



Implementing Quality in Higher Education in India

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Abstract

The growth of Higher Education Institutions in India has been impressive in the recent years, but quality wise it is lagging behind in standards and requirements. And that is why quality has become a matter of great concern. To stand at par with the developed countries, we have to first meet a number of challenges in imparting higher education – which include paradigm shifts in curriculum, learning and creativity, beyond syllabus activities, academic calendar, infrastructure, research, some accountability and governance. To provide some guidelines for facing these changes is the objective of this paper.

Key Words: *Paradigm shift, Curriculum, accountability, governance.*

Introduction

We are living in an important and epoch-making age. This is an age of accelerated change and the age of unprecedented developments and Education is the tool through which individuals, societies and nations can live, progress and achieve success. Education is an enlightening experience which helps in making a meaning out of the complex realities of life. In India we have always believed that education is a liberating as well as evolutionary force, which enables the individual to rise from mere materiality to superior planes of intellectual and spiritual consciousness. Education is a dialogue between the past, present and future, so that the coming generations receive the accumulated lessons of the heritage and carry it forward.

In the last two decades India has made rapid progress in the expansion of higher educational facilities and institutions and at present India's higher education system is the second largest in the world, after the United States. Indian higher education system has expanded at a fast

pace by adding nearly 20,000 colleges and more than 8 million students in decade from 2000-01 to 2010-11. 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, and 33 Institutes of National Importance. Other institutions include 33,000 colleges as Government Degree Colleges and Private Degree Colleges, including 1800 exclusive women's colleges, functioning under these universities and institutions as reported by the UGC in 2012.

Growth of Higher Education:

The growth is very impressive in numbers but quality is far behind the existed standards and requirements. And that's why quality of higher education in India is a matter of great apprehension. To stand at par with the developed countries we have to first meet out the challenges in imparting education especially in higher education.



Reasons for concern, for the quality of Higher Education:

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. Ex-Prime Minister Man Mohan Singh said that "our university system is, in many parts, in a state of disrepair. In almost half the districts in the country, higher education enrolments are abysmally low, almost two-third of our universities and 90 percent of our colleges are rated as below average on quality parameters... I am concerned that in many states university appointments, including that of vice-chancellors, have been politicized and have become subject to caste and communal considerations; there are complaints of favoritism and corruption". These words reflect the concerns for the quality of higher education in India. The quality of higher education in most of our universities and colleges requires substantial improvements. The following problems are common enough to be a cause for quality concern in higher education:

First, curricula, which have remained almost unchanged for decades, have not kept pace with the times.

Second, learning and creativity are at reducing in a system of evaluation that places its focus on memory rather than understanding.

Third, the atmosphere is not favorable to anything beyond the classrooms, for it is caught in a 9.30 to 1.30 syndrome.

Fourth, the academic calendar is no longer untouchable for classes or for examinations, as there are slippages in schedules so much so that, at several places, classes in the time table are not held and results are often declared with

a time delay of 6 to 12 months.

Fifth, the infrastructure is not only inadequate but also on the threshold of collapse.

Sixth, the importance attached to research has eroded gradually over time.

Seventh, the boundaries between disciplines have become dividing walls that constitute barriers to entry for new disciplines.

Eight, there is little accountability, because there are no rewards for performance and no penalties for non-performance.

Ninth, structures of governance are not responsive to changing times but the system is readily subverted by vested interests.

Tenth, teachers are not playing their roles as per the changing needs and requirements. They are unable to prepare students to meet the demands of the digital, technological, interactive, collaborate changing world around us. Quality of teacher education curriculum also needs a transformation according to the present developments and needs.

It is not possible here to provide a complete analysis of what are the other minor but relevant concern areas related to the quality of higher education system. But, above mentioned areas need urgent transformation if India wants to move ahead or along with the world higher education systems.

Implementing quality in higher education:

The following points provide a framework or guideline for improving the quality of higher education in India taking into account the various levels and key factors in education:



Both, academic (institutional goals and objectives, curriculum design and review, teaching learning and evaluation, research and publications) and administrative (organization and management, infrastructure facilities, support services, student feedback and counseling and management of financial resources) aspects should be assessed and to be improved to improve the quality of higher education as it will be the first step towards the most needed education.

Examination reforms like semester system, credit system are to be exercised to streamline them in a proper manner. As these are brought up from abroad, we should first of all check its feasibility for our organizational climate. Continuous and comprehensive Evaluation is to be encouraged. Standardized assessment procedures to strengthen the evaluation system.

Financial Accountability is more important which means that the fund is to be used for the enhancement of the laboratory and library facilities.

Gaps or deficiencies in our educational system are to be bridged to suit our economic, social and cultural requirements.

Education is emerging as a service influenced by market operations, and so, it has to meet quality requirements and expectations of stakeholders for its survival.

Distance education has a great potential for high productivity and we must take advantage of it in a big way.

Curriculum restructuring and innovations and involvement, conducting training programmes, orientation programmes, refresher courses.

Accessibility, accountability and

affordability are the major requirements. While the notion of quality was not fully developed, it was recognized that expanding access alone would be insufficient for education to contribute fully to the development of the individual and society.

Need to raise investment in education: education can be the next big area of economic growth in the country. Despite promises by the policy planners to raise investment in education to 6 % of GDP, state and central governments together have spent less than 4 % of GDP on education.

Anything less now would mean further delays in providing quality higher education.

What teachers need to do, to improve the quality of higher education ?

Teacher Education: the preparation of teachers for all levels of education is the responsibility of higher education. Therefore, it is also necessary to enhance the quality of teacher education within the higher education by adopting new learner centered approaches like constructivism etc.,

Accountability: the higher education system must provide for accountability vis-à-vis the outside world and create accountability within the system. We need to create systems that enable students, or their parents, to choose between and assess universities.

Information: institutions imparting higher education should be required to place basic information relating to their financial situation, physical assets, accreditation ratings, faculty positions, academic curricula, and so on, in the public domain. This would empower students and parents and can be an



important step for maintaining qualitative standards.

Thus these are only some of the steps which must be taken towards the qualitative higher education. But, implementing the above guidelines will require support from the management, government, teachers and students as well as the readiness to change as per required changing needs, and then only these guidelines can take a practical form.

Conclusion:

Thus, it can be concluded at the end that quality is a buzz work in today's world of education. It has become an important ideology of education which helps make education more relevant to the needs of the individual and society. Every educational institution must strive to achieve excellence through adopting the highest measures of quality as ongoing basis as fostering quality in higher education is a continuous journey. We all know that education is the key to success as well as a very powerful tool for change. Higher education is the peak time of education of individuals which must be qualitatively strong so that it can guarantee to high employability at good and reputed positions. Improvement in quality of higher education will eventually draw more and more students and problem of low enrolment will get solved. For this higher education curriculum must be relevant so that students can directly link with their routine lives and find it useful to study. Teachers must also change their traditional role and be ready for their role as learners first because teachers have a pivotal role to play in the transformation process and the need of the hour is to get things moving and put them in place.

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