

Challenges to Indian Higher Education in Global Perspective

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Abstract



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Greatness of a nation is witnessed through its educational system and the national destiny is shaped in its educational institutions, as education is the key to human progress and social change. Within the horizon of the education system, higher education occupies a central place that influences system, knowledge and quality of human resources. Universities are institutions of excellence to promote the best values and provide leadership to the educated world and society at large. There are several trends, issues and the quality indicators in the light of which standard of higher education is judged and improved. Six areas of these indicators from which challenges in tertiary education emerge are: curriculum, teaching and learning, evaluation, research, infrastructure and innovations. In addition to these, higher education faces great challenges related to organization structure, assessment and accreditation, management of quality, globalization and problems in remote areas. The present paper is an outcome of library study and researcher's own experience.

Keywords: Higher education, challenges, quality, globalization.

Introduction

Greatness of a nation is witnessed through its educational system. Destiny of a nation is shaped in its educational institutions as education is the key to human progress and social change. Within the horizon of education, higher education occupies a central place which influences:

1. The school education system,
2. Generation of knowledge
3. Quality of human resources social, economic and political policies
4. Actions of the state and the people

Universities are institutions of excellence to promote the best values and to provide leadership to the educated world and the society at large through students or taughts.

Teaching in higher education mostly concentrates on giving information which is not the sole objective of higher education. Objectives are multi-dimensional in nature. Some of them are:

1. Developing reasoning and thinking power
2. Judgment and decision making ability
3. Self-concept and value clarification, proper study habits
4. Tolerance and removal of ambiguity, risk-taking capacity, scientific temper, etc.

To achieve all these, the appropriate method should be used in an integrated fashion. Higher education occupies an important place at the apex of the educational pyramid and helps develop the cream of the society- a select group of individuals- physically, intellectually, emotionally and socially. Colleges and universities have produced scholars, engineers, technologists, doctors and managers of quality comparable with the best products of the best universities of the world. But against this minority of quality products, the larger majority came out of institutions of higher education. They are a little more of book learning and of course degree, but with very little capacity for self-study, poor language and communication skills, limited worldview and hardly any sense or national responsibility.

Higher education in India is passing through a critical phase. There is an increasing demand for well-qualified human resources, research & development but the resources made available for the development of higher education and research & development have been made limited. The colleges control about 83 percent of the total student population but have very limited resources for the improvement of quality.

These aspects of Indian higher education pose challenges. The summary of various issues, trends and challenges is presented under the following headings:

1. Quality Vs Quantity
2. Globalization
3. Threats for Higher Education in Remote Areas

Quality Vs Quantity

Higher education has expanded significantly after independence.

Rate of Growth	Year
10 percent to 5 percent	During 50s and 60s and remained till Mid 70s
4 percent to 5 percent	After 70s

Where, the size of the growth of the system is following:

Year	Number of Colleges	Number Universities
1947	500	20
2003	13,150	300
2012-13	37,204	628 (on March 13, 2013)
		1005 (as on August 6, 2021)

This expansion in colleges and universities without a proportionate increase in the physical and academic facilities has caused decline in the quality and the standard of college and university education. This is a big challenge to our higher education. Enrolment growth is but one of the many new pressures that raise quality issues in higher education.

According to the surveys carried out by NASSCOM and other agencies, more than 70% of our Engineering graduates are not employable. Dr. A.P.J. Kalam once said rightly that India does not have a problem of unemployment but unemployability. India needs quality manpower. The quality in higher education is the biggest need of the hour as our country is progressing towards becoming the educational hub of the world.

The concept of quality in education is being defined as- quality is that which consumers (e.g. parents, students and employers) define as quality, quality as reliability, quality as excellence, quality as the extent to which predefined objectives have been met: quality as fitness for purpose; quality as conformance to specification, quality control and quality assurance, total quality management (TQM). Taking a holistic view, TQM in higher education means improving quality of courses, input, instructional processes, resources, management processes and structures as well as student support services, output and linkage with world of work and other organization.

There are several quality indicators of college/ university education, six main areas of the quality indicators which are facing challenges as always are:

Curriculum

Present curriculum does not have uniformity due to rigidity in it. This existing rigid and insulated structure of courses and limit of strait jacket subject boundaries give way to multi-dimensional studies. The curriculum should become inter-disciplinary. There is a lack of flexibility and choices in courses. Thus, the curriculum has to undergo a sea change. It needs to be highly differentiated with respect to different levels and kinds of learner abilities, social-cultural groups and ethnic sections of the society.

Teaching and Learning

The challenge is that there is a lack of development of quality teaching-learning methodologies and these are not shared because of lack of cooperation in development of teaching and research in respective knowledge areas. It is required to develop a framework to strengthen teaching, learning and research in different subject areas that are in harmony with global standards.

Academic quality describes how well the learning opportunities available to students help them achieve their award. It is making sure that appropriate and effective teaching support and learning opportunities are provided.

The core of educational quality is in the interactive process between a teacher and student. The Key to quality education is generating passion for learning rather than mastering over the content given in a period of time. The most important component of the educational process is a teacher who cannot be replaced from instructional situations, irrespective of the development in media and ICT. In order to determine the quality of instructional processes one of the main marks will have to be with respect to teacher's behaviour and competence. Due to the explosion of knowledge, new information technology, globalization and rise in social aspirations, there is great demand for newer professional knowledge skills in the teacher.

Another challenge rises in the domain of pedagogy. Colleges need to change pedagogical style from teacher-centred to student-centric and include more assignments for students to independently analyse and apply tools on real life problems.

Evaluation

Evaluation is not based on learning outcomes of the learners and also not aligned to the higher cognitive domain. The critical thinking skills and problem-solving ability of the students do not find a place in the evaluation system. In view of the shift from guided classroom instruction to self-directed, cooperative learning, the collaboration of teachers and learners to construct knowledge, the evaluation techniques require changes in equal proportions. The quality in higher education can be improved by using sound evaluation schemes and continuous feedback evaluation; the evaluation that is linked with the performance of the students.

Research

The role of academics can be seen in terms of their three fold responsibilities, namely teaching, research & scholarship and service. The term research and scholarship has usually been referred to uncovering or generating new knowledge or solving particular practical or theoretical problems. Research is the most important aim as well as a function of higher education. As extracted from the matrices drawn by Sheela Ramachandran & V. Hema Nalini on competency and quality in higher education, the problems in research area are listed as: (a) Plagiarism, (b) Qualitative decline in research, (c) Non-application of latest research and technologies to create energy efficient environment, (iv) Lack of global perspective in research, (v) Lack of research base in institutes of higher education. Yet another problem is the lack of balances between teaching and research. This balance is must because teaching and research are twin foundations of a **University** as the creation of new knowledge goes hand in hand with the dissemination of that new knowledge for the betterment of the society.

The causal factors of the above mentioned problems are: (i) Lack of strategic planning in research, (ii) Lack of research agendas due to weak link between research institutions, (iii) Research institutions operate in isolation or without good understanding of the need of the industry, (iv) Lack of resources along with the abuse of those available, (v) Lack of motivation, (vi) Lack of strategic plan for research.

Infrastructure

Quality organizational systems and services are basic needs of the present globalized tertiary education. An appropriate organizational structure within colleges and universities is crucial for effective management.

Our infrastructure does not match with the high quality infrastructure of the top ranking universities of the world. Universities are being run with weak administrative systems and inadequate facilities. Also, there exists non-cooperation in facilities and research infrastructure. Besides these, public policies on higher education are not based on long term concerns. Thus, coherent and national strategic vision and policy framework is required for the optimum use of ICT and upgradation of technology infrastructure. There is a periodic need for assessment and accreditation of institutions and it is becoming more and more important due to the ongoing regime of privatization and marketing of higher education.

Innovations

Innovation is a new idea which may be a recombination of old ideas, schemes and that challenges the present order, a formula or a unique approach which is perceived as new by the individuals involved (Zaltman, Duncan &Halbek, 1973). In innovation, the dynamic comprises 'research for innovation' and 'research on innovation'. There is non-integration of research and quality and lack of repository of innovative practices because of inefficient use of technology and little access to interactive to world-wide web (Sheela R. & V. Hema Nalini 2013).

Globalization

The concept of globalization is not a new concept, rather it is a very old one. Of course, technology, finance, trade, knowledge, people, values and ideas have been flowing across borders for thousands of years. Students' options for higher education are no longer restricted by national boundaries.

The possible impact of globalization on higher education provides both opportunities and challenges. The opportunities are many and diverse as: increased supply of education, greater access for students and support for knowledge economy, fusion or hybridization of culture, growing comparability of qualifications, economic benefit for education providers, and diversification and generation of new academic environment. The possible challenges are also numerous and varied. They include concern about quality provision, inequality of access, the growing problem of physical and virtual brain-drain, homogenization of culture, weakening role of the state in establishing national policy objectives, growth in market-oriented programmes such as business and IT and decline in some liberal arts and pure science disciplines. It is true that what might be seen as an opportunity for one country could be a challenge or risk for another.

Objective of the Study

To find out various challenges to Indian higher education in the present day.

Threats for Higher Education in Remote Areas

Besides common challenges, higher education in underdeveloped remote areas faces specific problems. Institutions in urban areas take more benefit from UGC than those located in remote areas in terms of funds or financial assistance. Still, whatever resource or facility is there in the academic institutions of remote areas is sometimes hijacked by the civil administration, for instance in some naxal affected areas they are used as camps for para military forces.

There is a dearth of teachers with updated knowledge and academic excellence and administrators with academic foresight. It is because the appointments and postings in academic institutions are often influenced by such factors as caste/ community, academic references and also political/ bureaucratic connections ignoring really worthy and more eligible candidates. Academic Staff Colleges' refresher and orientation courses and other workshops and seminars are also not helping teachers in building capacity and developing ability as they attend these programmes as mere formalities to gain API scores. Jaya Prasad (2013) is of the view that immediate new change in service conditions of the academic sector is required. The transfer of service within the state, mobility between state and

central institutions of learning, sending teachers of remote areas on deputation to reputed institutes and vice versa must be made compulsory.

Students of remote universities do not get proper guidance and access to academic resources like necessary books and reference materials due to unavailability of experienced experts, well stocked bookshops and good libraries with internet connectivity. The book grants received by the university and colleges are utilized only in the purchase of books prescribed in syllabus and from local publications.

Conclusion

Higher education in India does not match with the global quality standards. With present infrastructure, class size, availability of teachers, training of teachers and research opportunities etc., it is difficult to achieve all objectives of higher education institutes assuming that quality can be determined by their internal resources and outputs but most of them fail to pay attention towards the development of wisdom and character in students. In the present world, technology works as a revitalizing antidote for a stagnating higher education system but the ideal situation would be that higher education wins the emerging challenges and issues and optimizes the advantages of both traditional and techno-centred education systems, thus helping in achieving real aims of education.

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