

Periodic Research

Present Scenario of Indian Higher Education with Special Reference to Role of Media and Socio-Political Changes

Abstract

The world conference on higher education organized by UNESCO in October 1998 stated the importance of higher education that the mission of higher education is to educate, to train and to undertake research. It stated the core missions and values of higher education, in particular the mission to contribute to the sustainable development and improvement of society as a whole, should be preserved, reinforced and further expanded. The present study mainly attempts to analysis the current scenario of Indian higher education with special reference to role of media and socio-political changes.

Keyword: Globalization, NACC, NBA, UGC, GER, Media, Communication, Higher Education.

Introduction

Higher education plays an important role in the development of nation. The prosperity of the country is linked up with the higher education. Presently institutions of higher education have two major responsibilities to perform. The first responsibility includes, besides other things helping students acquire the skill of learning how to learn so that they keep themselves fit and up to date in the fast changing world of work and the second is for providing continuing education for adults. Higher education is assuming a growing significance for developing countries, especially India experiencing service led growth. Higher education is all about generating knowledge, encouraging critical thinking and imparting skills relevant to this society and driven by its needs. Education general and higher education in particular, is a highly nation-specific activity, determined by national culture and priorities. The growth of India's higher educational institutions has indeed been spectacularly rapid. The numbers of universities have doubled since 1990-91, and enrolment has doubled.

The Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) is the regulatory body responsible for the development of human resources. The ministry is divided into two departments: the Department of School Education and Literacy, which deals with primary education and literacy and the Department of Higher Education, which deals with secondary and tertiary education. The regulating organizations under MHRD are the Department of Higher Education, University Grants Commission (UGC), National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) and National Board of Accreditation (NBA). There are 12 professional Councils, which form the part of the main players in the Indian Higher Education. . As of 2011, India has 42 central universities, 275 state universities, 130 deemed universities, 90 private universities, 5 institutions established and functioning under the State Act, 18,000 colleges and 33 Institutes of National Importance. (Source: Wikipedia)

Number of universities and colleges has considerably increased as shown in the following table.

Table 1
Number of universities and institutions in Higher Education

Year	Number of universities	Number of colleges
2006-07	273	16885
2011-2012	537	18000

Many types Of universities are working in our higher education system like central universities, state universities, deemed universities, private universities etc. Category wise universities are shown in the table no. 2.

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Table 2
Category Wise Universities in the Year 2011-12

Universities	2011-12
Central universities	42
State Universities	275
Deemed Universities	130
Private Universities	90

Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) is a statistical measure used by the United Nations to measure education index of a nation. In the context of higher education, it measures the total population of all ages enrolled in different education programs to the total population of the country in the age group of 18-23. The current level of GER in India stands at a figure of 12.4% and is very low compared to world average of 23.2%, 36.5% for developing countries and 45% for developed countries. The Government has set a target of increasing the GER from the present level of 12% to 15% by the end of XI Five Year Plan and to 30% by the year 2020. Various new projects have been taken during XI Five Year Plan to increase the GER. Reliable and comprehensive data-base is an immediate requirement to measure the actual GER and efforts have been taken to improve the GER.

India has a large higher education sector and is ranked the third largest in the world in student population after China and United States. India educates approximately 10 percent of its young people in higher education compared with more than half in the major industrialized countries. India's higher education sector is working with half the teacher strength it actually needs. The first major government assessment of faculty shortage in colleges and universities across the country has thrown up a shocking result of 54 per cent. (The Tribune, August 9, 2011)

The task force appointed by the Ministry of HRD and UGC submitted a report on the issue of faculty shortage. The findings of the task force say that at present, there is a shortage of 383,868 faculties in the system. The fall is also expected to increase by 100,000 every year. The findings also prove that the lecture-to-student ratio in the country is 1:20.9 against 1: 13.5 recommended by the UGC (1: 12 for Postgraduate students and 1:15 for Undergraduates)

1. The basic aim of this paper is to focus on the following aspects:
2. Effect of media on higher education.
3. Effect of socio-political changes on higher education.

Effect of Media on Higher Education

In general "media" refers to various means of communication. For example, television, radio, newspapers, compact and teleconferencing are different types of media.

Radio is playing a significant role in reaching, informing and educating people. Radio is still a dominant medium with wide access. Computers and internet have started influencing the way we learn. All these media are very powerful to reach, teach, and enrich. There are several pointers to suggest that television, if used appropriately would be one of the

powerful educational media. "Test showed that students did significantly better when they viewed the lessons that demonstrated planned visual continuity, contained visual reinforcement, and had been the result of a team approach to make effective use of the TV medium."Chu and Schramm (1967).

According to a study Saiprasad (2001), Higher education students seek information on education, career guidance, carrier advancement and a host of other areas through the internet. Research has indicated that computerized learning motivates students to invest more time in a subject area in particular when the student can work according to his own pace and time schedule, as described by Worthen, VanDusen and Sailor (1994). This also happens when the system creates extra possibilities for the student to communicate with other students (through email, bulletin boards and computer conferencing) .The enthusiasm of students working with the WWW is a clear illustration of these research findings.

Research has shown that using computerized learning can reduce the necessary learning time of students to two third of the time needed in a conventional course, as per the observations of Kulik and Kulik(1991). Internet enables citizens to have access to anything and everything of their choice-books, news, bank accounts ,shopping, databanks, friends peer groups and interest groups – and at a time of their choice without stirring out of the comfort of their homes with a flick of buttons on their remote control and computer keyboard. Voice activated signals may even do away with all this trouble of pushing buttons. Internet based emerging communication tools, such as emails, bulletin boards, etc, provide more reflective and useful interactions among learners, instructors, and resources according to Picciano (2002).The researcher found that, in the field of education, TV has assumed immense importance not only in terms of its reach but also in improving the quality of education at all levels and promises to play a major role in educational endeavors, towards upgrading as well as enrichment. Web based course delivery offers a complex learning and teaching environment.

Need of communications in higher education-persons related to higher education as deans, university presidents, directors of business schools, press officers, professors, directors of organizations. As it stands most of them are already aware of the absolute necessity for communications. They know their institutions can no longer remain sequestered in ivory to wryers separate from society enveloped in a purely academic mindset-As they have so long been. They all understand that the best thing to do is publicize the uniqueness and strengths of their institutions. Whether it is to attract students (particularly from abroad), to recruit professors, to collaborate with companies, to raise funds to mobilize alumni, or even to attract the attention of the general public. There is a simple reason for this: higher education has entered the era of competition and the playing field can be local, national or international.

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Everywhere, communication is necessary if a school wants to stay in the race, to stand out, to be visible and regarded positively.

Academic excellence alone is no longer enough: one also needs to "get the message out". This means implementing an effective, professional communications plan. Thanks to globalization, they are spread out all over the world. As for the media industry, it is also increasingly diverse in nature: there are the traditional media (written press, radio, television, posters etc.), but also student newspapers, websites, blogs, online publication, social network.

Our students are hyper informed, their attention is easily diverted, they are critical and experts at recognizing double talk and platitude. Highly conversant with the new technologies, they exist in the universe of mobile communication (CELL PHONES, TEXT MESSAGING, mp3 files, smart phones, notebooks) and the interactive web. The web era making it possible to assess information anytime and anywhere, the internet served as an extraordinary facilitator and accelerator. This is even truer for higher education than other sectors. So every institution created a website, some of which were more or less robust, more or less of friendly than other communications.

There was yet another change of course, beginning in 2005-2006, with the rise of web2.0, which brought with it significant interactivity. Websites were enriched with chat rooms, forums, blogs, and plenty of videos. This is also the era of social networking (facebook, linkedin, etc).

1. These days, communication encompasses the many ways in which an institution can express itself brand management, publishing, design press relations, direct marketing, events, internal communication, press monitoring...participative, interactive, multichannel, integrated, omnipresent: that is communications in higher education today. Among the (many) communications options available to universities and business schools, there is one that is increasingly successful: having their professors and experts express themselves publicly. Professors could potentially contribute by presenting a research summary that might be of interest to the public. This could be done in collaboration with the communications department or through a blog. In this way media plays an eminent role on higher education.

Impact of Socio-Political Changes on Higher Education

Education, especially higher education plays an important role in our society. Education shapes the destiny of a nation. The quality of man power in any country ultimately determines the sustainable a well being of its people. A creation of social opportunities for all sections of society is a reflection of the progress of that society and education is the principal instrument for developing human capabilities. Major changes have recommended in higher education. These changes are common to all societies of the

world and the cumulative effect of all these changes demand a different type of human resources. Consequently, higher education institutions are under to play different roles that are different from the traditional ones. Significant among these new responsibilities are

1. Providing educational programs of new models based on flexibility and learner choice.
2. Preparing students for the information era by developing skills for information processing.
3. Preparing students for lifelong learning style among them.
4. Providing for adults and non- formal education to an increasing percentage of mature learners.
5. Providing for specialized skill- oriented courses of different levels.
6. Optimizing the available resources to facilitate quality output .

These expectations from higher education institutions indicate that high quality and relevant education will have to replace the existing more general and academic education. Universalisation of higher education is the new dictum. By world class education, one means knowledge a training of high quality that would be of use in any society in the world irrespective of regional and socio economic variances. Each one of the affiliates to society should respond to all the new social expectations individually and the affiliating parent university should enable them with requisite freedom and other facilities to respond positively to this changing context.

Political decisions play a important role on higher education. As part of globalization, the economic reform packages were introduced in India in the beginning of 1991. These reform packages have imposed a heavy compression on the public budgets on education sector, more specifically so on higher education. In all sectors Government of India introduce a number of reformatory measures to make the country a global economy. The new environment holds both threats and opportunities to higher education.

Globalization, which is said to have brought radical changes in the polity, economy and society in India, may have a similar profound effect on education, particularly the higher education, in the country. Globalization has brought in new definitions not only for the world economic and political system but also for higher education. To enhance the global competitiveness of their higher education systems, government of India have started comprehensive reforms and adopted new governance measures to enhance their universities. At the beginning of India's independence, there were 19 universities and 591 colleges while students enrolment at the tertiary level of education was 0.2 million. After the independence, there is great advancement in these numbers. India is the third largest higher education system in the world (after China and the USA) in terms of enrolment. However, in terms of the number of institutions, India is the largest higher education system in the world with 18000 institutions. This means that the average number of students per educational institution in India

is also lower than that in the US and China. On the other hand, the public expenditure on education is only about 3% of the GNP. More particularly, only 0.37% of GDP is spent on higher education in India and this has been falling in recent years.

The Central government is responsible for major policy decisions relating to higher education in the country. It provides grants to the University Grants Commission (UGC) and establishes Central Universities in the country. The central Government provides unplanned grants for their maintenance. The coordination and cooperation between the Union and the States is brought about in the field of education through the Central Advisory Board of Education (CABE), also responsible for declaration of educational Institutions as 'Deemed Universities' on the recommendation of the UGC. The State government is also responsible for establishment of State Universities and Colleges and provides plan grants for International comparison. At present we have the UGC & the Council for Technical Education and Professional Institutions like the Medical Council, main players in higher education system in India. The responsibility for the establishment and monitoring of the performance of this large variety of Institutions has been exercised by many different statutory regulatory bodies as well as governments and Universities. A well – designed regulatory system will also help to promote a high degree of professionalism in managing higher education institutions, it is important to design a balanced and all encompassing regulatory mechanism that is overarching, transparent and ensures accountability which would evoke confidence in the academic institutions and academic body at large. It needs to be realized at this stage that the creation of bodies like the AICTE, ICAR, MCI and so on has certainly help in focusing attention on specialized areas. It has, at the same time, fragmented the higher educational sector in the country from a policy perspective.

Central government is responsible for major policy relating to higher education in the country. It provides grants to the UGC and establishes central universities. State governments are responsible for establishment of state universities and colleges, and provide plan grants for their development and non plan grants for their maintenance. The Central Advisory Board of education (CABE) is created for coordination and cooperation between the Union and states.

In order to enhance the global competitiveness of their higher education systems, governments in India have started comprehensive reforms and adopted new governance measures to enhance their universities. Incorporation and corporatization have been identified as important strategies to restructure and re-engineer university governance around the world.

Conclusion

Higher education system in India compare to developing/ developed countries needs substantial improvement. The percentage of students taking higher education is hardly about 13% whereas the

same is varying between 28 to 90%, across the world. The lowest % being 28% and the same is high as 90% in developed countries. Government should also provide sufficient funds, annual schemes for unaided institution for enhancing overall support. Some specific programs of higher education should be of these sectors must assure developed for respective sectors, and companies of these sectors must assure employability through internships/projects and final placements for win-win situation.

These are some of the points if we practice in a near future for increasing percentage of students seeking higher education, the scenario will certainly increase, and students in turn will start adding value to the corporate world and towards the growth of our nation in the near future.

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