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Higher Education in India: A Myth or Reality?
(With Special Reference to the Admission Process, Syllabus & Examination Pattern)

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Abstract

Examinations or student assessment of students play a very important role in deciding the quality of education. The academic quality of examinations (question papers) in Indian higher education system has been a matter of concern for a long time. In the present examination system, memorization occupies a dominant place. The recall of factual knowledge, though essential to any examination, is only one of several major abilities to be demonstrated by the graduates. The assessment process must also test higher level skills viz. ability to apply knowledge, solve complex problems, analyse, synthesise and design. In the last couple of decades, higher education has witnessed tremendous growth in terms of number of students enrolled, number of courses offered, reach of institutes etc. As a result of this growth, the examination system at universities has become quite complex and complicated. One of the major problems faced by a university is to conduct infallible examinations and provide tamper proof certificates. Leakages of question papers defeat the main purpose of examination, i.e. assessing the depth of knowledge and extent of skill acquired by the student. Quality teaching has become an issue of importance as the landscape of higher education has been facing continuous changes: increased international competition, increasing social and geographical diversity of the student body, increasing demands of value for money, introduction of information technologies, etc.

The paper interprets the contemporary scenario of higher education in India which seems to have lost the spirit of higher education with hardly anything to give to the youth in the name of socio-cultural and ethical values. The special focus in the paper is on the required reforms in the present higher education in India for the sake of the betterment of the Indian youth associated with the various colleges and universities in India.

Keywords: Higher education, Myth, Reality, Syllabus, Examination Pattern, Career, Orientation, Struggle, Competition, Main Stream.

Introduction

"The most important and urgent reform needed in education is to transform it, to endeavour to relate it to the life, needs and aspirations of the people and thereby make it the powerful instrument of social, economic and cultural transformation necessary for the realization of the national goals. For this purpose, education should be developed so as to increase productivity, achieve social and national integration, accelerate the process of modernization and cultivate social, moral and spiritual values." Report of the University Education Commission (Dr. S. Radhakrishnan Commission), 1948-49

The classical thinkers hold the idea that education is the very foundation of personality development which enables one to face the practical world successfully. It is only through education that one learns how to adapt to the changed circumstances and to lead a successful life. Education relates not only to the all round development of personality but also to the development of various social and cultural values. It determines the status of the individual in the society and links him with the mainstream. An illiterate person is no better than an animal who lives only to eat and finally to die. At all the levels whether at school or college or university

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level, education has much to contribute to the life of the individual, as it helps him to win a special identity in the society.

Higher education has much more to give to the individual than the education at the other various levels at schools. It directly enables him to have mastery over the subjects he undertakes for him to study and finally to join some good and reputable career. As a principle, the higher education prepares the students to enjoy the practical world quite intelligibly proving their academic potential over others, but the contemporary scenario of higher education witnesses a horrible deterioration. The reason is that it fails to impart to the students what it is meant for. It has an assurance neither for a balanced personality nor for a good career. It fails to produce quality, and is confined only to the production of the theoretical graduates and post graduates. Moreover, it fails to wash away the narrow mindedness of the scholars.

It is true that the number of the higher educational institutes is higher than before; the number of enrolled students in them too is incredibly higher than before, but it cannot be denied that the more the number of higher institutes is increasing, the less qualitative the education is. Everybody is running after higher education in a mechanical way without paying any heed to its aims. The only aim of the students is just to join the higher education without realizing its worth. The result is that higher education is generating only unemployed who find incompetent to be a part of any progression. In the Indian context, the higher education has only degrees and ambitions to the students, not a good career.

The things that have spoilt the spirit of higher education are admission pattern and process which declares many an able students unable to get higher education in reputed government colleges and universities, and which prefers the students of the various reserved categories to the really intelligent ones ;inappropriate syllabus which prepares the students only to pass the examination, and which is unable to prepare them for the world of competition; and the examination pattern which promotes cramming and selected study, and discourages the real learning and intelligence.

Objectives of the Study

In addition to the general objectives on which the research carried out, the following specific objectives for the study were set-

1. To have an insight into the contemporary higher educational scenario in India
2. To observe and study the admission process and bases of admission
3. To pay heed to the syllabus prescribed in the universities and colleges
4. To attempt to be familiar with the academic courses available to the students
5. To learn about the professional courses available in the colleges and universities
6. To be familiar with the various examination patterns being adopted by the universities and colleges

7. To be familiar with the teaching methods being adopted in the college and university teachers
8. To have an insight into the students' bent of mind on the various streams and courses
9. To study the various career orientation programmes being run in the colleges and universities
10. To interpret the students' bent of mind on the career
11. To interpret the relevance of the academic courses available for the students
12. To find out the changes and reforms required in the contemporary higher education in India

Review of Literature

Nick Clark, Editor, World Education News & Reviews (September 5, 2014) in Higher Education Reforms in India: Credits, Semesters and Access observes that in concert with plans to broaden access to tertiary study opportunities, the 12th Five-Year Plan also discusses the need for a deepening of academic reforms, with institutions being asked to shift their instructional emphasis from an "input-centric and credential-focused" approach to a more "learner-centric" approach. This is to be achieved through: regular revisions to curricula, the implementation of a choice-based credit system, the introduction of continuous and comprehensive student evaluations, a cumulative grade point system, and new marking and grading schemes. Learner-centric curriculum reforms include the introduction of credit requirements for non-major elective courses and the creation of syllabi and programs based on learning outcomes relevant to the labor market.

Report of the Committee for Evolution of the New Education Policy, 2016 surveys that in the last twenty years, the educational scenario has seen major changes and new concepts such as rights-based approach to elementary education, student entitlement, shift in emphasis from literacy and basic education to secondary, higher, technical and professional education, the endeavour to extend universalization to secondary education, reshape the higher education scenario. Recent developments include a new impetus to skill development through vocational education in the context of the emergence of new technologies in a rapidly expanding economy in a globalised environment, need for innovative ways of student financing, addressing challenges of globalization and liberalization, recognition of multi-disciplinary and inter-disciplinary nature of learning and knowledge, efficient use of public resources and encouraging ways of enhancing private investment and funding.

Bhattacharya Jonaki and Pal Prasenjit Rabindra Bharati (2016) in Higher Education in India: Recent Issues and Trends discuss the issue of ambiguous concepts of higher education that is used in the literatures all over world. The study has tried to trace the higher education in India form the long past. Then the authors discuss the present status of higher education in India and the recent trend in Indian higher education. The issues like Quantity of Institution, Fields of Education, Enrolment Pattern, Teacher Availability, Constitutional Provision on

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Higher Education, Disparity in Access to Higher Education, Governance Practice, Quality Control Mechanism, Trend in Finance has been discussed briefly. Recent trends like privatization and globalization emerging in the field of Indian higher education are covered by the study.

Stefan Trines (September 13, 2018) in Education in India observe that India is a rapidly changing country in which inclusive, high-quality education is of utmost importance for its future prosperity. The country is currently in a youth bulge phase. It has the largest youth population in the world—a veritable army of 600 million young people under the age of 25. Fully 28 percent of the population is less than 14 years of age, and with more than 30 babies being born every minute, population growth rates are expected to remain at around 1 percent for years. India is expected to overtake China as the largest country on earth by 2022 and grow to about 1.5 billionpeople by 2030 (up from 1.34 billion in 2017). The UN projects that Delhi will become the largest city in the world with 37 million people by 2028.

Hypothesis

The author formulated the following hypotheses for the study, and tested them through the study-

1. Higher education leads the students to career and specialization in certain fields
2. The contemporary higher educational scenario in India is embarrassing
3. The admission pattern and process in the colleges and universities is too tedious
4. Percentage of marks in the last examination passed is the basis of admission
5. A certain number and percentage of seats are reserved for the candidates belonging to the various castes
6. The low scorers fail to get admission in Government colleges and universities
7. The low scorers join the private colleges and universities to join higher education
8. The syllabus prescribed in the colleges and universities is not sufficient to link the students to the reputed careers
9. Both the government and the private colleges and universities run various academic courses in the various streams
10. Very few government colleges and universities run the professional courses
11. The technical colleges and universities run the professional courses and facilitate the careers to the students
12. The teaching methods being adopted in the colleges and universities are not appropriate
13. The higher scorers have their bent of mind on Science and Commerce streams, while the lower scorers have their bent of mind on Arts, Agriculture or similar courses and streams
14. Both the government and the private colleges lack the career orientation programmes
15. The college and university students are not serious about the career
16. The academic courses available in the colleges and universities fail to link the students with career
17. The higher education pattern needs to be reformed in the interest of the students

Methodology

The paper serves as a qualitative research made through the secondary data in particular in addition to the personal observation and perceptions of the author. Made with the specific objective to evaluate and interpret the contemporary higher educational scenario in India, the study was made following the steps, such as, the selection of the problem to be studied and interpreted, setting of specific aims of the study, going through the related literature found available in books, journals, newspapers, and internet sites, micro analysis of the contents, hypothesis formulation, adding own perceptions and observation to the contents, systematic putting together of the contents, interpretation of the causal-effect relation of the problem.

Research Questions

In order to study the various aspects of the selected problem, the author attempted to find the answer to the following research questions-

1. What is the importance of education in the life of man?
2. What are the categories of education being imparted to the students at various levels in India?
3. What is the higher education meant for?
4. Is the higher education available to all?
5. If yes, how?
6. If no, why not?
7. What is the admission pattern in the higher educational institutes?
8. What percentage of seats is reserved for the candidates belonging to the different categories?
9. Does the admission pattern require change?
10. If yes, why?
11. What is the idealistic approach about the syllabus for the higher studies?
12. Is the syllabus prescribed in the technical and non-technical higher educational institutes capable of ensuring the students a sure success in the competitions?
13. Does the syllabus need to be revised as per the needs of the students?
14. What streams are joined by the students for the sake of higher education?
15. Are the academic courses able to link the scholars with career?
16. If no, why?
17. Is the examination pattern satisfactory?
18. If no, what changes should be brought about?
19. What is the approach of the students about the higher education?
20. How can the higher educational institutes serve the purpose of the students?

Findings

1. Education is the key to the personality development and panacea to all the problems

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that require a judicious decision at the various steps in life

2. In India, education is imparted at various levels, such as, elementary or primary level, upper primary level, secondary and senior secondary level, college and university level

3. Higher education is meant for mastery over a subject and specialization in a specific field and a reputed career

4. In theory the higher education is available to all, but in practice it is available only to those who fulfill the prescribed norms

5. The contemporary higher education scenario in India is not satisfactory as it fails to link the students with career and job

6. The contemporary higher education in India prefers quantity to quality. Every year thousands and ten thousands of students with tremendous percentage of marks and division are produced by the colleges and universities, but very few of them are capable of handling the situations in the practical world

7. Despite scoring a very high percentage of marks and having several degrees, the scholars fail to get jobs they deserve

8. The admission pattern in the colleges and universities is defective and it needs reform

9. Admissions should be allowed not on the basis of the percentage of the last examination passed, but on the basis of entrance test and interview so as to confirm whether the applicant is capable of getting higher studies or not

10. 16% seats are reserved for the SC candidates, 12% for the ST candidates, 21% for the BC candidates, and 3% of them are reserved for the physically handicapped ones.

11. The reservation of seats in higher educational institutes spoils the spirit of higher education, as it allows for higher education even those who do not deserve it. At the same time, it does not allow many of the candidates of the General category simply because seats are not left for them

12. The admission pattern needs to be reformed. First, a common test for all should be conducted, and only those who qualify the test should be allowed for higher education. It will bring quality in higher education

13. For higher education there should not be any reservation policy. It must relate to the actual abilities of the candidates

14. The syllabus for the various courses and programmes in colleges and universities is not proper and appropriate. The modern age is an age of competitions. The syllabus should be designed in a way that it links the students with the world of competitions and prepares them for the field of specialization they want to

15. Neither in technical nor in non-technical institutes is the syllabus capable of ensuring a sure success

16. For the sake of higher education, the favourite streams of the students are-Arts, Commerce, Science, Law, Agriculture, Management, Engineering, Medicines etc.

17. The examination pattern followed by the colleges and universities is defective and it requires change. Examinations are held either in semesters or annually. Semester system is better than the annual examination pattern as it keeps the students busy and absorbed throughout the year. Semester system must be made mandatory for all the courses. In addition, class tests, seminars, group discussions etc. should be given room in the syllabus so that an all round development of the personality may be ensured.

Conclusion

At present higher education seems to have lost its spirit and got an entirely new meaning which associates it to westernized modes of living, deteriorated values and imbalanced personality. It fails to allow the students to lead a successful life through some good career and through specialization. It has nothing to give to the youth but false hopes, frustration, depression, staggering career. To be honest, it requires reforms and changes. It can be helpful to the students only when first the admission pattern based on the reservation policy is changed. The real talent and intellect can be promoted only in that case when the admissions to the higher educational institutes are allowed, not on the basis of the category, but on the basis of the intelligence to be tested through a combined preliminary test for the admission in various classes. Only then the really worthy students can be linked to higher education. Secondly, the higher education should aim more at quality than on quantity. Thirdly, the syllabus for the various courses should be designed and prepared in a way that immediately after passing the examination, the students feel comfortable while appearing at the various concerning competitive examinations. The topics that there are in the syllabus of the competitive exams should be given room in the syllabus. Fourthly, in order to prepare the students for the practical world, the professional courses must be added to the academic courses. Every course should have a syllabus divided between general and specific papers. The general papers should have such topics as are essentially to be prepared by all irrespective of the stream the students have opted, while the specific papers should be related to the stream the students have joined. In addition, Each paper should aim at judging and evaluating the theoretical and practical bent of mind of the students.

In every higher educational institute whether technical or non technical, there should be the arrangement of various guidance and counseling and career orientation programmes so that during the course of higher studies the students can make up their mind what course they should opt for the sake of a good career. Until and unless these reforms in higher education in India are made, the crowded higher educational institutes all over India will continue to produce the scholars with heavy degrees and without practical knowledge and without career. The policy makers should keep in mind that the youth is not meant for wastage of time, money and energy, but for the best utilization of intellect for the sake of

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practical knowledge of things, successful career and specialization.

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