



An overview on Challenges in Higher Education

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Abstract This paper stressed that the academic atmosphere in our educational institutions is vitiated by cancer of communalism, casteism, corruption, violence and terrorism leading to murders, rapes, suicides, indecent ragging leading to suicides, threats against invigilators in examination halls, intolerance and indiscipline to mention a few maladies. Can we not stop this rot that has set in our educational institutions? A great responsibility rests on the shoulders of intellectuals, educationists, teachers and student organizations and administrators.

Keywords: private universities, communalism, casteism, corruption, violence

Introduction

During the 65 years there has been phenomenal growth in the field to higher education. In 1950-51 we had only 27 Universities, 700 hundred colleges as against, 46 Central universities, 342 State University, 125 Deemed universities, 227 private universities and nearly 40000 colleges now. The enrolment of students has risen from 1,74,000 to about 20 millions over as period 65 years.

Twenty first century is the age of liberalization, privatization and globalization. Knowledge will be the key to this age. Fundamental sources of wealth will be knowledge and information rather than raw materials and labor. Tomorrow's society will be knowledge society. Tomorrow's markets will be knowledge markets, tomorrow's industry will be knowledge industry. The change agents for converting our present day generation into knowledge generation are called knowledge workers. Various categories of operators who contribute to the work force of the future include knowledge simulators, knowledge absorbers and knowledge communicators.

The building blocks of this knowledge society as perceived today are information technology, biotechnology, microbiology, drug designing, communicative skills etc. Richest man Bill Gates is a knowledge manipulator. Higher education should refer to the education covering knowledge, skills, attitudes that empower a mature adult to meet and improve upon his or her requirements - individual, societal, cultural and economic. Our Prime Minister recently constituted a Knowledge Commission under the chairmanship of Sri. Sam Petroda.

Information and stored knowledge is now only a mouse click away and access is almost instantaneous.

Problems and Weaknesses of Higher Education

The present scenario reflects serious weaknesses in our higher education system as follows.

- ❖ The existing system of higher education continues to encourage memorization and curbs creativity.



- ❖ Curricular and pedagogic reforms are not coping with the rate of advancement of knowledge.
- ❖ Examination reforms miserably slow paced.
- ❖ Mushroom growth of ill equipped, ill-provided ill-planned colleges and universities year after year.
- ❖ Evil-practice of collecting capitation fees for admission.
- ❖ Widespread indiscipline among students as well as teachers.
- ❖ Lack of motivation among students.
- ❖ Lack of commitment among teachers.
- ❖ Lack of accountability, responsiveness and transparency among educational administrators. Lack of sufficient funds to colleges and universities resulting in inadequate facilities to student and teacher.
- ❖ Anachronic affiliation system. Autonomous colleges should be established.
- ❖ Political interference in the autonomy of higher educational institution.

Curricular Reform:

Reorganization of our curriculum is most urgent for making our youth confident enough to speak, write, think and perform.

Pedagogic reform is concerned with recruitment and maintenance learned teaching faculty on the one hand and the adoption of objective evaluation of student performance on the other. Educationists, policy makers, planners should accept humanistic approach to achieve human development.

The two core activities that affect higher education are quality of the faculty and quality of teaching. The spirit of excellence has to be infused and ingrained in our teachers. Effective teaching is not merely subject teaching, nor advising students about dos and don'ts. A Teacher should inspire his students to achieve academic excellence. He should be a role model to students.

There is greater need for total quality management in higher education. The issue of quality improvement in higher education has been examined by the various committees and commissions.

- ❖ National Policy on Education, 1986
- ❖ Rama Murthi Committee, 1992
- ❖ Central Advisory Board of Education (CABE) Recommendations of the above committees are as follows.
- ❖ Admissions to university courses should be highly selective, based strictly on merit. Establishment of more autonomous colleges.
- ❖ Recruitment to teaching posts, strictly on merit.
- ❖ Establishment of Academic Staff Colleges (ASCS) to improve quality of teachers.
- ❖ Pre-induction training for a period of one year after recruitment of teachers. Thereafter, regular refresher or reorientation courses to enable the teachers to keep themselves in touch with latest developments.
- ❖ There should be self appraisal scheme for annual assessment of teachers.



- ❖ Library services should be fully responsive to the academic and research studies of students and teachers.
 - ❖ Centers of excellence should be established in certain selected areas.
 - ❖ To enrich college and University Labs with modern equipment.
 - ❖ Provision of adequate research facilities. Research should be made mandatory in post graduate colleges.
 - ❖ Interaction between educational institutions and industry should be promoted.
- educational institutions particularly of higher education may have to undergo a paradigm shift for a proactive role in building a learning society."
- ❖ Recent study has identified six principles which will dictate learning in the 21st century.
 - ❖ Learning in the in the 21st century will become essential part of every day human activity.
 - ❖ Access to learning in the 21st century will become essential as near universal as possible.
 - ❖ Learning technology in the 21st century will need to respond flexibly to learner needs.

Accreditation, assessment and academic audit are basic improvements of quality assurance. UGC has to be congratulated for establishing National Assessment and Accreditation Council in 1994 (NAAC) to play the role of watch dog of excellence. NAAC has really knocked out complacency in higher education institutions and awakened the slum-bering educational institutions to activity and academic excellence, accountability and quality improvement.

Newer trends in higher education with revolutionary development in Communication and information technology, call for greater introspection on innovative methodology of teaching and research in the Universities. We have to incorporate newer changes in the educational technology. Let me quote Prof. A.N. Maheswari. Former V.C. of Cochin University of Science and Technology, "As the world is gradually entering an informative age. India has also to reengineer its educational system at all levels to organize itself as a learning society. In this context all

- ❖ Learning suppliers in the 21st century, will need to adopt the ways to meet the changing demands of their clients and maximize the potential of new delivery techniques.
- ❖ Learning in the 21st century will need to be a collaborative enterprise.
- ❖ Government in the 21st century will need to play an active role in supporting learning infrastructure but should not attempt to control the learning agenda.

The bottom line of educational system should be quality, cost effective, competitive, relevant and value-oriented.

Higher education should not be allowed to produce intellectual isolation or societal alienation. Those involved in the educational process at this level must have opportunities of identifying themselves with the community around them by generating contexts which bring them into constant contact with rest of



the people without abdicating their own legitimate prerogatives of intellectual excellence.

The academic atmosphere in our educational institutions is vitiated by cancer of communalism, casteism, corruption, violence and terrorism leading to murders, rapes, suicides, indecent ragging leading to suicides, threats against invigilators in examination halls, intolerance and indiscipline to mention a few maladies. Can we not stop this rot that has set in our educational institutions? A great responsibility rests on the shoulders of intellectuals, educationists, teachers and student organizations and administrators.

Conclusion

Are we prepared to shoulder this responsibility to set things right? If we shirk our responsibility we will have no future. The future generation of students will not forgive us for this lapse on our part. Posterity will not pardon us. I earnestly appeal to the teaching faculty, student community, intellectuals and administrators to keep our temples of learning free from communalism, casteism, corruption, religious fundamentalism, regional chauvinism and ethnic conflicts. Let all of us strive to make our temples of learning the abode of deities of humanism, honesty, hard work, academic excellence and morality. Let us all serve these deities to the best of our abilities irrespective of caste, creed or community.

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