayurveda. Following this, comes Delhi government salary structure for Ayurveda faculty. States like Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Odisha rank lowest in the tally for offering lowest in the pay slab to Ayurveda teaching faculties. Being ranked similarly but paid differentially is inequity and against the fundamental right of same work same pay. A lower payment for the same work acts as a de motivation barring the people to excel in their field. In the worst scenario, this also becomes a driving force for switching the places and positions in search of finding better opportunities.

Table 2. Salary structure of Ayurveda faculty positions at various places

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | State or Institution | Professor | Reader | | | Lecturer | |
| 1 | AIIA, New Delhi | Rs.37400-67000+GP Rs.10500(PB4)+NPA |  | Rs.37400-67000+GP Rs.9000(PB4)+NPA |  | Rs.15600-39100+GP Rs.8000(PB3)+NPA |  |
| 2 | BHU, Varanasi | |  | | --- | | PB-4 (Rs. 37400-67000) + AGP Rs. 10000/- | |  | |  | | --- | | PB-4 (Rs. 37400-67000) + AGP Rs. 9000/- | |  | |  | | --- | | PB-3, (Rs. 15600-39100) +AGP Rs. 6000/- | |  |
| 3 | Uttar Pradesh | GP 7600/- |  | GP 6600/- |  | GP 5400/- |  |
| 4 | Rajasthan Ayurveda University | Rs. 37,400 – 67,000/- + Grade Pay Rs. 10000/- |  | Rs. 37,400 – 67,000/- + Grade Pay Rs. 9000/- |  | Rs. 15,600 – 39,100 + Grade Pay Rs. 6000 |  |
| 5 | Odisha | - |  | - |  | 9300-34,800/- GP 4600/- |  |
| 6 | Delhi NCR | PB-IV Rs 37,400- 67,000 + Grade Pay Rs 8,700 + NPA ( revised) |  | PB-III 15,600- 39,100+ GP 7600 + NPA ( revised) |  | PB-III 15,600- 39,100+ GP 5400 + NPA (revised) |  |
| 7 | IPGT&R, Jamnagar | 37400-67000/- +GP 10,000/- |  | AGP 9000/- |  | 15,600-39,100/- AGP 6000/- |  |

**In job growth opportunities: How do we nurture our teachers to excel?**

How do we identify our best employees and project them as the examples to motivate others? This is a key management issue which every corporate is well aware of. Keeping the staff motivated to perform their best and to retain the best among them in the organization for long is a major task most HR managers are engaged with. A dedicated worker is an asset which no one wishes to lose.

This is interesting to see, how this human resource development task is actually taken up in Ayurveda services. In majority of the states, universities and institutions, the entry in Ayurveda teaching cadre is open at lowest level and all higher positions are subsequently filled either through departmental promotion committee ( DPC) recommendations or through career advancement scheme (CAS) based on performance based appraisal system ( PBAS) . In some states the departmental promotions are limited to 50% of the available vacancies and rest 50% are kept open to be filled by direct recruitment. In principle, the exercise of recruiting the faculty either through direct means or through CAS or DPC needs to be done simultaneously to avoid any delay by either means. Unfortunately, both of these means of recruiting the higher faculty in Ayurveda suffer huge administrative delays and hence the higher faculties are rarely recruited in time. In states like Uttar Pradesh and Delhi, the situation is highly pathetic as here promotional and direct recruitments have been delayed for as long as over 12 years. The result of this short fall in faculty number comes oblivious in the form of non grant of permission to take the admissions at many colleges. Unfortunately, instead of identifying and eliminating the causes of delay and adopting a clear mechanism to deliver the dues timely, fancy approaches like enhancing the retirement age, shifting the people from one place to other and contractual postings have been adopted which helped nothing but deferring the decisive actions to be taken by diluting the attention to the real crisis . This is not overemphasizing to reiterate that timely in-job career advancement is a big motivational mechanism available in the public sector. It its absence or unjustified delay, keeping the faculty motivated looks impractical.

**The faculty number crisis in Ayurveda: AIIA as a case study**

AIIA can be taken as a revealing case study in the context of faculty crisis in Ayurveda. AIIA started its actual functioning in 2016-17 with the start of its first batch of MD. Currently it holds 56 MD seats which are dealt by its 28 member faculty team ( 12) . Among the existing regular faculty at AIIA, 5 are professors, 10 are associate professors and remaining 13 are assistant professors. Three departments namely Agada Tantra, Rachana Sharir and Kriya Sharir have no actual representation in the existing faculty of AIIA. Vikriti Vigyan has no senior faculty and hence a faculty from Kaya Chikitsa is given the duel charge to look at both the departments. The director of AIIA holds the additional position of professor and head of one department in the institute. Now if the student teacher ratio in case of PG education in Ayurveda is to be believed for deliverance of quality education, AIIA would have required a battery of 103 teachers (56 lecturers, 28 readers and 19 professors) to meet the existing educational needs of 56 MD students. With its current strength of 28 which is 73% deficient to the minimum faculty requirements, the quality of education imparted at this premier institution remains questionable. The faculty crisis of AIIA therefore poses a serious question that despite its high status and best salary structure in the segment across the country, what is limiting this premier institution in meeting the desired numbers. The primary limitation seems to be about the parameters set for the purpose of faculty recruitment. Although attempts have also been made to invite the people from research and analogous positions to join AIIA, it actually did not help. The problem of faculty number actually is linked to the feeding cadre which fills the next faculty position in a hierarchical manner. In states like Uttar Pradesh and many others, ayurvedic teachers remain stagnated at respective positions without timely made career advancement. Eventually, these people, despite their rich and long experience at primary positions, ability and willingness to join the higher positions at the places like AIIA, can’t do for failing to meet the essentials required.

**Faculty crisis in Ayurveda : Impacts and the solutions**

Looking back at states, the situation seems more alarming. Recruitments are unduly delayed due to administrative lapses which are equally sluggish for both direct or the promotional positions. Unduly delayed or absent delivery of career advancement propositions in most of the states added with unvented stagnant environ and poor salary structures acts as a leading cause to make the existing faculty running out of the steam. How lucrative the profession of Ayurveda is? this can easily be judged by a simple question if asked from the current teachers of Ayurveda. If asked, how strongly they agree to bring their next generation in Ayurveda, it would be rare to find someone who really wish to allow their wards to choose this profession. This state of dissatisfaction among its existing stakeholders raises two serious questions. One is about the quality of the services delivered by the people who are in the state of sheer unhappiness with their profession and second which is even more serious is about who is really going to become the next stake holder if the current state of affair continues.

Looking back at the primary issue, this seems simple to propose that to minimize country wide hiccoughs on recruitment related matters in Ayurveda teaching cadre, a uniform stature is urgently required to be formed. There shall be a central recruiting body for the purpose which may look after all recruitment and promotion issues pertaining to the Ayurveda teaching cadre. The salary structure is essentially required to be made uniform in order to minimize the expatriation of existing faculties from one state to other and rather be made so attractive that it may invite more talents to come and join. Early career and mid career advancements schemes are required to be proposed for Ayurveda teachers as well. Factually, either Ayurveda teachers should be treated at par in every matter in terms of the opportunities and benefits enjoyed by the teachers from the other streams or simply there should be a separate regulation allowing such benefits to be shared by all Ayurveda teachers across the country.

**Conclusion**

If we want to get the best from our teachers, undoubtedly we need to give them the best. There are examples from the countries like Korea, Germany, US and Japan who have done so and the prosperity of these countries in terms of knowledge is not a hidden fact. Although many argue that the driving force for quest of knowledge should not be governed by materialistic outcomes, unfortunately living in miseries and not seeing a hope of change may neither be a good proposition to prosper the quest for knowledge. Ayurveda teaching fraternity has long remained secluded from the world of higher education. The simplest proposition to bring this huge knowledge capital in real use is to bring its stakeholders at par and to assure them to bloom to their fullest potential. Helping Ayurveda teachers to do their best by treating them equitably is going to be one best proactive measure to better Ayurveda in coming years.

This however should also be understood that the misery of Ayurveda education is not going to end merely by treating its teachers with best perks in the profession. The quality of education is determined by many other complex factors of which infrastructure and number of faculties makes a small tangible section. Large part of education quality is intangible and relates to self motivation and high morale of a teacher. One unwilling tutor is sufficient to create a huge bulk of faithless, unwilling, unenlightened, ignorant and helpless budding graduates in Ayurveda which would be the future generation of this field. It’s a vicious cycle, which is ultimately bound to deteriorate the whole education system unless timely remedial steps are not taken.

A real time feedback system is often suggested as an effective remedy to design the counter measures for poor delivery. For a physician, the patient can be the best judge and for a teacher it is the student. A blind feedback system to evaluate the teacher’s performance can be a good way to enhance the performance if it is linked with appraisals. This can be done on individual basis at colleges or collectively for a subject, state or whole country. Rewarding the better performers can be more motivating comparing to punishing the defaulters.

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