



Promoting excellence in higher education Issues and challenges

Dr. Ch Jayashree, Vice-Principal, Sorijini Naidu Vanitha Maha Vidyalay, Hyderabad

Abstract: Higher education institutions are recognized as a 'social good' fostering intellectual development, technical skills and promoting the values of equity, inclusion and citizenship. A key function of higher education is to foster the values of a civilized society and to promote social mobility and social justice along with high standards of academic achievement. We need higher educated people who are skilled and who can drive our economy forward. Today in this complex world of cut throat competition in all fields, a student has to be equipped in a wide spectrum of activities with a vision of training them for a challenging future through value based education. When India can provide skilled people to the outside world then we can transfer our country from a developing nation to a developed nation very easily and quickly.

Keywords: development, technical skills, value based education

Introduction

Intellectuals from the higher educational institutions all over the country are the think tankers of the nation and most concerned about the progress of the nation which ultimately depends on the excellence in higher education. Higher education meaning is complicated as it is simultaneously linked to the social and cultural environments and to the political and economic contexts.

Excellence is being equated to 'being better' which could mean, the following:

- Excellence in research;
- Top quality professors;
- Favorable working conditions;
- Job security and good salary and benefits;
- Adequate facilities;
- Adequate funding, including predictability year-to-year;
- Academic freedom and an atmosphere of intellectual excitement;
- Faculty self-governance.

• The international dimension in which excellence is embedded.

- The parallel retrenchment

of the traditional link between excellence and elite education.

- Positive stakeholder satisfaction.

Higher education institutions are recognized as a 'social good' fostering intellectual development, technical skills and promoting the values of equity, inclusion and citizenship. A key function of higher education is to foster the values of a civilized society and to promote social mobility and social justice along with high standards of academic achievement..

To achieve this higher education institutions should gear up to climb the ladder of excellence. There are many issues and challenges in this task of preparing young India to meet the Global standards'. A Survey showed about one half of our four year graduates were unable to demonstrate intermediate level of competence in reading and interpreting the newspaper articles, in working with bus schedules, and in using elementary arithmetic to solve problems involving cost of meals in restaurants.



The Times Higher Education World University Rankings 2014-15 have once again demonstrated the distance that Indian universities need to travel for achieving excellence in higher education.

Critical appraisals undertaken by the governmental committees and independent academicians have highlighted the crisis confronting the system: 'increasing educated unemployment; weakening of student motivation; increasing unrest and indiscipline on the campuses; frequent collapse of administration; deterioration of standards; and above all, the demoralizing effect of the irrelevance and purposelessness of most of what is being done.'

While the politicians and policy makers have often spoken about the need for radical reconstruction of the system, what has been achieved in reality is only moderate reformism.

At present, the world-class institutions in India are mainly limited. Most of the Indian colleges and universities lack in high-end research facilities. Under-investment in libraries, information technology, laboratories and classrooms makes it very difficult to provide top quality instruction or engage in cutting-edge research. This gap has to be bridged if we want to speed up our path to development.

According to the London Times Higher Education (2009)- Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) World University rankings, no Indian university features among the first 100. But universities in East Asia have been included in the first hundred. Hong Kong has three, ranked at 24, 35 and 46; Singapore two ranked at 30 and 73; South Korea two ranked at

47 and 69 and Taiwan one in the 95th position. Notably, China's Tsinghua University and Peking University are ranked at 49 and 52 respectively.

There is no Indian university in the rankings from 100 to 200. It is only when one moves on to the next 100 that we find the Indian Institute of Technology, Kanpur at 237; IIT Madras at 284 and the University of Delhi at 291

But given the pace of change in contemporary society, we must increasingly produce graduates who are learners for life, capable of adapting to changes in the processes and nature of work in a global economy and committed to contributing to the well-being of their communities and places of work. Given the complexities of modern life, we must educate a more adaptive, innovative, and engaged citizenry.

Challenges/issues of present higher educational system in India

- Increasing need for professional Administration and governance in the light of global competition
- Lack of resources to pay respectable salaries leave alone Research and Academic Development.
- Increasing trend of Self-interest pursued through political patronage
- Competency in institutional knowledge system is a real challenge ahead in the light of budgetary constraints..
- Challenges from international universities in terms of quality.
- Clarity in terms of implementation of CBCS at collegiate level



- Lack of required infrastructure to improve quality in education.
- Lack of proper planning of human resources
- No linkages with industry for skill oriented education.
- Lack of strong commitment from both sides.
- No stringent action on the growth of unprecidental colleges with no/poor quality of education.
- Increasing craze for degrees of foreign Universities
- Opening of economy /Privatization of Higher education.
- As we move into the 21st century, we find ourselves in a time when our educational system is plagued with a high number of dropouts and many students who complete college lack important skill sets leading to the skill gap
- Need to contemporize the values that motivated universities in olden days to become catalysts for change and societal development.
- large vacancies in faculty positions and poor faculty thereof, low student enrolment rate,

Students from poor background are put to further disadvantage since they are not academically prepared to crack highly competitive entrance examinations that have bias towards urban elite and rich students having access to private tuitions and coaching. Education in basic sciences and subjects that are not market friendly has suffered.

Core values of quality, inclusiveness, and connectivity to 21st-century realities are the important mantras in this century.

Quality means a commitment to utilize an institution's strengths to the fullest and to develop programs of highly regarded research and education across the arts and science. **Inclusiveness** reflects a commitment to make higher education broadly accessible to all who seek to advance themselves through knowledge. **Connectivity** is a commitment to work in collaboration with a range of partners both within and beyond the academy.

Suggestions for improving quality of higher education

I believe that in order to address this problem and to ensure that our students are adequately prepared for meeting the challenges of growing needs

Creating courses with academic instructors that are based on best practices. Ensuring that all programs serving students are based on a student learning outcomes model; Using best practices for appropriate student populations; Using technology to spread success stories.

The main governing body at the tertiary level is the University Grants Commission (India), which enforces its standards, advises the government, and helps coordinate between the centre and the state. UGC and other Regulatory authorities have been trying very hard to extirpate the menace of private universities which are running courses without any affiliation or recognition.



Students from rural and semi urban background often fall prey to these institutes and colleges.

UGC, All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE), Distance Education Council (DEC), Indian Council for Agriculture Research (ICAR), Bar Council of India (BCI), National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE) Rehabilitation Council of India (RCI), Medical Council of India (MCI), Pharmacy Council of India (PCI), Indian Nursing Council (INC), Dentist Council of India (DCI), Central Council of Homeopathy (CCH), the Central Council of Indian Medicine (CCIM) and such other regulatory bodies from time to time are trying to accommodate these development and yet maintain quality students in higher education.

Skill building is really very crucial to ensure employability of academia Incentives should be provided to teachers and researchers to make these professions more attractive for the younger generation Effective measures will have to be adopted to mobilize resources for higher education.. The world is entering into an Information Age and developments in communication, information and technology will open up new and cost-effective approaches for providing the reach of higher education to the youth Governments can ensure PPP through an appropriate policy.

“Massachusetts has demonstrated that high-quality career and vocational education programs can engage a wide range of students while providing them with both academic proficiency and the technical skills necessary for advanced training in high-demand fields.

According to the Department of higher Education government of India, 16,885 colleges, including 1800 exclusive women's colleges functioning under these universities and institutions and there are 4.57 lakh teachers and 99.54 lakh students in various higher education institutes in India. Apart from these higher education institutes there are several private institutes in India that offer various professional courses in India. Distance learning is also a feature of the Indian higher education system. Some institutions of India, such as the Indian Institutes of technology (IITs), have been globally acclaimed for their standard of education.

Conclusion

University Grants Commission and Ministry of HRD should play a major role in developing a purposeful interface between the Universities, Industries and National Research Laboratories (NRLs) as a step towards PPP. Provide Need Based Job-Oriented Courses In the globalized world opportunities for the educated people are naturally ample in scope. As a result business process outsourcing (BPO) activities have increased competition in the world trade leading towards the production of quality goods - Examination reforms, gradually shifting from the terminal, annual and semester examinations to regular and continuous assessment of student's performance in learning should be implemented. We need higher educated people who are skilled and who can drive our economy forward. When India can provide skilled people to the outside world then we can transfer our country from a developing nation to a developed nation very easily and quickly.



References

- MHRD (2006) Annual Report. Ministry of Human Resource Development, Department of Secondary and Higher education. Government of India. New Delhi.
- The Financial Express November 24-11-14
- Planning Commission (1999) Approach paper to the Tenth Five-year Plan (2002- 2007). Planning Commission. New Delhi.
- For access & excellence in higher education, The Hindu, April 23rd, 2010.
- UGC (2005) Research Handbook: Towards nurturing research culture in higher education institutions in India. University Grants Commission. New Delhi.
- World Bank (2004) 'Measuring Trade in Services Liberalization and its Imitations'.
- Agarwal, Pawan (2006) Higher Education in India: The Need for Change (ICIER Working Paper No. 180). New Delhi: Indian Council for Research on International Economic Relations, (http://www.icrier.org/publication/working_papers_180.html)
- Chronicle of Higher Education, various issues (cited as CHE) (<http://chronicle.com/>)
- Sanat Kaul, Higher Education in India: Seizing the Opportunity (ICIER Working Paper No. 179). New Delhi: Indian Council for Research on International Economic Relations, May 2006 (http://www.icrier.org/pdf/WP_179.pdf) available on 25.1.2011
- JGU VC calls for Regulatory Reforms in Higher Education to Promote Global Excellence, 10-09-2015 ,Education Insider
- Jandhyala B.G. Tilak, Absence of Policy and Perspective in Higher Education. Economic and Political Weekly Vol. 39, No. 21 (May 22, 2004), 2159-2164 (<http://www.epw.org.in/epw/uploads/articles/7650.pdf>)
- Higher Education in India: Issues, Concerns and New Directions <http://www.ugc.ac.in/pub/heindia.pdf>.