

INDIAN HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE ERA OF GLOBALIZATION: CHALLENGES AND QUALITY MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

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Education is the most vital input for the growth and prosperity of a nation. It provides strength and resilience to enable people to respond to the changing needs of the hour. Education is the backbone of all national endeavour. It has the power to transform human beings into human resources. We cannot build a sustainable and prosperous nation without human resource development which mainly depends on the health and vitality of higher education.

Apart from primary and secondary education, higher education is the main instrument for development and transformation. Higher education has the omnipotent role of preparing leaders for different walks of life – social, political, economic, cultural, scientific and technological. Higher education has special value in the contemporary knowledge society which contributes both directly and indirectly to the wealth of a nation. According to the study of 120 countries, the World Bank reported that human capital accounts for 64% of total wealth whereas physical and natural resources account for only 16% and 20% of total wealth respectively. Hence economic prosperity and human capital have a direct relationship (Gupta - 2004).

Universities and colleges exclusively impart higher education of different types – Arts, Science, Commerce faculties etc. The efficiency of higher education depends on the efficiency of universities. According to Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, the late Prime Minister of India, “ A university stands for humanism, for tolerance, for freedom, for the adventure of ideas and for the search of truth. It stands for the on-word march of the human race towards ever higher objectives. If the Universities discharge their duties adequately, then it is well with the nation and the people”. The World Bank report (1994) highlights the worth of higher education which benefits state and society in several ways: by empowering individuals with advance knowledge and skills to discharge responsibilities in government, business and profession and by producing new knowledge through research and serving as a conduit for the transfer, adaptation and

dissemination of knowledge generated elsewhere in the world. The Task Force constituted by the World Bank and UNESCO (2000) observed that higher education helps increase wages and productivity, which directly enriches individuals and society. Universities providing higher education are the centers of excellence, research, innovation, the dissemination of knowledge and transformation.

From 1950 to 2003 there has been a lot of expansion in the field of higher education, resulting in 309 universities, 15,614 colleges, 9.28 million students and 4.60 lakh teachers. India has built one of the largest higher education systems in the world, second only to the USA. A variety of universities such as affiliate, residential, deemed and specialized universities in the fields of agriculture, medicine, technology, veterinary and open learning are operating. By 2003 India had 18 central universities, 183 state and 81 deemed, creating a great network in the field of higher education.

Realizing the need for regulation to ensure quality, a number of bodies such as the University Grant Commission (UGC), All India Council of Technical Education (AICTE), National Council of Teacher Education (NCTE), Bar Council of India (BCI), Council of Architecture (CA), Medical Council of India (MCI), Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR), Indian Nursing Council (INC), Pharmacy Council of India (PCI) Dental Council of India (DCI), National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) and National Accreditation Board (NAB) were established and empowered to monitor different plans and policies, promote research activities, allocate grants, revise and formulate examination systems, evaluate curricula, organize training programs for teachers and professionals and assess and ensure the quality of higher education in their respective areas of interest. In spite of such a big network and large number of statutory bodies functioning in this field, the quality of higher education in India is still very poor

and faces enormous challenges in today's globalized era.

Contemporary Challenges:

1. Internationalization of Higher Education: -

Globalization demands the integration of national economics with the free movement of goods, capital, labour and ideas. It has resulted in the perception of higher education as a commercial product governed by market forces and the principles of demand and supply. However, our higher education is totally unable to cope with international standards. Sub-standard higher education is creating problems of brain-drain as it fails to accommodate its talented students. Bearing in mind the consequences of globalization and the immigration of overseas students, it is essential to improve the standard of higher education in India.

2. Quantitative growth: -

Although there has been a noticeable increase in the number of universities, colleges, students and teachers in higher education since independence, it is very low in relation to the size of the population and compared to developed nations. There are 684 universities in Japan, 2364 in USA and 330 in Germany. There are also insufficient infrastructural facilities to accommodate the growing needs of students and teachers of higher education in India.

3. Quality Assurance: -

Qualitatively our higher education is very poor in respect to trained teachers, infrastructure, relevant programs, up-to-date inter-disciplinary curricula, research and evaluation.

4. Research Work: -

The quality of higher education depends on intensive and extensive research programs. Today's higher education suffers from inferior research, which has no significance or contributory value to the field of education but is used instead of awarding degrees and certificates that lead to career promotion.

5. Accountability: -

Lack of proper accountability curtails the standard of higher education. From managing bodies to teachers, students and parents, no one is truly accountable for their duties and responsibilities. There is no

proper channel of assessment of their job responsibilities.

6. Students Enrolment: -

Enrolment in higher education is still very low, accounting for only 7% of the total population compared to other developing nations like Indonesia, Brazil and Thailand where enrolment is 11%, 12% and 19% respectively. Moreover, the 7% pursuing higher education in India mostly belong to the higher and middle classes leaving the poor behind.

7. Privatization: -

The privatization of higher education is a recent intervention as a result of globalization and has paved the way for quantitative. But the real challenge is to have quality control measures.

8. Examination reforms: -

The University Education Commission (1948-49) headed by Dr. S. Radhakrishnan stated that the single most important reform in higher education was the examination system. This system is now the home of blatant and widespread corruption, inefficiency, inaccuracy, rote learning, selective study, inflexibility and the active discouragement of innovative teaching, all of which impact upon the quality of higher education.

9. Inadequate Governance: -

Lack of openness and transparency in the governance of higher education from governmental level to university and college levels is acting as a bottleneck in the quality improvement of higher education and creating additional problems of the promotion of staff and fairness in administrative work.

10. Curriculum: -

Higher education has failed to update its curriculum so that it can keep pace with globalization and techno-scientific developments. The outdated course content cannot and does not satisfy the needs of the present age but instead promotes unemployment, violence, superstition and fanaticism.

Quality Management of Higher Education: a strategic plan of action: -

Globalization has created ample avenues for the integration of our views and knowledge in different spheres and providing greater

opportunities for services, goods and the exchange of ideas. The present era demands both the quantitative and qualitative improvement of our higher education which may be achieved with the following strategic plan of action:-

1. **Internationalizing and raising the standard of higher education** to welcome overseas learners to higher education in India and at the same time check the brain drain of our own students.
2. **Increasing accessibility of higher education** for all people irrespective of economic strata and promoting the base of talents of learners with sufficient development of infrastructural facilities, institutions, laboratories, equipment etc.
3. **Enhancing the quality of higher education** through innovation in teaching, recruiting talented faculty and introducing inter-disciplinary courses and need-based syllabi.
4. **Promoting Creative research works** in various fields of higher education with proper liaison between industries, laboratories, universities and professionals. Talented and skilled people with productive skills must be encouraged to pursue both fundamental and action research
5. **Depoliticising the system of higher education** to promote discipline among teachers and students
6. **Accelerating greater enrolment in higher education** with the provision of incentives, scholarships and stipends in both formal and non formal institutions with parity and equality. The proposal to open rural and private universities should be given due importance as a way to encourage the rural poor to pursue higher education.
7. **Encouraging open learning / distance learning** in different fields of higher education.

to cope with the explosive nature of the population.

8. **Setting accountability norms** for all risk-taking personnel – management, teachers, students, policy framers, parents etc. thus promoting the quality and responsibilities in higher .
9. **Adopting openness and transparency** in the matter of the governance of higher education from top to bottom following the norms of equality and accessibility, which will enhance career, efficiency, potentialities and job satisfaction in the working personnel of higher education.
10. **Liberalizing private bodies and managements** so that they can enter the field of higher education with sufficient quality control devices and accountability keeping in view equity, equality, parity and accessibility on economic and social grounds.
11. **Reforming the examination system** with the total abolition of rigidity, corruption, malpractice, selective study and rote-learning and ensuring flexibility, reliability and transparency of examination, evaluation and reporting system and at the same time promoting innovative teaching, self study and productive learning.
12. **Updating course content** to meet the needs and prospectus of a globalized society and introducing need-based, skill oriented and interdisciplinary curricula which will promote employability, eternal values, unity and integrity among the students and eradicate violence, superstition, fanaticism etc.
13. **Harnessing Information and Communication Technology (ICT)** to keep pace with the technocratic world for better results in the fields of research, innovation and production in different areas of higher education.
14. **Ensuring proper co-ordination** in regulatory bodies in the matter of inspection, teaching, training, planning and financing higher education which will develop the working capacity of universities and colleges.

Higher education is an essential means of national development. Its institutions should function with the true spirit of disseminating knowledge, transforming society and bringing peace and harmony to the nation. Gandhiji, the father of the nation, was right when he said that university education should turn out true servants of the people willing to live and die for their country. His vision coincided with the ideas of Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, president of India (2004), who said that our education system should highlight the importance of entrepreneurship and develop such skills right from college to provide them with opportunities for creativity and freedom and the ability to generate wealth through setting up ventures producing marketable products. Hence higher education should be quality based, marching towards the pursuit of truth through knowledge and enlightenment to open up new vistas of development and humanism. Such an education will ignite the minds of young citizens and build a healthy nation.

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