

Contemporary Issues and Challenges of Higher Education in India

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Abstract—Triggered by globalization, during the twentieth century education, skills, and the acquisition of knowledge have become crucial determinants of a person's and a nation's productivity. The primary determinant of a country's standard of living is how well it succeeds in developing and utilizing the skills and knowledge, and furthering the health and educating the majority of its population. As part of global economy over the past few years, India's higher education sector has witnessed tremendous growth and rapid changes. The challenges are multifaceted and multidimensional. The state of Indian higher education has always been in the dock, more specifically for its quality. India still lacks in terms of right faculty, right infrastructure, meaningful research and development projects and equal access to higher education. Globalization and privatization have imposed new challenges, where the nation is still entangled in solving the basic issues of accessibility to higher education for all. In the wake transition from elitist to mass education, universities and colleges are also under tremendous pressure to enhance access and equity on the one hand, and to maintain high standards of quality and excellence on the other. In this connection this paper makes an attempt to analyze the status of higher education, issues and challenges of higher education and so as to represent the relevant recommendations to improve quality in higher education of India.

Index Terms— Higher education, Globalization, knowledge, Access, Quality, Challenges

I. INTRODUCTION

During the twentieth century, education, skills, and the acquisition of knowledge have become crucial determinants of a person's and a nation's productivity. One can even call the twentieth century the "Age of Human Capital" in the sense that the primary determinant of a country's standard of living is how well it succeeds in developing and utilizing the skills and knowledge, and furthering the health and educating the majority of its population.

It is necessary to recognize that the present approach towards higher education is governed by the "National policy on Education" of 1986 and Program of Action of 1992, The 1986 policy and Action Plan of 1992 was based on the two landmark reports namely the "University Education Commission" of 1948-49 (popularly known as Radhakrishnan Commission), and the "Education Commission" of 1964-66, (popularly known as Kothari Commission Report) These two landmark reports in fact laid down the basic framework for the National policy for higher education in the country.

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access to higher education. Globalization and privatization have imposed new challenges, where the nation is still entangled in solving the basic issues of accessibility to higher education for all. In the wake transition from elitist to mass education, universities and colleges are also under tremendous pressure to enhance access and equity on the one hand, and to maintain high standards of quality and excellence on the other. In this connection this paper makes an attempt to analyze the status of higher education, issues and challenges of higher education and so as to represent the relevant recommendations to improve quality in higher education of India.

Objectives of the paper:

1. To highlight the present status of higher education in India
2. To focus on challenges and prospects of higher education.
3. To Suggest some measures to prove the higher education level in India.

Methodology:

This paper attempts to review the status of Higher Education in India, the contemporary issues and challenges of Higher Education in India and Recommendations to improve the quality of higher education in India. The

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relevant secondary data is collected through various sources such as websites, Economic survey, books and journals.

Status of Higher Education in India:

India has one of the largest higher education systems in the world, after the USA, with 25.9 million students enrolled in more than 45,000 degree and diploma institutions in the country. It has witnessed particularly high growth in the last decade, with enrolment of students increasing at a CAGR of 10.8% and institutions at a CAGR of 9%. The private sector has played an instrumental role in this growth, with private institutions now accounting for 64% of the total number of institutions and 59% of enrolment in the country, as compared to 43% and 33%, respectively, a decade ago. The Government has also given the required thrust to the sector in its Five Year Plans. During the Eleventh Plan period (2007 -2012), India achieved a Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) of 17.9%, up from 12.3% at the beginning of the Plan period. Various legislative actions were also taken during this period, including the introduction of the Higher Education and Research Bill, the Educational Tribunal Bill and the Foreign Educational Institutions Bill, to enhance transparency and quality in the sector. However, in spite of the significant progress made during the past few years, India's higher education sector is still plagued with several challenges, e.g., its relatively low GER, inequitable access to higher education by community, gender and geography, and lack of high- quality research and education institutions, resulting in sub-optimal outcomes.

Major Issues and Challenges of Higher Education in India.

1. Access to Higher Education

The various population census of India reveals considerable disparities in rural – urban areas to access for higher education in India.

Occupational Disparities

Occupation is an important factor that affects the enrolment level of higher studies. The students whom parents are engaged in self employed or salaried employees their GER is higher than students whom parents involve in daily wage activities.

Disproportionate Finance Allocation

Government spends more money of promotion of up to higher secondary level as compared to higher education level.

II. Equity of Higher Education

Caste based Reservation: To overcome the deep rooted problem of social inequality, successive governments have introduces caste based reservations in

higher education admissions which account approximately 49 per cent of total seats. Due to this system, better talent coming from non-reserved category is deprived of the admission in good institutions, which creates social unrest and used as tool to make vote bank by the political parties.

Regional inequalities: The maximum average budget allocation on education was allocated by the states in India is not uniform size of amount which leads regional imbalances in the quality of higher education in India.

Gender Disparities there is also a gender disparity in India in higher education.

III. Quality of Higher Education

The mismatch in the supply of the educated (degree) which are product by the institution which often fails to take note of the nature of the demand of skill and education in the contemporary situation. From this, one can further infer and also conclude as substantiated by facts that where there is more supply of graduates from general education there occur large numbers of unemployment due to lack of employment opportunity and substantiate this ultimately, directly and indirectly encourages the export the brain from the state (i.e. called brain-drain), create the problems like youth unrest and ultimately drive the youths to indulge in various anti-social activities

Quality Variation:

The higher education institution suffer from large quality variation in so much so that a NASSCOM-MacKinsey report-2005 has said that not more than 15per cent of graduates of general education and 25-30per cent of Technical Education are fit for employment. The various regulatory bodies regulating higher education have constituted autonomous bodies like NAAC, NBA, AB by ICAR, DEC, by NCTE etc. for monitoring quality standards in the institutions under their purview. Though there exist autonomous bodies for assessment and monitoring quality standards in the institutions of higher education are suffering from two major deficiencies. First, the quality norms of such councils are not comparable with international standards. Secondly, the enforcement process is not strength. Further political interference and corruption dilute the role and impact of these institutions n ensuring the desired standards.

Global competition:

India being signatory of WTO is bound to open up its market for trade in services including education but it does not have a clear policy for strengthening its education sector to compete with the giants in the world. Policy restrictions stop the competent institutions from making necessary changes in the processes of admission,

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recruitment and salaries of faculty\staff and opening campuses aboard. In lack of proper policy provisions in time, higher education sector in the country is adversely affected.

Recommendations:

1. Course of content: course of content should be according to needs and requirement of the local and national demands of skills and knowledge so that students can adjust better themselves when they entered in any job

2. Adequate development assistance: Concerning the UGC recognition, adequate development assistance must be provided to those colleges who are being deprived and left out from being recognized (except the 7362 colleges from that of the 25000 in India), in order to enable them to meet the minimum eligibility requirements so as to be able to access further development grants in further

3. Public awareness: public awareness should be created about the importance of education and skill development vocational courses through various means of open and Distance learning system basically for those who are mostly not interested in sending their children to school and colleges especially in rural and under developed areas.

4. Transparent and understandable credit based system should be implemented

5. Online education should be provided it will insure uniformity and equity.

6. Evaluation and assessment should be made in a continuous process for upgrading the quality and bringing the innovation and modification in education.

7. Guidance and counseling: Before offering a course to the students counseling should be done so that he\she can choose subjects and courses according to his\her interest, thus we can reduce the drop-outs ration.

8. Financial disbursement: At last but not the least, the financial disbursement should be proportionately made for elementary, secondary as well as higher and technical education. Besides these, colleges and universities should have their scope to generate resources themselves for economic viability, expansion and their growth.

Dash, Mrutyunjay (2011) India in this context requires a comprehensive reforms package to harness optimum potential of its human resources crucial in achieving its socio-economic objectives. He has given following recommendations for improvement of higher education India.

a) While access to qualitative professional higher education needs to be further expanded at the same time equity must be ensured by extending financial and academic support to poor and marginalized sections of the society.

b) In order to increase access ICTs aided teaching and learning modules should be developed.

c) Sufficient training programmes for faculty members should be conducted to adopt new skills and expertise to develop learning systems relevant and contemporary to the requirement of the 21st century.

d) Quality assurance is the key to sustainability of any system. As such, higher education system involving all its stakeholders with appropriate regulatory mechanism should create conditions congenial enough for promotion of research, innovative and creative thoughts aiming to ensure high quality.

e) International university networks and partnerships should be developed to promote high quality research and develop internationally competitive curricula and teaching practices and dissemination of innovative ideas.

f) In view of dearth of public funds in a rapidly growing economy, higher education must be based on public-private partnerships model.

g) Academic freedom both for teachers and students should be provided to realize academic excellence.

h) Concerted efforts both at govt. and private level must be made to attract the best of the talents with a sound compensation package along with perks and amenities.

VI CONCLUSION

Knowledge is power and therefore has remained one of the most important driving forces of sustaining human existence. For any economy to achieve exponential economic growth, it is essential to gear up skill based activities through a potential, vibrant and dynamic higher education system. In India, higher education was traditionally looked after by the government, but nowadays private sector has also entered in to share responsibility to provide higher education. The countries has good infrastructure and a good range of programs but it is not according to the international standard, even some private institutes not hired quality teacher which leads to deterioration of quality of education . The councils and government bodies responsible for quality assurance do not have internationally matchable quality norms on one hand and an effective system to monitor and control violation of the existing norms by the institutions on the other. Further, the political parties manipulate the issues of access and equity in higher education for their vested political interest rather than taking the right steps to enhance the quality of higher education. As a result those who can afford the high cost of higher education look forward for the opportunities aboard while the other has to compromise with sub-standard education. If India has to

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emerge as preferred location for higher education in the globalizing world it will have to develop a national policy to address the challenges of sub-standard quality, effective systems of monitoring and control, red-tapism in growth and development and political interference.

Looking at the deficiencies in most of the key areas of higher education system of India like accessibility, quality, financing and governance, a strategic paradigm shift in the policy framework and overall functioning is needed to meet growing expectations and societal needs. So from above discussion it can be concluded that government accreditation and norms setting bodies should take care access, equity and quality level while offering grades.

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