



## Promoting Excellence in Higher Education-Issues and Challenges

P.Gangadhararao, M.com, H.O.D. Department of commerce, Sri.Y.N.College,  
Narsapur, W.G.Dt, AP

B.Venkata Ratnam, M.com, M.Phil, lecturer, department of commerce,  
Sri.Y.N.College, Narsapur

P.Manasa Deepthi, MBA, Assistant Professor, Malla Reddy Institute of Management,  
Hyderabad

### ***Abstract:***

*India educates approximately 11 per cent of its youth in higher education as compared to 20 per cent in China. We need higher educated people who are skilled and who can drive our economy forward. When India can provide skilled people to the outside world then we can transfer our country from a developing nation to a developed nation very easily and quickly. The University Grants Commission has appropriately stated that a whole range of skills will be demanded from the graduates of humanities, social sciences, natural sciences and commerce, as well as from the various professional disciplines such as agriculture, law, management, medicine or engineering. India can no longer continue the model of general education as it has been persisting in for the large bulk of the student population.*

***Key words:*** higher education, resources, skill acquisition

### **Introduction**

Historically and traditionally, quality assurance (QA) organizations have had two functions: the enhancement of the quality of institutions and programmes the accountability of the results of teaching and learning. India's higher education system is the world's third largest in terms of students, next to China and the United States. Unlike China, however, India has the advantage of English being the primary language of higher education and research. India educates approximately 11 per cent of its youth in higher education as compared to 20 per cent in China. We need higher educated people who are skilled and who can drive our economy forward. When India can provide skilled people to the outside world then we can transfer our

country from a developing nation to a developed nation very easily and quickly. To raise living standards further, we need to produce more goods and services which people value and produce them more efficiently, growth in real output are improved skills and aptitudes, increased investment in physical capital (such as machinery and equipment), advances in technology and improved forms of economic organization.

From this perspective, the education sector's prime purposes are to facilitate skill acquisition, undertake public good research and act as a store house of knowledge. The skills required to promote social and economic development are broad, and range from vocational skills to a deeper appreciation of the arts. Skills can be raised in a host



of ways - through on-job training, learning by doing, self-managed study, as well as learning in formal contexts provided by state and private institutions. Some economists suggest that over 20 percent of a developed country's resources are devoted to education and training in their broadest sense. If these resources are not put to good use, economic performance and social development will be impeded.

The concept of 'excellence' is well established in many fields of activity, and the term is used frequently to refer to very good or outstanding performance. In higher education it means different things in different contexts. Excellence may be equated with the reputation and standing of institutions, but much depends on the perception of student experience and the varying missions of institutions. There are numerous definitions suiting different purposes and different areas of quality assurance and stakeholders' involvement. The concept is vague enough to offer plentiful grounds for both theoretical and practical research. In the view of the working group, it is important to consider excellence as a social phenomenon based on theoretical and cultural considerations, but is the group also recognizes that the concept has practical applications in the context of management and technological development.

Key words: Accountability, excellence, impeded, networking, perception, incubation, socialization, imparting, stake holders, assurance.

**In order to make higher education competitive and global, the credit system is to be introduced.**

1. Research facilities have to be improved and students attracted to take up research work more meaningfully without any hurdles.
2. Multiple regulatory authorities should go, replaced by a single, friendly regulatory authority, giving more autonomy to the universities.
3. The regulatory authority be least interfering, more supportive and follow well-defined assessment criteria for accreditation so that the universities are globally accepted.
4. There is a wide gap between the industry expectations and the university standards, on account of which millions of people are unemployed/unemployable, while thousands of jobs are lying vacant for want of the right personnel.
5. The role of private operators in the field of higher education has increased and a meaningful private-public partnership is a must to cater to the increasing number of users.

Of course, all these are the observations made about the state of higher education in India. But there were also issues raised about whether the government alone was responsible for reaching out to all nooks and corners of the country and all strata of the society in the field of higher education; whether higher education be oriented only towards employability of the students or has some higher goals; how to improve the standards of academics if the worst of the graduates opt for teaching and the cream are not interested in research or academics, etc.

#### **The role of research in higher education:**

The research function of academia remains a prime source of knowledge and innovation at national, regional and international levels. Yet, over the past decade, most industrialized states have been obliged to address the double



challenge of providing wider access to postsecondary education and training and ensuring adequate investment in high-level research. This is proving to be a delicate balancing act, which hinges on visionary policies and a more diversified funding base. Governments pursue reforms to build world-class systems of higher education, which assure quality in both research and teaching. In contrast, the term "World-Class University" tends to denote research-oriented institutions, although this should also recognize those who achieve excellence through innovative approaches to learning.

Mankind is on the brink of a tragic era, in which the anarchic forces of the market and the incessant pressures upon natural resources on the verge of exhaustion will push sovereign states to increasingly dangerous rivalries. What will the role of research in higher education be, in response to the challenge of an active future contribution to human and social development? A good balance must be reached in the basic functions of research in order to avoid governance risks. While focusing only on the transformative function of research may pose dangers to the human dimension and development, unilateral concentration on responsible development aspects may generate reactive approaches and delay economic benefits.

#### **Research and Innovation Systems**

Systems of innovation may have varied scope (international, regional, national or local) and may have different organizational and institutional components: *Organizations* are formal structures that are consciously created with an explicit purpose, and are thus the principal players involved.

*Institutions* can be defined as frameworks of norms, rules, legislation and routines which constitute the rules of the game.

A total of ten critical activities occurring in these systems have been identified through debates

Forum debates:

(1) *Provision* of R&D investment to create new knowledge, primarily in engineering, medicine

and the natural sciences.

(2) *Capacity-building* to create a highly skilled group in the labour force to be used in R&D.

(3) *Establishment* of new product markets.

(4) *Quality assurance* mechanisms.

(5) *Encouraging* creative organizations which promote entrepreneurship and enhance the infrastructure to boost innovation.

(6) *Networking* through markets and mechanisms with interactive learning amongst the institutions involved.

(7) *Creating* enabling institutions which facilitate innovation [such as Intellectual Property (IP) Rights and tax laws, R&D investment, sound environmental and safety regulations].

(8) *Incubation* activities to foster innovative projects.

(9) *Financing* of innovative processes to facilitate the commercialization of knowledge.

(10) *Consultancy services* for technology transfer (including the legal and commercial aspects of innovative activities)



### **Challenges of present higher educational system in India**

Since we have got independence we are facing challenges to establish a great and strong education system. Various governments came and gone. Off course they tried to establish new education policies in the system but this is very sad to dictate that they were not sufficient for our country. Still we are facing lot of problems and challenges in our Education System. India recognizes that the new global scenario poses unprecedented challenges for the higher education system. The University Grants Commission has appropriately stated that a whole range of skills will be demanded from the graduates of humanities, social sciences, natural sciences and commerce, as well as from the various professional disciplines such as agriculture, law, management, medicine or engineering. India can no longer continue the model of general education as it has been persisting in for the large bulk of the student population. Rather, it requires a major investment to make human resource productive by coupling the older general disciplines of humanities, social sciences, natural sciences and commerce to their applications in the new economy and having adequate field based experience to enhance knowledge with skills and develop appropriate attitudes. Responding to these emerging needs, the UGC stated: "The University has a crucial role to play in promoting social change. It must make an impact on the community if it is to retain its legitimacy and gain public support". It seeks to do so by a new emphasis on community based programmes and work on social issues. Concepts of access, equity, relevance and quality can be operationalised only if the system is both effective and efficient. Hence, the management of higher

education and the total networking of the system has become an important issue for effective management.

### **Suggestions for improving quality of higher education**

1. As we move towards a learning society, every human activity will require contributions from experts, and this will place the entire sector of higher education in sharp focus.
2. Industry and Academia connect necessary to ensure curriculum and skills in line with requirements. Skill building is really very crucial to ensure employability of academia to understand and make sure good jobs (keeping in view knowledge + skills+ global professional skills = good jobs).
3. Industry and students are expecting specialized courses to be offered so that they get the latest and best in education and they are also industry ready and employable. Vocational and Diploma courses need to be made more attractive to facilitate specialized programs being offered to students. Incentives should be provided to teachers and researchers to make these professions more attractive for the younger generation.
4. The new technologies offer vast opportunities for progress in all walks of life. It offers opportunities for economic growth, improved health, better service delivery, improved learning and socio-cultural advances.
5. The decline in public funding in the last two plan periods has resulted in serious effects on standards due to increasing costs on non-salary items and emoluments of staff, on the one hand, and declining resources, on the other.
6. The world is entering into an Information Age and developments in



communication, information and technology will open up new and cost-effective approaches for providing the reach of higher education to the youth as well as to those who need continuing education for meeting the demands of explosion of information, fast-changing nature of occupations, and lifelong education

7. Student-Centred Education and Dynamic Methods- Methods of higher education also have to be appropriate to the needs of learning to learn, learning to do, learning to be and learning to become.

9. All round development of personality is the purpose of education. But the present day education is neither imparting true knowledge of life and nor improving the talent of a student by which one can achieve laurels in the field one is interested. So, combination of arts subjects and computer science and science and humanities or literature should be introduced so that such courses could be useful for the students to do jobs after recruitment in some companies which would reduce unnecessary rush to higher education.

11. India realizes, like other nations of the world, that humanity stands today at the head of a new age of a large synthesis of knowledge, and that the East and the West have to collaborate in bringing about concerted action for universal upliftment, and lasting peace and unity.

13. Academic and administrative audit should be conducted once in three years in colleges by external experts for ensuring quality in all aspects of academic activities. The self-finance colleges should come forward for accreditation and fulfill the requirements of accreditation.

15. In any nation education is the basic necessity for the socio-economic development of the individuals and the society. In reality only 20% of the population is educated in India. So, improved standard of education as first priority should be offered to the majority by the govt. authorities with sincere political will. Also, privatization of higher education is absolutely necessary in a vast country like India as government alone is helpless to do so.

16. Quality depends on its all functions and activities: teaching and academic programs, research and scholarship, staffing, students, building, facilities, equipments, services to the community and the academic environment. It also requires that higher education should be characterized by its international dimensions: exchange of knowledge, interactive networking, mobility of teachers and students and international research projects, while taking into account the national cultural values and circumstances.

18. World Class Education- Indian government is not giving priority to the development of Standard in education. India should aspire for the international standard in education. Many national universities like in the USA, UK, Australia, etc. allow studies in higher education for foreign students in their countries and through correspondence courses as well. In the same way India Universities of world class education can also offer courses of studies to foreign students taking advantage of the globalization process. To achieve that goal it should adopt uniform international syllabus in its educational institutions.

17. The number of Ph.Ds from Indian Universities should increase with proper



standards. This should be seen in the context of extremely low fraction of Ph.Ds in India in relation to M.Sc./B.Tech., as compared to what it is in USA, UK, Germany, Japan etc. Meritorious doctoral students should be recognized through teaching assistantships with stipends over and above the research fellowships. Identifying talented, meritorious students and encouraging them through recognition is very important to attract students into research and teaching.

#### **Conclusion:**

If excellence is to be used as a means for identifying the standards and quality of academic provision that goes beyond a basic threshold that applies to all institutions, then there needs to be a way in which it can be recognized and assessed. It is not sufficient to accept that excellence is a reflection of the reputation of institutions and academic departments, or for that matter, the ranking of institutions in university league tables. Reputation is earned over an extended period of time and is strengthened through research experience, accumulated knowledge, social interaction and the formation of a vibrant and productive academic community. Education is a socialization process and students are influenced by

the values, culture and ethos of their institutions. This, however, does not guarantee an excellent learning experience for students or pre-determine their achievements. Elite institutions often attract the most able students but do not necessarily guarantee the highest levels of educational gain. The principal conclusion from the discussion is that the concept has the greatest relevance and value if it is applied in the context of defined criteria. Excellence can be evaluated against agreed standards that apply across the range of different academic disciplines and different types of institutions. It is a relative concept and can be applied to reflect the variability between institutions and the student context.

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