



Higher Education in India – Issues and Challenges

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Key words:

Higher Education is in the process of change. The change is necessity stated by projected Indian Demography and its future. India with the largest Higher Education sector for the world has the potential to play key role at the global level in the sphere of agricultural, manufacturing, services and IT etc of subject area and designing of appropriate course circulate to tap the inherent talents of the students and development of the skills and knowledge of them. The aspect of such development is based on the subject related to humanities and liberal art and social sciences is another area to reckon with. The role of Higher Education Institutions as the centers of knowledge generation to the process of knowledge with quality and sustainability will contribute for the development of the object of knowledge society.

Key words: Higher Education, Quality, Social science, Skills, Technology, Humanities

1. Introduction

Education is fundamental to every constituent of the society irrespective of gender, physical, racial, economic, geographical, cultural, or linguistic differences. Education is a Nation's Strength. A developed nation is inevitably an educated nation.

Higher education refers to a level of education that is provided at academies, universities, colleges' institutes, of technology and certain other collegiate-level institutions, such as vocational schools, business schools and career colleges that award academic degrees of professional certifications (Nanda Dhameja, 2015)

India's higher education system is the world's third largest in terms of students, next to China and the United States. Universities and its constituent colleges are the main institutes of higher education in India. Indian higher education system is spread over 42 central universities, 275 state universities, 130 deemed

universities, 90 private universities. Additionally 5 institutions were established functioning under the Act, Along with 33 institutes of National Importance. Nearly 33000 institutions function as government and private degree colleges which also include 1800 exclusive women's colleges. Most of these universities in India have affiliating colleges where undergraduate courses are being taught. However Jawaharlal University is a remarkable exception to this rule. Apart from these higher education institutes there are several private institutes in India that offer various professional courses in India. Distance learning is also a feature of the Indian higher education system.

The country lacks the critical mass in higher education. Its gross enrolment ratio

(GER) is a mere 11 per cent compared to China's 20 per cent, the USA's 83 per cent and South Korea's 91 per cent. This means that in comparison to India, China has double the number of students



pursuing higher education. The Eleventh Five Year Plan envisages increase in the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in higher education to 15 per cent of the population in the age cohort group of 18-24 years by 2011-12. This requires a substantial increase in the number of institutions and consequently would require an adequate number of teachers for imparting education. Failure to redress the faculty shortage would hamper the achievement of the targets to increase in GER set out by Government.

The prospects and development in the higher education sector in India needs a critical examination in a rapidly globalising world. Expansion, inclusion and excellence were the three objectives of higher education policy of Government of India. The government had taken many steps to increase student enrollment in higher education and quality improvement in higher educational institutions. Keeping in view The Government has constituted a Knowledge Commission to suggest measures to alleviate the problems that higher education sector is afflicted with and make India a Knowledge super power in the global economy. But the government is at a Crossroad. While there is a need for an expansion of the higher education sector, resource constraint for both the Centre and the states poses challenge to ensure quality education even in the existing institutions.

The government after pursuing neo-liberal policies for the last 17 odd years is keen to open the higher education sector to the private providers, either through public-private participation or foreign direct investment in higher education. The society is divided. While one section is opposed to

co modification of education, the other section thinks that involving the private sector is the only way out. How would the higher education sector evolve in response to these challenges is a crucial issue for us to understand and anticipate. How is the sector contemplating changes to engage with the world? If India is to be a global economic powerhouse it is essential to nurture this higher education sector.

Critical issues in Indian higher education

As India strives to compete in a globalised economy in areas that require highly trained professionals, the quality of higher education becomes increasingly important. The present system of higher education does not serve the purpose for which it has been started. In general education itself has become so profitable a business that quality is lost in the increase of quantity of professional institutions with quota system and politicization adding fuel to the fire of spoil system, thereby increasing unemployment of graduates without quick relief to mitigate their sufferings in the job market of the country. So, the drawbacks of the higher education system underscore the need for reforms to make it worthwhile and beneficial to all concerned. Most observers agree that Indian higher education, the significant and impressive developments of the past few decades notwithstanding, faces major challenges in both quantitative and qualitative terms. Perhaps the clearest and boldest statement of this issue can be found in the "Report to the Nation 2006" of the National Knowledge Commission which concludes that there is 'a quiet crisis in higher education in India that runs deep', and that it has to do with both the quantity and the quality of higher education in India. Reflecting on



the findings of a confidential report by the National Assessment and Accreditation Council, which is affiliated to the University Grants Commission (UGC), he expressed his concern over the fact that two thirds (68%) of the country's universities and 90 percent of its colleges are "of middling or poor quality" and that well over half of the faculty in India's colleges do not have the appropriate degree qualifications. Knowledge is the base for overall growth and if the nation has to be competitive and to be at par with the globalization pace, we will have to respond to the market forces.

The growth of higher education in India has been largely guided by the service able prerequisite of the economy. After independence, the role of the state in planning out a development path and also in building higher education institutions was guided by mutuality of purpose. Most observers of higher education in India feel that performance of higher education institutions has been less than satisfactory in terms of access, equity and quality.

Now there is an urgent need to work for the development of the educational sector to meet the need of the emerging opportunities, increasing younger generation population and challenges of the 21st century.

Challenges of present higher educational system in India

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. The shift can occur only through a systemic approach to change as also the development of its human resource, and networking the system through information and communication technology.

There are many basic problems facing higher education in India today. These include inadequate infrastructure and facilities, large vacancies in faculty positions and poor faculty thereof, low student enrolment rate, outmoded teaching methods, declining research standards, unmotivated students, overcrowded classrooms and widespread geographic, income, gender, and ethnic imbalances. Apart from concerns relating to deteriorating standards, there is reported exploitation of students by many private providers. Ensuring equitable access to quality higher education for students coming from poor families is a major challenge. Students from poor background are put to further disadvantage since they are not academically prepared to crack highly competitive entrance examinations that have bias towards urban elite and rich students having access to private tuitions and coaching. Education in basic sciences and subjects that are not market friendly has suffered. Research in higher education institutions is at its lowest ebb. There is an inadequate and diminishing financial support for higher education from the government and from society.

The time now is to modernize our education system so that our country



can get much more technically graduated people which can help our country to developed state. Today's youth always try to go foreign for his higher education as they have much better facilities and quality of their system. Our governments trying for various challenges faced but no one is doing well for that. Government came and goes but system remains intact.

Higher education is extremely diverse and the challenges and issues faced by higher education institutions are just as diverse. The process of education is not merely digesting books. It is also about doing several co-curricular and extra-curricular activities that give a broader meaning to life in general and education in particular. Facilities for the same are lacking or not easily accessible in India. Even where facilities exist, there is a lack of information about the same.

There is a lack of universities and institutes for education but one most important fact is that the quality of education is absent in higher education. There are very few teachers and their knowledge is very insufficient. Our top class students are hard-worker but not innovative. They are not capable enough to produce new technology. There is a great need to revolutionize higher education.

Suggestions for improving quality of higher education

There are some suggestions for improving quality of higher education-

1. **Student-Centered 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. Student-centered education and employment of

dynamic methods of education will require from teachers new attitudes and new skills. Methods of teaching through lectures will have to subordinate to the methods that will lay stress on self-study, personal consultation between teachers and pupils, and dynamic sessions of seminars and workshops. Methods of distance education will have to be employed on a vast scale.

2. **Innovative Practices-** 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. Though efforts are required to improve the country's innovative capacity, yet the efforts should be to build on the existing strengths in light of new understanding of the research innovation-growth linkage.
3. **To Provide Need Based Job-Oriented Courses-** 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. The programme must be focused on graduate studies and research and developing strategies and mechanisms for the rapid and efficient transfer of knowledge and



for its application to specific national and local conditions and needs. Meritorious doctoral students should be recognized through teaching assistantships with stipends over and above the research fellowships. Finally, based on knowledge only vision of the future life and work can be had; based on this vision only a broad ambition can be fixed for oneself; and based on this ambition only one can lead interesting life doing satisfying job to do remarkable achievements in some field in the world.

4. **Quality development-** 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. The level of education and knowledge being imparted by many colleges...is not up to the mark. Instead of concentrating on quantity, these institutions should concentrate on quality. The approach of doctoral research in social sciences needs to be more analytical and comparative and be related to society, policy and economy.
5. **Personality Development-** Finally, education should be for the flowering of personality but not for the suppression of creativity or natural

skill. In the globalized world opportunities for the educated people are naturally ample in scope. As a result business process outsourcing (BPO) activities have increased competition in the world trade leading towards the production of quality goods and their easy availability everywhere in the world market. That is the way the world can be developed for peace, prosperity and progress by able and skilful men.

6. **Fair Quality Assurance System-** Colleges and Private institutes should set up Internal Quality Assurance Cell and must follow a minimum standard to give degrees. The quality assurance system must be independent of political and institutional interaction and it must have a basis in the legislation. There should be operational, financial and academic autonomy coupled with accountability. There is a need of an independent accreditation agency with a conglomerate of government, industry, academia; society etc. means all stakeholders of the education to ensure that the stakeholders particularly the students are not taken for a ride. They should be able to know whether a particular institution delivers value or not, then things can be under control to some extent. It is also important that all institutes of higher learning must make public the acceptability of their courses and degrees. (i.e. the status, recognition and acceptability of their courses by other institutions).
7. **Examination Reforms-** Examination reforms, gradually shift from the terminal, annual and semester examinations to regular and



continuous assessment of student's performance in learning should be implemented

8. **Industry and Academia Connection-** 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).

Conclusion

There has been tremendous increase in institutions of higher learning in all disciplines. But with the quantitative growth has it been able to attend to the core issue of quality. India is today one of the fastest developing countries of the world with the annual growth rate going above 9%. In order to sustain that rate of growth, there is need to increase the number of institutes and also the quality of higher education in India. To reach and achieve the future requirements there is an urgent need to relook at the Financial Resources, Access and Equity, Quality Standards, Relevance and at the end the Responsiveness. To attain and sustain national, regional or international quality, certain components are particularly relevant, notably careful selection of staff and continuous staff development, in particular through the promotion of appropriate programs for

academic development, including teaching/learning methodology and mobility between countries, between higher education institutions and the world of work, as well as student mobility within and between countries. Internal self-evaluation and external review must be conducted openly by independent specialists, if possible with international experts.

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