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Issues and challenges in higher education: With special reference to commerce and management education in India

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Abstract

Modern commerce & management education includes diversified fields of education and research such as: Finance, Marketing, Accounting, Human Resource Management, Entrepreneurship Development, Production, Operations and Strategic Management Commercial and Business Law etc. These sectors have immense potential for the rapid growth of the economy. India being a developing country is facing new challenges to cope with, which put high demand on the educational system of the country. An attempt has been made in this paper to study the status and highlight, issues and challenges, government initiatives, opportunities and the road ahead in higher education with special reference to commerce and management education in India.

Keywords: Roasted groundnut, Dehulling, moisture content, operating speed, efficiency

Introduction

In the modern world, which changes daily, we are faced with many challenges that impose the necessity of reshaping the business and management strategies, as well as the ways of leading the organizations and overall economic policy. There is an enormous responsibility on the managers and economists for the development of economy and society as a whole, and the responsibility for researchers and scholars in this area is even greater, since they are expected to offer new purposeful and efficient solutions and guidelines for the development of enterprises and sustainable economic growth. The Annual National Conference on "Contemporary Issues, Challenges and Developments in Commerce & Management" has been the opportunity for researchers to attempt to contribute to solving the current problems of commerce and management, as well as to launch new issues that will be subject to consideration and resolution in the days ahead.

In order to attain economic growth of a country, one needs qualified managers, economists and accountants with advanced practical knowledge to enable to evaluate and analyse the complexities of the large scale business and other financial institutions in one side and to face the stiff competition from the MNCs from the other side. Here, the commercial and management experts who have trained in different aspects of business environment, have a very important role to play. Keeping in view the above facts and demand of the time, prospects of commerce and management education seems very bright looking at the available market size.

Market size

India holds an important place in the global education industry and has one of the largest networks of higher education institutions in the world after US and China. India has the world's largest population of about 50 Crores in the age bracket of 5-24 years and this provides a great opportunity for the education sector. The education sector in India was estimated at US\$ 91.7 billion in FY18 and is expected to reach US\$ 101.1 billion in FY19. The Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in higher education has reached at 25.8 per cent in 2017-18. Moreover, the aim of the government to raise the GER to 30 per cent by 2022 will further boost the growth of the education in India. The country has become the second largest market for e-learning after the US.

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The sector is expected to reach US\$ 1.96 billion by 2021 with around 9.5 million users. However, there is still a lot of potential for further development in the education system.

Our education system is facing certain burning issues since long and experts and planners have no clear agenda for the education sector and hold diverse views on educational reform. Some educationalists out right reject the present system and have a great respect for the ancient system who gave emphasis on imparting “moral, spiritual and cultural values” to the students.

Ancient Indian Education System created deep understanding of human values and gave importance to ‘Character’. It was felt that ‘Character’ of a person was more valuable than his wealth. This developed a spiritual and cultural heritage, besides imparting knowledge. Lord Macaulay’s has great praise for the Indian education system. He said, “I have travelled across the length & breadth of India, and I have not seen one person who is a beggar, who is a thief, such wealth I have seen in this country, such high moral values, people of such calibre that I do not think we would conquer this country, unless we break the very backbone of this nation, which is her spiritual and cultural heritage. And, therefore, I propose that we replace India’s old and ancient education system, her culture, for, if the Indian think that “all that is foreign and English good, is greater than their own”, they will lose their self-esteem, their native culture and they will become what we want them, a truly dominated nation.”

Present education system has some common defects or faults and these defects are the same across the education chain (School, Vocational and Higher). But it’s even more interesting that these questions were the same for the Kothari Commission in 1968. As we craft our reform agenda, it may be useful to remember a story about an exam Albert Einstein gave his students, fifteen minutes into the exam, a brave student stood up and asked why the questions in this year’s exams were the same as last year’s exams. Prof. Einstein replied: “Because the answers are different this year”. India is also trying to find different answer to same old questions in recent years.

Let’s look at five faults ^[1] in our education system

- 1. Quantity V/S Quality:** Our educationists, policy planners have tried to control quality by controlling quantity and we have ended up with neither. We need time to excel in quality because healthy education institutions are not born adults. We have witnessed that during 1980 the mushrooming number of engineering colleges in southern states became the supply chain of India’s IT industry as the time went by. The time gave rise to competition and later only those survived who were providing better quality education and others suffered close down. So, once we expand quantitatively then we should talk for quality because in the long run only quality can survive.
- 2. Repair V/s Prepare:** Many educationists favour that education should not be for earning rather it should be for learning. I believe this is wrong because we can’t teach somebody in sixth month what they should have learnt in fifteen years i.e. sixth month is enough to teach somebody to be a plumber, mason, sales person or customer service person but too short to teach them to be confident, curious, creative, a risk taker or team player. Our youth is taking education so that he or she

may contribute to the meagre income of his / her family. The most debated issue in poor countries like India is that the learning is for earning or for learning. So, what I wish to point out here is that there must be flexibility between vocational education and general education so one can change stream at his own will from general to vocational and vocational to general depending upon his/ her objective for earning or learning. Recently, government has accepted this policy.

- 3. Price v/s cost:** The cost of education in India is increasing at a fast pace. From primary to secondary and higher education parents are finding it difficult to pay growing fee and other costs associated with education. According to National Sample Survey Office (NSSO), between 2008 and 2014, the average annual private expenditure for general education (primary level to post graduation and above) shot up by a staggering 175 percent while during the same period, the annual cost of professional and technical education increased by 96 percent. The expenses typically include course fees, books, transportation, coaching and other related costs ^[2].

As we go towards quality from quantity questions around the cost and price of education are surely going to generate more anger and controversy. What are fair fees? How much profit is fair? How can we create incentives for investors without the scalping of education consumers with asymmetric information? Should the pay commission scales for public teachers apply to the private sector? Where you stand on this issue depends on where you sit, but we have enough evidence that price controls do not work. Education in India comprises of government, government aided and private institutions of which nearly 40% are government. With the population growth rate of 1.5%, there is tremendous pressure on the education system to provide quality education at affordable price and improve the literacy rate.

- 4. Funding V/S Delivery:** It is also a controversial question whether the public funding should only be for public institutions or it should be for both public and private delivery system. With the public funding being no more in a position to take-up the challenging task of expansion and diversification of the higher education system in the country to meet the continuously growing demands at present, there is little option other than bringing in private initiatives in a massive way to meet the various challenges. In order to improve the quality and open competition public money should be made available to private players in PPP mode also so both may excel.
- 5. Excellence V/s Inclusion:** The question of excellence v/s inclusion is very relevant in Indian context. Often scholars argue in favour of excellence where we have tight entry gates and wide-open exit gates. But in a country with huge population we may not entirely rely upon the IIT or IIM model we will have to favour open entry gates and wide exit gates so that we may fulfil the desire of masses to get higher education.

These issues are important for our country, as it is now engaged in the use of higher education as a powerful tool to build a knowledge-based information society of the 21st

Century. University departments will have to perform multiple roles like ensuring quality without compromising for quantity, imparting new skills essential for earning or getting a job without compromising the basic values and ethics, imparting education at affordable cost without discouraging the private sector investment and at the same time achieving the world class standard so our higher education institutions also find a place in the world ranking of management and commerce education.

Commerce and management education in India

Education should be a three-fold process of imparting knowledge, developing skills, and inculcating proper attitudes and values towards life and society^[3].

- a. Multiple Core Level Subjects: Commerce education is a sum of variety of courses combined. It basically heterogeneous in nature as it does not focus on one discipline and covered multiple subjects but without giving thorough and specialized knowledge.
- b. Limited Exposure to any Particular Subject: The concept of specialization is not yet adopted in commerce education to its fullest extent. Though at post graduate level there are certain specialization however the course content and proportion of specialization does not match with the overall syllabus and total course structure.
- c. Lack of Practical Pedagogical Method: The pedagogical and teaching method presently used emphasis more on lectures. There is absence of practical base and creative teaching methods.
- d. Lack of Training and hands on experience: The industry academia interaction should be at a higher level so the graduates may become ready for professional job when they come out of the university.
- e. Different parts of the world are now in the process of globalisation in technological, economic, social, political, cultural, and learning aspects. New technologies are emerging every day, and everything is turning towards globalisation.
- f. In such challenging situation, young managers possessing management degree turn out to be survivors. The biggest challenge of the management institutions is to produce efficient managers. In order to maximise the opportunities for development of management education for students, globalisation, localisation, and individualisation in education are important and necessary.
- g. The major issues include how to develop research focused institutions, career focused institutions and foundation institutions in India to serve the society at large. Developing good governance and regulatory framework in management education is the biggest challenge in India.

Improve quality of the faculty and classrooms

There is scarcity of quality faculty in the country. Faculty quality is an extremely important factor. Digitalisation in classrooms enables the faculty to adopt innovative teaching pedagogy. Nurturing and sustaining quality faculty with industry experience, teaching ability, international exposure, and research outputs is one of the pillars of management education. There is urgent need of transforming the classrooms into digital classrooms for providing a platform to students for generating industrial skills. Faculty with

industry exposure makes it easy for students to understand application of theory to real life business situations. Teaching ability of a faculty combines various parameters like subject knowledge, communication skills, curriculum coverage and pedagogy so as achieve overall satisfaction of students with respect to teaching. Today, it is noticed that some of the vernacular students aspiring for 'Management Degrees', have communication and understanding problems of English language. They are not able to speak and write correct English. As a result, their output is low.

Government initiatives to improve the education

Now we must devote some time to look at the major initiatives taken by the Government of India:

- SWAYAM (Study Webs of Active-Learning for Young Aspiring Minds) Programme: Under this programme, Professors of centrally funded institutions like IITs, IIMs, Central universities are offering online courses to citizens of our country. All courses are made available free of cost for learning. In case the learner requires a verified certificate, a small fee is applicable. In first phase, Indian leading institutions alone as well as with the help of faculty from foreign universities are offering courses in areas of engineering education, social science, energy, management, basic sciences to ensure the quality and to add on skills among the students.
- The initiative of National Digital Library (NDL) is a virtual repository of learning resources with a single window search facility. It has already brought together 15 million digital books and journals and 31 lakh learners are using this facility. It supports all academic levels including researchers and life-long learners, all disciplines, all popular form of access devices and differently abled learners.
- In August 2018, Innovation Cell and Atal Ranking of Institutions on Innovation Achievements (ARIIA) were launched to assess innovation efforts and encourage a healthy competition among higher educational institutions in the country.
- In August 2018, Government of India launched the second phase of 'Unnat Bharat Abhiyan' which aims to link higher educational institutions in the country with at least five villages. The scheme covers 750 such institutions.
- In order to boost the Skill India Mission, two new schemes, Skills Acquisition and Knowledge Awareness for Livelihood Promotion (SANKALP) and Skill Strengthening for Industrial Value Enhancement (STRIVE), have been approved by the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA), Government of India, with an outlay of Rs 6,655 crore (US\$ 1.02 billion) and will be supported by the World Bank.
- The Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat (EBSB) campaign is undertaken by Ministry of Human Resource Development to increase engagement between states, union territories, central ministries, educational institutions and general public.
- Prime Minister Mr. Narendra Modi launched the Skill India initiative – 'Kaushal Bharat, Kushal Bharat'. Under this initiative, the government has set itself a target of training 400 million citizens by 2022 that would enable them to find jobs. The initiatives launched include various programmes like: Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY), National Policy for

Skill Development and Entrepreneurship 2015, Skill Loan scheme, and the National Skill Development Mission.

- Smart India Hackathon initiative is to promote innovation in the students by encouraging out of the box solutions for common problems faced by the society at large. In the first edition held in 2017, more than 40,000 students have participated to solve more than 600 problems. In 2018, the scope has been expanded to Hardware area also.

Opportunities and road ahead

The growth of the Indian economy in the recent past and the compulsion to sustain it is also forcing the Indian government to accelerate the process of developing all branches of Indian education system. Commerce and Management education has a significant position not only in the leading nations of the international education system but also in emerging economies of 21st century. Various government initiatives are being adopted to boost the growth of distance education market, besides focusing on new education techniques, such as E-learning and M-learning. Furthermore, with online modes of education being used by several educational organisations, the higher education sector in India is set for some major changes and developments in the years to come.

In 2030, it is estimated that India's higher education will:

- Adopt transformative and innovative approaches in Higher education.
- Have an augmented Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) of 50 per cent
- Reduce state-wise, gender based and social disparity in GER to 5 per cent.
- Emerge as a single largest provider of global talent, with one in four graduates in the world being a product of the Indian higher education system.
- Be among the top five countries in the world in terms of research output with an annual R&D spent of US\$ 140 billion.
- Have more than 20 universities among the global top 200.

The future of management education is going to be shaped by technology. The syllabus of commerce education must contain knowledge component, skill component, and practice component. Placement is the ultimate goal of any business education. To place the students in industries, colleges can arrange campus recruitment & placement. Technologies like artificial intelligence, machine learning, augmented reality, virtual reality, faster broadband, mobile internet and mobile app are going to affect the future of management education. Rapid growth promises a great future for the Indian e-commerce industry signifying a strong market and increased customer demand. Commerce and Management education is in great demand especially after the change towards liberalization, privatization and globalization. Therefore, commerce management education requires integration of management education with corporate sector, up gradation of curriculum and course content designing of different program for executives, maintenance of an efficient and effective regulatory system and emphasis on research.

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