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Higher education in India: Challenges and suggestions

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Abstract

Education is one of the significant factors instrumental to the development of a country. Higher education in India has expanded very rapidly after independence and has undergone rapid development. This paper aims to focus on some challenges facing in field of higher education in India and suggest some strategies through which quality of higher education can be improved.

Keywords: Higher education, quality, challenges

Introduction

Education is the process of developing the capacities and potentialities of the individual, so as to prepare that individual to be successful in society. Education is a powerful instrument of change and progressive improvement of human behaviour. Education is the driving force of economic and social development in any country (Cholin, 2005; Mehta & Kalra, 2006)^[3, 4]. Considering this, it is necessary to find ways to make education of good quality, accessible and affordable to all. Education is an essential tool for achieving sustainability. The Education Commission 1964-66 described the role of education in social and economic transformation through a statement-the destiny of a nation is shaped in its class rooms. In fact, classrooms are the places where the future citizens of the country are reared, trained, educated and motivated to accept the new challenges and to face the changing situations. Education creates human capital which is the core of economic progress and assumes that the externalities generated by human capital are the source of self-sustaining economic process. Schultz (1962) formalized the empirical evidences on education and earnings in the form of a theory of human capital. According to the theory, education is a process of capital formation-human capital formation. Human capital, like other forms of physical capital, brings returns to investment. Further returns to education are equal to or higher than other forms of investment in education.

Importance of Higher Education

Higher education is very important for a developing country like India and it is encouraging to increasing human development. Higher education in India has experienced phenomenal expansion since independence. Higher Education provides opportunities to the people to reflect on the critical social, cultural, moral, economic and spiritual issues facing humanity. Higher education provides specialized knowledge and skilled persons for national development.

Higher education occupies the top position in the educational hierarchy. By virtue of its location in the hierarchy, it has a responsibility and makes a contribution to the lower levels of education.

The World Conference on Higher Education (UNESCO, 1998) notes that one of the functions of higher education is to contribute to the development and improvement of education at all levels-“Higher education should enhance its contribution to the

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development of the whole education system, notably through improved teacher education, curriculum development and educational research”

Higher education has a lead role in the directing and supporting of other layers of education by providing human resources to teach and manage the education system at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels of education on the one hand, and a receiving role since the students transiting from the lower levels of education are its inputs. In the educational hierarchy and production process, the products from the lower-level units become inputs (students) in the subsequent level of education and the outputs (graduates) from the higher-level units become important inputs (teachers) in the production of the output of the lower levels of education.

Emerging Issues (Avhad, 2013)^[1]

1. The participation of students in demonstrations, strikes, processions, mass meetings, walk outs, setting libraries on fire, damaging laboratories and university properties, indulging in ragging like activities on campus. These are the nationwide issues emerged out of students' unrest.
2. Economic difficulties: The majority of students come from the ordinary class and many of them are unable to provide for their minimum necessities of life.
3. The student in modern society is involving more intensely in social change. The modern student is breaking away from the traditions and restraints, new culture and new thinking.
4. Glamour on the campus affordable or not for that purpose our students are ready to go an extreme.
5. The techno savvy generation of students has arrived and their increased potential and aspiration for techno based learning cannot be overlooked and therefore, keeping pace with this new generation learners is emerging as one of the most important issues in Higher Education.
6. The concept of effective governance in higher education sector needs to be thoroughly innovated to be able to effectively deal with the new challenges confronting on us.
7. It has been observed that India shows poor status of universities in research and development compared to other countries.
8. Low expenditure on Higher Education figures related to expenditure on higher education is not satisfactory.
9. Traditional methods of teaching: Professors still stick to those older methods of teaching like board, marker. They don't like to make use of audio visual aids in teaching. Also they are not up to date with the information available and what global industry demands.
10. Inadequate facilities and infrastructure: In India, many of the universities don't have adequate infrastructure or facilities to teach students. Internet and Wi-Fi facility is still out of reach of many students.

Teaching Learning Quality in Higher Education

Learning is at the heart of the educational purpose and process. Teaching is a good aid for children to learn. The assessment of teaching and measurement of learning have attracted the attention of researchers in education. Research into successful schools and classroom practices (Walberg & Paik, 2000)^[8] indicates that there is scope for making

further improvements to make teaching more effective and to enhance learning levels. The classroom management practices of teachers are influenced by their prior training, experience, and level of motivation (Michaelowa, 2002)^[5]. Quality teaching is the use of pedagogical techniques to produce learning outcomes for students. It involves several dimensions, including the effective design of curriculum and course content, a variety of learning contexts, soliciting and using feedback, and effective assessment of learning outcomes.

Factors influencing the quality of teaching include

- the internationalisation of higher education
- the increasingly broadening scope of education
- the rapid changes in technology, which can quickly make programme content and pedagogies
- the increased pressures of global competition, economic efficiency
- the need to produce a skilled workforce to meet the challenges of the 21st century

The role of higher education teachers is therefore changing. In addition to being, first and foremost, a subject expert acquainted with ways to transmit knowledge, higher education teachers are now required to have effective pedagogical skills for delivering student learning outcomes. They also need to co-operate with students, colleagues from other departments, and with external stakeholders as members of a dynamic learning community.

The new teaching and learning paradigms in higher education imply

- New relationships regarding access to teachers, and a wider range of communication and collaborative working through learning platforms.
- Re-designing of curricula.
- Bridging teaching and research more intensively.
- Re-thinking of student workload and teaching load.
- Continuous upgrading in pedagogy, use of technologies, assessment models aligned with student-centred learning.
- Creating of innovative learning platforms.
- Providing guidance and tutoring to students with new means and methods.
- Assessing impacts and documenting effectiveness of the teaching delivered.

Challenges of Higher Education in India (Chahal, 2015)^[2]

- The Indian system of 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 are many basic problems facing higher education in India today. These include inadequate infrastructure and facilities, faculty crunch, low enrolment ratio, outmoded teaching methods, declining research standards, unmotivated students, overcrowded

- classrooms and widespread geographic income, gender, and ethnic imbalances.
- It requires major investments so as to make human resources productive, by coupling the older general disciplines of humanities, social sciences, natural sciences and commerce, with their applications in the new economy and having adequate field base experience to enhance knowledge with skills and develop appropriate attitudes.
 - 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.
 - 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. There is a great need to improve the quality and standards.
 - The Indian education system promotes rote learning and students only use prescribed materials. This trend continues even when pursuing higher education. The examinations are more a test of memory power rather than creativity. When the stage comes to pursue further studies and present research papers, they portray a dismal picture hampering the research process associated with higher education.
 - Higher Education can be promoted by following certain guidelines such as inclusion of research as a criterion for faculty for the purpose of promotion, (a system laid down by UGC and is currently been followed by affiliated colleges and universities); institution of awards for distinguished researchers with substantial financial incentives; generation of greater funding; improvement of infrastructure; and possible reduction of teaching hours so that more time can be devoted to research. India has all the potential of being a research hub given her long tradition of teaching and renowned brain power. The impediments have to tackled so as to easy the path to economic prosperity.

Suggestions for improving quality of Higher Education (Chahal, 2015)^[2]

- Towards a Learning Society:** 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.
- International Cooperation:** With the increased development of transport and communication, the global village is witnessing a growing emphasis on international cooperation and action to find satisfactory solutions to problems that have global dimensions and higher education is one of them.
- Student Centred Education and Dynamic Methods:** Methods of higher education have to be appropriate to the needs of learning to learn, learning to do, learning to be and learning to become. Student-centred education and employment of dynamic methods of education will require from teachers new attitudes and new skills.
- Examination Reforms:** Examination reforms, gradually shifting from the terminal, annual and semester examinations to regular and continuous

assessment of student's performance in learning must be implemented.

- Action Plan for Improving Quality:** Academic and administrative audit must be conducted once in three years in colleges by external experts for ensuring quality in all aspects of academic activities. The self-finance colleges must come forward for accreditation and fulfil the requirements of accreditation. Universities and colleges should realise the need for quality education and come forward with action plan for improving quality in higher educational institutions.
- Cross Culture Programmes:** After education, tour to every the places in India and world as far as possible with the cooperation of government is necessary so that one can understand about people, culture, arts, literature, religions, technological developments and progress of human society in the world.
- High-tech Libraries:** Our university libraries have a very good collection of books, but they are all in mess. A library must be online and conducive for serious study. Indian universities should concentrate more on providing quality education which is comparable to that of international standards.
- Personality Development:** Education must be for the flowering of personality but not for the suppression of creativity or natural skill.
- 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.
- Privatisation of Higher Education:** For qualitative private higher education in India, it is necessary to strengthen quality assurance and accreditation procedures for private higher education institutions.

Education is one of the significant factors instrumental to the development of a country. It should be transformed to the needs of the time and changing scenario of the world. To develop India as an education hub or to become a prosperous partner in global economy, India has to qualitatively strengthen education in general and higher education with research and development in particular. Higher education opens the path that leads to transcendence of knowledge.

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