



CHALLENGES, ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN INDIA

P. V. Pavan Kalyan, VIT University, Vellore

Abstract: *India has survived with an increasingly mediocre higher education system for decades. Now as India strives to compete in a globalized economy in areas that require highly trained professionals, the quality of higher education becomes increasingly important. So far, India's large educated population base and its reservoir of at least moderately well-trained university graduates have permitted the country to move ahead. But the competition is fierce. China in particular is heavily investing in improving its best universities with the aim of making a small group of them world class in the coming decade; and making a larger number internationally competitive research universities. The largest international student population is from China. The number from China is about 4 lakhs. China allows this large number to go out for higher education, of the massive facilities created within China only because they realize that in the larger interests of the country, the young men and women have to seek educational opportunities outside the borders of China. Surprisingly Tamil Nadu has not taken a comprehensive view of higher education through an appropriate committee since independence. The neighbouring states have done the exercise. It is necessary for Tamil Nadu to examine comprehensively the opportunities available for higher education and research; the opportunities needed to be created and policy decisions to be taken for the future. It is not the responsibility of the party power alone. Every political party that worth the name must accept responsibility in this direction.*

Keywords: *Higher education, challenges, issues, opportunities, Suggestions*

INTRODUCTION

The higher education system in India at present is at a transition stage. A stage where changes have taken place for good and more transformations in thoughts and processes are desired. Higher education system in any nation today seeks a relook. The world is being slowly but steadily turned into a global village. Synchronisation and harmony among the global universities across the globe can create sync throughout, wherein the nurturing of the young minds may be accustomed to the changes desired. Another aspect which is very important today is the concept of blended learning. It is just the next step to the previous idea of creating a harmonization of higher education across the globe. Students from all



over the world will be benefitted from the expertise of the renowned academicians. The harmony may create a balance in learning and research thereafter.

HIGHER EDUCATION IN INDIA

In India, one problem is numbers and the other is quality. We want to be a developed country by 2020. If we really want to achieve that target, we should have at least 20% of the age group in higher education by 2020. The present number is uncertain but is reported to be around 10%. In other words within a decade (that is, from 2010 to 2020), we will have to double the opportunities for higher education. It is just impossible for the Government alone to create the facilities needed. Private providers have to play a role. Coming to another important component of higher education, that is research. In the Science Summit held in Bangalore, in 2000, the former secretary of the Department of Science and Technology gave the following information based on estimates that emerged in a discussion meeting. In technology that is used in India, the foreign components were as follows:

- 1) Foreign technology used without alteration 50%
- 2) Foreign technology modified and adopted to suit our need 45%
- 3) Indigenous technology 5%.

The Defence Minister of India stated in Parliament recently that, our weapons are outdated and we are depending upon imports from abroad for nearly 70% of our equipment. In an age of globalization, no country will sell advanced technology or lend advanced technology. We have to substantially develop our own. This requires augmenting our research capability. We may take a look at the state of research in India. It may be meaningful to compare our position with China. In 1980, India published 10,606 papers with citations. The number from China was 682. In 1990, India published 11563 research papers and the number from China was 6991. In 2005, the number from India was 25227 while the number from China was 72,362.

HIGHER EDUCATION CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Alignment

The expectation of society is different nowadays. The authorities who decide upon the policies should take a note of the situation. To be competent and to be at par with global competitors, the higher education institutions should provide interdisciplinary programs to the students to meet the 21st century's higher education demands. Higher education



institutions require reorganizing courses, programs, and structures to suit the aspirations and needs of the students. So higher education institutions require to redesign or align their curriculum to support today's students to fit globally. They also state the importance of curriculum design in today's higher education.

Student Employability

Employability is a very important aspect of higher education system. Students seek educational opportunities to enter the world of jobs. According to me the real requirement today is to take into serious consideration the student placement, and in this process inculcate the requisite skills and habits original analytical thinking, communication skills, superior presentation skills, working in teams, and information technology. This will help in aligning the students with the industry. Therefore, Higher Education Institutions should make their curriculum more practical and industry oriented instead of traditional methods being followed. They have emphasized the emerging role the industry could play in the Indian context, in ushering collaboration with the education sector; they recommend that industry could play a vital role in increasing the growth prospects of educational institutions. They also emphasized the role of government, industry associations, private institutions, and universities in order to strengthen the interface between industries.

Quality of Learning and Teaching

The way out to compete with smart people across the globe is to ensure smart learning and quality teaching. If the Higher educational institutions co-ordinate with the industry and other higher educational institutions, then it can foster towards improved and required set of skills, learning, and teaching. Therefore, the beneficiaries will be the students who will have more access and information about the latest developments across the industry and the teachers will be acquainted with the valid facts of their subjects. Scholars validate the significant relationship between active experimentation learning style and preference for scholar instruction approach, which could help the teachers to improve the quality of learning and teaching.

Assessment

Assessment is a key process in Higher Education. According to scholars, the higher educational institutions in order to tackle the irregularities in assessment should create effective mechanisms. Assessment should be made student friendly, so that a student never suffers in the pretext of the errors committed by the evaluator.



HIGHER EDUCATION GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

Higher education institutions governing bodies are responsible for ensuring the effective management of the institution and for planning its future development. They are ultimately responsible for all the affairs of the institutions. Generally, they are responsible for approving institutional mission and the strategic plan, financial solvency, resourcing policy, employment and Human Resource policy and strategy, estates policy, senior appointments and remuneration, audit, legal compliance, determining educational character and mission, and so on. They are facing challenges to effectively manage the institutions hence become one of the crucial challenges in Higher Education. To take with this challenge, institutions need better leadership who will be able to provide academic freedom to enable them to make collective decisions with the new requirements that is the necessity to make and implement important and often unpopular decisions in a timing manner.

CRITICAL ISSUES IN INDIAN HIGHER EDUCATION

As India strives to compete in a globalised economy in areas that require highly trained professionals, the quality of higher education becomes increasingly important. So far, India's large, educated population base and its reservoir of at least moderately well trained university graduates have aided the country in moving ahead, but the competition is fierce; from China in particular. Other countries are also upgrading higher education with the aim of building world class universities. Even the small top tier of higher education faces serious problems. Many IIT graduates, well trained in technology, have chosen not to contribute their skills to the burgeoning technology sector in India; perhaps half leave the country immediately upon graduation to pursue advanced studies abroad, and most do not return. A stunning 86 per cent of Indian students in the fields of science and technology who obtain degrees in the United States do not return home immediately following their graduation. A body of dedicated and able teachers work at the IITs and IIMs, but the lure of jobs abroad and in the private sector makes it increasingly difficult to lure the best and brightest to the academic profession. The present system of higher education does not serve the purpose for which it has been started. In general education itself has become so profitable a business that quality is lost in the increase of quantity of professional institutions with quota system and politicization adding fuel to the fire of spoil system, thereby increasing unemployment of graduates without quick relief to mitigate their sufferings in the job market of the



country. So, the drawbacks of the higher education system underscore the need for reforms to make it worthwhile and beneficial to all concerned. Most observers agree that Indian higher education, the significant and impressive developments of the past few decades notwithstanding, faces major challenges in both quantitative and qualitative terms. Perhaps the clearest and boldest statement of this issue can be found in the "Report to the Nation 2006" of the National Knowledge Commission which concludes that there is 'a quiet crisis in higher education in India that runs deep', and that it has to do with both the quantity and the quality of higher education in India. Recognizing this dual challenge, the Indian Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh, severely criticized in a recent speech the serious qualitative deficiencies in Indian higher education while at the same time announcing plans for a major expansion of the system. Reflecting on the findings of a confidential report by the National Assessment and Accreditation Council, which is affiliated to the University Grants Commission (UGC), he expressed his concern over the fact that two thirds (68%) of the country's universities and 90 percent of its colleges are "of middling or poor quality" and that well over half of the faculty in India colleges do not have the appropriate degree qualifications. Knowledge is the base for overall growth and if the nation has to be competitive and to be at par with the globalization pace, we will have to respond to the market forces.

SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVING QUALITY OF HIGHER EDUCATION

There are some suggestions and Expectations from Government, Industry, Educational Institutions, Parents and Students for improving quality of higher education.

1. 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. Although the priorities, which are being assigned today to the task of Education for All, will continue to be preponderant, the country will have to prepare itself to invest more and more on higher education and simultaneously, measures will have to be taken to refine, diversify and upgrade higher education and research programmes.

2. 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.

3. Student-Centred Education and Dynamic Methods-

Methods of higher education also 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. Methods of teaching through lectures will have to subordinate to the methods that will lay stress on self-study, personal consultation between teachers and pupils and dynamic sessions of seminars and workshops. Methods of distance education will have to be employed on a vast scale.

4. International Cooperation-

Universities in India have been a primary conduit for the advancement and transmission of knowledge through traditional functions such as research, innovation, teaching, human resource development, and continuing education. International cooperation is gaining importance as yet another function. 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.

5. Privatization of Higher Education-

In any nation education is the basic necessity for the socio-economic development of the individuals and the society. In reality only 20% of the population is educated in India. So, improved standard of education as first priority should be offered to the majority by the govt. authorities with sincere political will. Also, privatization of higher education is absolutely necessary in a vast country like India as government alone is helpless to do so.

6. Personality Development-

Finally, education should be for the flowering of personality but not for the suppression of creativity or natural skill. In the globalized world opportunities for the educated people are naturally ample in scope. As a result business process outsourcing activities have increased competition in the world trade leading towards the production of quality goods and their



easy availability everywhere in the world market. That is the way the world can be developed for peace, prosperity and progress by able and skilful men.

HIGHER EDUCATION OPPORTUNITY IN INDIA

Strengths

1. Economic conditions are quiet stable as compared to Euro zone and few other economies of the world.
2. Quality education, quality research is the USP of many top notch management institutions like IIMs, IITs and many others in India.
3. Indian Government is trying to speed up its various efforts through organizations like AICTE, NAAC, NBA, etc. to improve efficiency and quality.
4. ICT (Information, Communication and Technology) has got fillip from government and will cover higher education institutes. 11th Five Year Plan has proposed for launching of a National Mission in Education through ICT to increase ICT coverage in all the 378 universities and 18064 colleges in India.
5. Some of the Indian universities/institutions namely IIMs, IGNOU, BITS Pilani, MAHE, NIIT are already offering online programs and many more have emerged in the recent period.
6. Besides, other provisions include disbursement of special grants to Central Universities and other Central institutions (like the IIMs, the IITs, the NIITs, medical, and engineering institutions) for increase in their intake capacities by about 54 per cent under the stipulations of the Oversight Committee of GOI.

Weaknesses

1. The biggest issue is of poor sanitation and is particularly urgent in India, where many die each year from diarrheal diseases and poor sanitation. Poor sanitation also costs Bangladesh, India and Pakistan combined more than \$50 billion each year. This is the concern from many country students and academicians to migrate to India.
2. A limited reputation for academic research hinders research scholars to flock to India.
3. Inadequate facilities on many public campuses fall short to provide basic facility to students and professors.



4. Recurrent strikes by political and social parties create commutation concerns and instability.
5. Insufficient information on quality and urge to improve, creating problem to create quality education systems.
6. Many of the management educational institutions in India still consider local student (state or India) are their target customer.
7. Many of the management education institutes are still not accredited by certificates of standardization such as NAAC, NBA, ISO and the like.
8. Public spending on education in India currently averages about 4.1 percent of GDP – one of the lowest levels of any region.
9. As B.Ed, M.Ed. are compulsory to join as a teacher in schools, there is no compulsory provision on the part of GOI w.r.t. Management education teachers though FDPs are held.

CONCLUSION

After independence, there has been tremendous increase in institutions of higher learning in all disciplines. But with the quantitative growth has it been able to attend to the core issue of quality. India is today one of the fastest developing countries of the world with the annual growth rate going above 9%. In order to sustain that rate of growth, there is need to increase the number of institutes and also the quality of higher education in India. To reach and achieve the future requirements there is an urgent need to relook at the Financial Resources, Access and Equity, Quality Standards, Relevance and at the end the Responsiveness. To attain and sustain national, regional or international quality, certain components are particularly relevant, notably careful selection of staff and continuous staff development, in particular through the promotion of appropriate programs for academic development, including teaching/learning methodology and mobility between countries, between higher education institutions and the world of work, as well as student mobility within and between countries. Internal self-evaluation and external review must be conducted openly by independent specialists, if possible with international experts. Report of the National Knowledge Commission if implemented can help boost education sector in India. We are moving towards an era which would be defined by the parameters of knowledge and wisdom. India in order to become a developed nation by 2020 and



knowledge power by 2015. The decisions that are going to be taken on these are likely to hold the key to India's future as a centre of knowledge production. We need higher educated people who are skilled and who can drive our economy forward. When India can provide skilled people to the outside world then we can transfer our country from developing nation to a developed nation very easily and quickly. According to Prime Minister of India, 'The time has come to create a second wave of institution building and of excellence in the fields of education, research and capability building'. We need an educational system that is modern, liberal and can adapt to the changing needs of a changing society, a changing economy and a changing world. The thrust of public policy for higher education in India has to be to address these challenges. However, one university can't make much difference. If the government welcomes more such initiatives, the future will be ours. We will be able to match and compete with other countries and the dream to be the world's greatest economy won't be difficult to achieve.

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