

II. INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE IN HEIS

HIGHER EDUCATION IN INDIA: ISSUES AND CONCERNS

D. K. Burghate

Principal, SSES Amt's Science College, Congress Nagar, Nagpur

E-mail: drdkburghate@gmail.com

D. W. Deshkar

SSES Amt's Science College, Congress Nagar, Nagpur

E-mail: dwdeshkar@gmail.com

Abstract

Educational opportunities and traditions have been able to produce graduates, capable only of pursuing limited careers, but, in the new globally competitive environment that is emerging in the country, the Indian student is now required to develop a multifaceted personality to cope up with the rapid changes in the world at large. This calls for the all round development of body, mind and spirit, through the educational processes in the institutions of higher education.

Keywords: *Higher education, challenges, requirement.*

Introduction

The higher education system in India in the post-independence period has grown in a remarkable way, to become one of the leaders of its kind in the world. However, it has many issues of concern, like financing and management including access, equity and relevance, reorientation of programmes by laying emphasis on health consciousness, values and ethics and quality of higher education together with the assessment of institutions and their accreditation. These issues are of prime importance, as it is now engaged in building a knowledge-based information society of the present century with the use of higher education as a tool. With this consideration, the Universities have to perform multiple roles, like creating new knowledge, acquiring new capabilities and producing an intelligent human resource pool, through teaching, research and extension activities so as to balance both the need and the demand.

The new challenge before the country is to become a developed society, which requires that not only a vibrant economy driven by knowledge has to be ushered in soon, but also a new society where justice and human values prevail has to be created. Moreover, challenges in higher education are no longer nation centric but they have already attained global dimensions, particularly after trade in services has been brought under the purview of the WTO regime. With the explosive growth of knowledge in the past century and with the development of handy tools of information and communication technologies as well as of other scientific innovations, competition has become a hallmark of growth all over the World. As a result,

knowledge is not only going to be the driver of Indian economy, but also, it is going to permeate into all the strata of Indian society for a better quality of life and living conditions. Therefore, India has to rise to the occasion urgently and reorient its higher education system to be vibrant, competitive, meaningful and purposeful. Besides, there is absolutely no substitute to quality of higher education, although the country has strived for a long time with the serious problem of meeting the quantity needs of our society. It is, therefore, essential that a careful balancing of the two is given priority to meet the twin requirements of the society in the foreseeable future.

Management of Higher Education

The Indian higher education system is one of the largest such systems in the World. It is estimated that during the following Five Year Plan period, there will be a tremendous pressure of numbers on this system and a large number of additional students will be knocking at the doors of higher education institutions in the country. The new regime under WTO where competence is the cardinal principle of success in international operations has made it abundantly clear that the country should exploit its excellent potential in higher education and training facilities and prepare itself to export the Indian brand of education to foreign countries.

1.1 Public/Private Partnership

Indian higher education system escalated with establishment of several Institutes all over the country to generate a

and disseminate knowledge coupled with the noble intention of providing easy access to higher education to the common Indian. The deregulating mechanism of control started with the granting of “Autonomous Status” to identified Colleges in the 1970s. Some of these Colleges have graduated further to receive the “Deemed to be University” status in later years.

1.1.1 Suggestions

1. Responsibility to provide the eligible with good quality higher education at reasonable cost.
2. ‘no talented person shall be denied access to higher education opportunities on the grounds of economic and social backwardness’.
3. Industries may be encouraged to be partners with educational institutions directly for the development of human resources dedicated to their interests. This could happen in the areas of creating infrastructure, faculty sharing and direct support with funds.
4. The industries shall be encouraged to establish state of the art Research and Training Centers to develop the necessary specialized man power.
5. The areas not capable of attracting private funds shall be supported sufficiently well from public funds. This, as indicated earlier, is essential for the balanced intellectual growth of the society.
6. Strong quality control measures to assure performance above an acceptable benchmark is essential for the institutions.
7. A Total Quality Management for courses offered, monitoring the achievement of the students at all stages of the course, shall be introduced at all higher education institutions.
8. Empowering the students to take up dual degree programmes. Such a measure will turn around many Colleges from the non-performing class to the performing class. This is an area where public/private partnership has a creative role to play.
9. Designing courses with relevance to the future and developing the necessary manpower to deliver them is a challenging task. All this calls for a team of professionals in different areas to come together to develop proactive strategies for higher education to meet the future demands.
10. Good Faculty.

11. Private Universities are a reality now and, as such, strong regulatory mechanisms are to be put in place immediately to monitor and control their activities with the objective of ensuring quality and social accountability. Higher education is a Public Good and cannot be left to the market forces to control. Those who venture investment in this area shall be properly scrutinized. Those with commercial interests dominating over the interests and ethics of higher education shall be eliminated.
12. According autonomous status to all performing institutions will facilitate rapid development of efficient and state-of-the-art higher education institutions.

1.2 Governance

It has been observed that policy framework is carefully planned at the level of the Planning Commission, Ministry of Human Resource Development and University Grants Commission. However, the policies are not fully implemented mostly because of faulty management of the institutions of higher education. The administrative structure of the Universities, which was devised in the pre-independence period, seems to be still continuing. The new challenges facing the system of higher education in the country cannot be met without a total overhaul (repair) of the structure of management of higher education institutions. This has become all the more necessary because of globalization, which requires talent, competence, drive, initiative and innovation at several levels. This cannot be achieved without overhauling the administrative set up of Universities/Institutions.

1.2.1 Suggestions

1. The Governmental control in the Universities must be reduced, so that the University autonomy and accountability are strengthened and academic decisions are taken on merit.
2. New methods and procedures of financial regulations should be devised and direct interference of the finance department in the financial management of Universities, which is counter productive should be stopped.
3. As the Colleges are the feeding sources of the Universities, a better coordination in their working and activities is very much required. The participation of the teaching faculty in working and activities through a democratic process should be ensured.
4. Complete transparency should be maintained in the working of Executive/ Academic Bodies and other Governing Councils of the Universities. There is an urgency to review the University Acts in different States and revise the same in the light of the new requirements and the challenges being faced by the Universities. New technologies of information and communication should be utilized for obtaining administrative efficiency.
5. Higher Education should be developed as an infrastructure for social and economic growth of the Country.
6. Student involvement in the area of University/College governance should be encouraged.
7. Political interference in the appointment of University teachers and administrators should be totally stopped.

1.3 Access and Equity

Today the world economy is experiencing an unprecedented change. New developments in science and technology, media revaluation and internationalization of education and the ever expanding competitive environment are revolutionizing the education scene. A paradigm shift has been noticed in higher education nowadays, from 'national education' to 'global education', from 'one time education for a few' to 'lifelong education for all', from 'teacher-centred education' to 'learner centred education'. These changes make new demands and pose fresh challenges to the established education systems and practices in the country. Because of interdependence and integration of world economy in recent years, the Indian higher education system has a new role and a challenge to provide to the nation and the world at large, skilled human power at all levels, having breadth of knowledge and confidence to effectively confront the social and economic realities.

It is worth noting that while India has the second largest system of higher education, next only to USA, the total number of students hardly represent 6 percent of the relevant age group, i.e., 18 - 23, which is much below the average of developed countries, which is about 47%. Thus, access, equity, accountability and quality should form the four guiding principles, while planning for higher education development in India in the twenty-first century.

It is true that enhancing social access to higher education is still important in the country. But, the major challenge before the Indian higher education system is to bring equity in quality of education across the length and breadth of the country. This is closer to the heart of students in rural, semi urban and urban areas, because they also wish to be able to participate in the new economic revolution.

Several social, economic and political reasons seem to act as constraints to access and equity in higher education in India. Poverty leads to high drop- out rates even at primary, middle and secondary school levels. Lower status of women, lack of easy access, lack of implementation of existing programmes, inadequate utilization of resources, absence of political will and inadequacies in coordinated actions across all equity fronts within institutions seem to be the other reason. Financial constraints also often form a significant factor in advancing equity.

1.3.1 Suggestions

1. Strategies for higher education should be set within an educational chain extending from early childhood to post- graduate education to career advancement. Improving the interrelationship of all stages and levels of education should be a long - term policy goal.
2. Rural, urban and gender disparities must be kept in mind by policy makers in planning and implementing the higher education system.
3. While quantity is important, say achieving, double digit percentage for higher education, quality is paramount. Higher education should continue to be subsidized by the Government in an adequate manner. For improving the quality in education the role of public sector should be enhanced.
4. A liberal milieu in the Indian Universities must be reconstructed. Diversity of opinion and critique of society and its processes need to be encouraged.
5. Policies of higher education should be designed to strengthen indigenous research agenda.
6. One reform that is urgently needed is the right to information in the institutions of higher learning. Transparency in the functioning at all levels is required so that those committing wrong are deterred.
7. It is recommended that the method of selection of Vice Chancellors must be changed urgently, to make them accountable to the academic community and not to the political or bureaucratic bosses.
8. Policies of our country based on simplicity and sharing of facilities within and across institutions must be established and encouraged.
9. Increasing reliance on the generation of internal revenues through consultancy and interaction with industry may produce imbalances in the Universities across various disciplines of study.
10. New models for higher education including the following aspects need to be created and adopted in the country:
 - (a) extended traditional Universities
 - (b) technology based Universities, and
 - (c) corporate Universities.

1.4 Policy Planning for Export

Increasing economic integration across the World over the past decade has cast tumultuous impact on all the areas supporting human life in the developing countries, which constitutes about 80% of the work force. The so-called structural adjustments in national policies and the new international economic order have brought about severe stresses never perceived before. There are exhortations to the policy planners of higher education emanating from GATT regulations made under WTO formulation e.g. withdrawal of subsidies, reduced control of the State, larger privatization and access to corporate players, designing of courses to meet the human resource needs of the markets in the changed scenario, and reliance on self-financing type management. There are also obligations to allow free import of higher education as a service commodity from developed nations in the form of cross-border supply, consumption abroad etc. The cumulative effect of all these factors and the prevailing competitive environment have hustled the morale, confidence and commitment of the University community in general, even inducing trepidation.

Improving the low level of enrolment 6% in the 18-23 age group ratio, ensuring better equity, access, sound and realistic man-power planning, faster growth of skilled human resource for a self-reliant course of economic development and universalization of basic education are the other major challenges.

In such a skewed and grueling perspective, the University academics and administrators, are confronted with so many challenges calling for knee-jerk response and proactive approaches to management of institutions of higher education with a high level of professionalism, competence and quality assurance. They are duty bound to tide over the challenges facing the institutions and deliver quality goods and services to the customers and users without any opacity, obsession or prejudice. Outline of the strategies, the imperative scope of expansion, dimensions of diversification, potentials for both short and long-term planning and modalities of placid administrative processes warranted in the contemporary ambience, but in the changed context, have been discussed by experts and researchers.

There was a consensus that without compromising the national ethos of equity and access to higher education to all the intending learners at reasonable cost and to the socially disadvantaged ones at subsidized levels, higher education institutions in India must boost their activities to provide diversified academic products and services of high quality and with a strong market orientation.

1.4.1 Suggestions

1. Most of the areas identified for export of higher education are directly concerned with industries. Therefore, Central and State Governments should introduce a range of programmes and incentives designed specially to improve the links between Universities and industry.
2. The Universities and National Institutes of higher Learning should design their courses in collaboration with industry and such courses be updated regularly, e.g., every year, according to need.
3. There should be uniformity, as far as possible, in the standards of the courses, academic calendar and the examination system of Universities.
4. To provide a broad choice of courses, credit system should be introduced in the Universities.
5. Libraries should be fully equipped with the latest books, journals and periodicals
6. Laboratories should be updated and obsolescence in equipment/facilities should be removed on a regular basis.
7. Working facilities and workload of teachers should be as per the international norms
8. Teachers should be encouraged to attend various conventions, conferences, seminars, workshops in their disciplines to update their subject know how.

9. As per need, hostel facilities should be developed for foreign students in the Universities. And a Foreign Students' Advisor's Office should be created to look after foreign students in a proper way.
10. There should be regular monitoring and evaluation of teaching and research in the Universities and other Institutions of higher learning. A Monitoring & Evaluation (M & E) Unit should be set-up at State level preferably attached to Chancellor's Office; and for its effective functioning; a Statistical Cell should be set-up in each University in the State, under the overall supervision of the M & E Unit.
11. E-learning appears to be a fast emerging mode of global entry at the present time. The Universities and other Institutions of higher education can design their web sites for offering online education worldwide.
12. Other desirable initiatives for export of higher education include:
 - Developing educational products of new models based on flexibility and learner's choice;
 - Preparing students for the knowledge society;
 - Providing methods and styles of working for life-long learning;
 - Arranging facilities for E-learning and distance learning;
 - Ensuring total quality management in the higher education system;
 - Catering to the changing market demands and churn out adaptable work force, instead of providing them scope for narrow specialization.

1.5 Economics of Higher Education

Access to higher education needs to be widened in the country, both within the formal system and through other effective innovative measures, such as a truly open system and networking of Universities. In the globalized World, the State-protected educational system cannot withstand the pressure without making itself competitive. There seem to be four reasons why new policy initiatives should be taken by the Government in this connection.

- the economic returns of primary education far exceed the returns of higher education;
- the private returns on higher education far exceed the social returns;
- the State funding for higher education is insufficient; and
- since private sector benefits the most from higher education, it is only just that it should make a decisive contribution.

1.5.1 Suggestions

1. Launching lucrative and specific courses for foreign students.
2. Reorientation of educational programmes.
3. Linking education with employment.
4. Launching industry linked human resource development programmes.
5. Reorientation of the management system of Colleges and Universities.
6. Encouraging accountability at various levels of decision making.
7. Providing professional and vocational education and preparation of students for this.
8. Making general education costlier and less widely available than vocational education as to induce more students to take up the latter.
9. Developing innovative educational programmes/products, having high potential for raising resources, making use of the institutional autonomy.
10. Encouraging taking up national/international and Government funded R&D projects.
11. Benefit from alumni
12. Interrelating with industry; some suggestions for which are:
 - Undergraduate industry-related courses should be organized with care, exposing the students to industry problems and requirements;
 - Industry personnel should be invited for extension lectures;
 - Industry personnel should be associated in curriculum development;

- Faculty should visit industries and get acquainted with current problems;
 - Better contact with alumni to evaluate teaching methodologies and new demands;
 - Vocationalization of Degree programmes;
14. Encouraging optimum utilization of infrastructure and equipment.
 15. Encouraging the application of ICT in all processes at the institutions.
 16. Introducing 'earn while you learn' scheme for needy students.
 17. Funding liberal education by the State and skill oriented education by private sector.
 18. Locally relevant higher education to be imparted through vocational courses.
 19. Colleges to assess local needs and frame their own syllabi/courses flexibly.
 20. Introducing a scheme for rewards/punishments to ensure accountability work.

Conclusion

Education not only makes a man a perfect but also arms him to meet all the challenges in life. He knows how to face the difficulties in a calm and quiet way. Instead of getting worried on the onslaught of difficulties, he will welcome them. This is the only chance in the life of a man to bring to the fore the latent powers which lie hidden in a man, till they are put to use. So long as the man is in a comfortable position, he does not need to exploit this hidden treasure. However, once he is in straitened circumstance, he is compelled to use every bit of energy to fight out the adverse circumstances. This can be done only by an educated man, who is not frightened at the sight of the difficulties, because he does not allow them to get on to his nerves. It is said that it is not ease but effort, not facility but difficulty that makes a man. Thus, the education helps a man to develop a balanced personality.

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