Improving Quality of Higher Education in India

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ABSTRACT

Higher education in India is suffering from less competition and appropriate culture and as a result, quality researches are not done. Indian higher education has very rich history, but present does not seem to be effective. Quantitative growth is very good, but qualitative aspect seems to be missing. To work on this issue, Yashpal Committee has done good research and has shown problems and recommendations for uplifting the standard of higher education. This article is focusing on the track of barriers of higher education and its recommendations. It also talks about the role of quality Ph. D. In this context, few recommendations are also suggested.

1. Introduction

Indian higher education system is lack of competition and culture (Agarwal, 2015).

These words of Pavan Agrawal, Secretary, Higher Education of India reflect the authenticity of the problem of higher education in India. After taking cognizance of this fact and before proceeding to discuss, the barriers of educational system in improving quality of higher education, it would be pertinent to give a brief history of higher education in India.

2. Brief History of Higher education in India

The formal higher education system in India was initiated in the first millennium at Nalanda, Takshahila, Ujjain and Vikramshila Universities. The subjects taught at these Universities were mainly art, architecture, painting, logic, grammar, philosophy, astronomy, literature, Hinduism, Buddhism, Arthshastra, law and medicine (Ayurveda), etc. Each university was specialised in a particular field of study, for instance,

Takshshila for medicine and Ujjain for astronomy. Among them, the Nalanda University being the largest educational centre had all the branches of knowledge (Ponmelil, 2015).

The same Nalanda University is considered to be a Model University by Professor Sanjay Dhanda, Director IIT-Kanpur (Ugra, 2010). Simple reason behind this is the reputation of Nalanda University in India and other countries including China for its inter-disciplinary teaching method which is very much needed even in the present era.

In the 20th century, during the British rule, the present education system was introduced by the recommendations of Lord Macaulay. It was by all means the western education in style and content. The British government did not recognise the ancient traditional structure of education, with the result that the ancient education system in India was gradually forgotten. Mahatma Gandhi also described the ancient education system as a beautiful tree.

The University Grants Commission was formally established in November 1956 under the act of Parliament in 1956, as a statutory body of the Government of India by first Education Minister Maulana Abdul Kalam Azad to develop and modernise India's education system and at the same time to promote the scientific advancement. The Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru established IIT and IIM came in 1961.

3. Barriers of Education System in Improving Quality of Higher Education

In any field of human activity, quantity and quality are equally important. The same is applicable in the field of education. 504 universities and 25,951 collages in 2009 do not give an indication of catering to the growing needs of higher education (India, Government of India, Ministry of Human Resource, 2015). In the 11th Five Year Plan during the period 2007-12, 1500 more Universities are suggested by National Knowledge Commission (NKC). So, numerical growth is taking place with rapid pace, but the quality aspect of education is not yet thought out seriously. Due to lack of adequate infrastructure in terms of faculty, library and equipment in computer laboratories, the quality in the higher education is facing several barriers.

Some of the barriers hampering the improvement of quality in higher education are listed below:

➢ The students who complete their study of UG and PG programme do **not** have **much employability** in job market.
➢ Present society demands **interdisciplinary knowledge** which is one of the most **missing features** in the present higher education system.
➢ **Curriculum** remains more or less **stagnant** for number of years, whereas the changes and trend in the society take place in quick succession.
➢ Development of quality and **visionary approach** always **begins with top level of management** but it is not adequately found in the head of the institute, management of the colleges or University chair persons.

➢ Single yardstick of experience in the performance evaluation without any accountability **loses** the **motivation of teachers** and eventually the quality of education gradually deteriorates.
➢ Conventional and **not well-organised class-room teaching** accompanied by **weak presentation skill** adversely affect the interest of the students.
➢ **Commercialisation** of higher education particularly by **self-financed collages** to earn more and more money is the cause of providing fewer infrastructures to the students and inadequate facilities and incentives to teachers.
➢ **Interest and aptitude base selection** of career is **unfortunately not seen** in teaching profession.
➢ For the new recruiters, **fixed pay has largely affected the quality of education imparted** to the young minds of the country. This leads to **loss of motivation** and **enthusiasm** and keeps them away from teaching profession.
➢ **Research work** is one of the factors in knowing the real life happening and problems. This is **lacking on account of heavy workload in routine teaching work.** In fact motivated teachers are the real designers of employable generation who enters the job market with skill to solve real life problems.
➢ The hard fact of **poor reading habit of the teachers**, teachers just go to classes to teach with stereo type teaching pattern, using the same material for years and years. This deprives the students of the basic training to face the real world.
➢ **No autonomy in work** or little space of time to work in creative manner, **can't give a chance to search for new knowledge**. Even competent teachers are deprived of this sort of academic freedom to mould the future career of students.

To get rid of these barriers, the Government of India appointed the National Knowledge Commission with a view to create knowledge based economy with intellectual inputs for the country.

4. Recommendations of National Knowledge Commission 2006 with reference to Higher Education (Yashpal Committee Report - AICTE, 2015)**:**

Formation of National Knowledge Commission

On 13th of June 2005, the National Knowledge Commission has come out as a high level advisory body of the Prime Minister of India with the objective of transforming India into a Knowledge Society. Knowledge Commission has submitted **3000 recommendations** on **27 focus areas** during its three and half year term.

NKC was given a mandate to guide policy and direct reforms in the areas like education, science, technology, agriculture, industry and E-Governance. To have a glance, recommendations for phase one for higher education are highlighted:

- Higher Education system is over-regulated but under-governed. There is, therefore, a dire need to establish Independent Regulatory Authority of Higher Education (IRAHE), so national universities can provide education of the highest quality with admission on all- India basis.
- Around 1500 more universities nationwide are suggested, which would increase gross enrolment ratio at 15 % by 2015.
- Revision \ restructuring of curricula at least once in three years.
- Instead of just testing once in a year, introduce continuous assessment system.
- Universities must become research hub
- Conscious efforts to attract and retain-talented faculty members through better-working conditions combined with incentives for performance.
- Libraries, labs and connectivity must be monitored and upgraded on regular basis.
- The appointments of Vice-Chancellors must be freed from direct or indirect interventions on the part of governments, it should be based on search process and peer judgement alone.
- An acute need of reform in the structure of governance of universities

- Evaluation of courses and teachers by student as well as peer evaluation of teachers by reputed teachers.
- Enhance the ICT infrastructures.

5. More Quality through Ph. D. (India, More Quality Ph. Ds., 2008)**:**

From the second phase recommendations of 2008, issue of **More Quality through Ph. D.** is worth to mention here (A nation's transformation to a Knowledge and Skills Economy is critically dependant on the original research and development taking place within the country and the recommendations related to more quality Ph. D. are given below:

- Launch a national publicity campaign to attract the best young minds for careers in teaching at all levels and also academic research.
- Enable responsible research environments in universities like digital media, in parallel with funds, better libraries and laboratories.
- Introduction of four year well-planned courses to enable direct entry into Ph.D. programmes.
- Exposure to Under Graduate and Post Graduate students to cutting edge research
- Ensuring a capable administration headed by appointments of able V.C and registrar, these appointments should be based on academic and administrative credentials.
- Increasing efficiency and transparency in universities administration at all levels.
- Support and promotion of cross-disciplinary teaching and research programmes.
- Promoting collaboration between research and development units within industry and universities.

6. Highlight on the Recommendations of Yashpal Committee (Yashpal Committee Report - AICTE, 2015)**:**

Very concrete and qualitative recommendations are given by the committee to advise the Government on renovation and rejuvenation of higher education headed by Prof. Yashpal, an Executive Chairman of UGC and his team.

Originally, this committee was supposed to review UGC \ AICTE and other related councils but that study could not be much productive so they suggested to make their task broader. Prof. Yashpal Committee observed that most institutions of higher education harm the potential of human mind for constructing and creating new knowledge and emphasised declaration of information rewarded capability of storing information. The committee has suggested many recommendations. The snapshot of the major recommendations of Prof. Yashpal Committee is given even though some of them overlap with the major recommendations of NKC:

- Present regulating bodies should be subsumed within a national commission for higher education and research.
- IIT and IIMs, our best run institutions must stave to be models of all-round excellence.
- Task of universities is not only to impart knowledge to young people but also to give them opportunity to create their own knowledge.
- Graduates should be sufficiently exposed to interdisciplinary experience which can sustain them when the demands of the particular job market changes
- Theoretical knowledge must be accompanied by practical experience.
- To teach effectively at the university level, one needs rigorous engagement in research.
- Strategy of syllabus redesigning to succeed, evaluation and exam pattern should be changed and pedagogy practises used by teachers
- Exposure to students at UG level in various disciplines like humanities, social sciences, athletics etc. in an integrated manner.
- Full-fledged orientation programme for newly recruited teachers, which should focus on curriculum, communication and assessment skills.
- New kinds of course designing for professional; learning in all fields from management to architecture and from medical to engineering.
- Setting up a state level council for speedy development of the skills necessary in the present phase of Indian economic development.
- UG students must get opportunities to interact with the best university faculty, as specially the senior faculty of post graduate level.
- Start programme of management education in I.I.Ts.
- Teacher should have complete autonomy in academic matters to frame her\his course and evaluation system

7. Some observations for improving Quality of Higher Education

After the snap shot of NKC and renovation and rejuvenation committee of two eminent personalities i.e., Prof. Yashpal and Mr. Pitroda, some personal observations are made in order to improve the quality of higher education. They are mentioned here:

- Committees headed by Kothari, Pitroda and Yashpal committee are agreed that autonomous bodies of education should be free from pressure of party and power politics.
- Genuine publicity campaign must be started for hiring better teachers to get rid of the short fall and crisis of good teachers at undergraduate and postgraduate level.
  The selection of the new teachers should not be just on the basis of personal interview and research paper written by them, in addition to that interest and aptitude in teaching profession and presentation skill in selection would give a better slot.
- Fixed-pay system for the new appointees must be stopped urgently by replacing the pay to honour knowledge and motivate the new entrants in teaching profession.
- The role of teacher is something beyond curriculum, so they should also share different life learning experiences with students.
- Teachers should be encouraged to pursue research work because it is the right mode of developing the knowledge about local and world class practices
- Single yard stick of mere experience of teaching for many years should be corrected by proper feedback of peer teachers and principals

of college and rating of teachers from several more angles should be introduced to make them competitive.

➢ It is very essential to train students according to the need of job market. This can be achieved by redesigning the curriculum and syllabus in core areas.

➢ Entire higher education system should envisage equipping students not only through the specialisation or Super specialisation but with inter-disciplinary knowledge which was earlier offered in ancient Gurukul system at Nalanda or Takshshila, the ancient vibrant educational campuses.

➢ Colleges and Universities should take initiative to develop rapo with industry on timely basis to increase the employability ratio of trained and professional human resources for society.

➢ The barrier of financial constraint for reform can be reduced by establishing liaison with the initiative of the corporate people who have ample funds under research and development for the upliftment of the society and country as a whole.

8. Conclusions

It is gratifying to note that the Ministry of HRD of the Government of India has embarked upon an ambitious project of renovating and overhauling the present education system to promote excellence in higher education with a view to sustaining the growing economy of the country. The project can succeed in full measure if the central and state governments work hand-in-hand with utmost cooperation by treating education as the national issue. Moreover, the onus of successful implementation of educational reforms lies with well-equipped, motivated and dedicated teachers. The qualities of such teachers can thrive in a conducive and encouraging academic environment, which has to be created by universities and colleges with the active financial support of central as well as state governments without any undue political interference. For the proper implementation of any educational policy the teachers should have central place and it must be a sine qua non for the success of educational reforms.

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