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Policy and Administration are the major cause of problem of Higher Education in India

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Abstract

Higher education in India suffers from several systemic deficiencies. Some of the problems of the Indian higher education, such as quality improvement, the unwieldy affiliating system, inflexible academic structure, uneven capacity across various subjects, eroding autonomy of academic institutions, and the low level of public funding are well known. To improve higher education in India the necessary steps which must be taken by the authorities are effective spending, reworking, breaking academic bureaucracy, preparing the syllabus based on what the industry wants and attracting the world's top foreign universities to open up their campuses in India.

Keywords: Higher education, Quality improvement, Bureaucracy, Efficiency, Privatisation, Governance.

INTRODUCTION

India's enormous population of young people is its biggest strength. Unfortunately, India is far from taking actions together when it comes to figure out how to educate these young people. Government's data suggests that only one out of every seven children born in India goes to college. What is more, the nation suffers from both a crippling quantity, as well as a quality and faces challenge when it comes to higher education. Higher education in India suffers from several systemic deficiencies. As a result, it continues to provide graduates that are unemployable despite emerging shortages of skilled manpower in an increasing number of sectors. The standards of academic research are low and declining. Some of the problems of the Indian higher

education, such as – the unwieldy affiliating system, inflexible academic structure, uneven capacity across various subjects, eroding autonomy of academic institutions, and the low level of public funding are well known. Many other concerns relating to the dysfunctional regulatory environment, the accreditation system that has low coverage and no consequences, absence of incentives for performing well, and the unjust public funding policies are not well recognised.

The policy for the development of higher education in India has been mainly governed by the "National Policy on Education" of 1986 (as modifi ed in 1992) and its Programme of Action adopted in 1992. The 1986 policy and its Programme of Action of 1992 were based on two land mark reports namely, the "University Education Commission Report" of 1948-49 (popularly known as the Radhakrishnan Commission Report), and the "Education Commission Report" of 1964-66, (popularly known as the Kothari Commission Report).

CHALLENGES TO HIGHER EDUCATION IN INDIA

The main challenges to Indian higher education are given in the following-

Quality Improvement

Most observers agree that Indian higher education, notwithstanding the significant and impressive developments of the past few decades, faces major challenges in both quantitative and qualitative terms. Perhaps the clearest and boldest statement of this issue can be found in the 'Report to the Nation 2006' of the National Knowledge Commission (NKC) which concludes that there is 'a quiet crisis in higher education in India that runs deep', and that it has to do with both the quantity and the quality of higher education in India.

Recognising this dual challenge, the Indian Ex. Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh, severely criticised in his speeches the serious qualitative deficiencies in Indian higher education while at the same time announcing plans for a major expansion of the system. Reflecting on the findings of a confidential report by the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NACC), which is affiliated by the University Grants Commission (UGC), he expressed his concern over the fact that two thirds (68%) of the country's universities and 90% of its colleges are 'of middling or poor quality' and that well over half of the faculty in Indian colleges do not have the appropriate degree qualifications. At the same time, the Prime Minister expressed concern over the fact that only 7% of India's 18 - 24 years of youths enter higher education (compared to 21% in Germany, and 34% in the US) and announced plans for the government to set up at least one central university in each of the 16 (of India's 28) states that do not currently have one, and at least one degree-granting college in each of the 350 (of 604) districts that are without one. The 'central universities' are to become 'a symbol of excellence, a model of efficiency, and an example in terms of academic standards and university governance for other state universities to emulate'. While these plans are considerably more modest than what the NKC has proposed (it

foresees an expansion of the university system alone from the existing 350 to a future total of 1500 institutions, including 50 'national universities' as the centres of excellence), the added cost to the government of the Prime Minister's expansion plans already is estimated to be around $13 billion. In the introductory remark of report of Rashtriya Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA) it was mentioned - *The success of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) and Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiya (RMSA) has laid a strong foundation for primary and secondary education in India.However, the sphere of higher education has still has not seen any concerted effort for improvement in access or quality.*

Efficiency of Teachers

Should the ambitious plans of both the public and the private sectors for the massive development of higher education in India have a chance to succeed, one of the key prerequisites is a large and highly capable pool of scholars who can provide academic leadership in teaching and research. Many of these scholars already exist or are moving into the ranks of the professorship at the better Indian (and foreign) universities; many more will be needed to satisfy the growing demand and to take the place of the large numbers of college and university faculties who are not up to the standards of an internationally competitive system of higher education.

To judge from the existing analyses of the situation, the achievement of this goal appears to require a combination of several different strategies, including

- a change in the criteria for academic recruitment and promotion,
- significant improvements in the economic condition of the academic teaching profession,
- a very ambitious programme for the identification, training, support and placement of young scholars, and
- a major effort at repatriating successful Indian scholars from abroad.

None of these measures is easy; all of them will have to overcome deficits where standards for academic recruitment have been rather lax or arbitrary, where the remuneration of teaching in higher education has been rather dismal (compared to opportunities both abroad and in the private sector), where graduate and doctoral programs have been short on capacity, academic rigor, and financial support, and where the increasingly intensive efforts to bring Indian scholars back from abroad have so far met with only limited success.

The Privatization of Higher Education

One of the striking features of the development of higher education in India over the last few decades has been the extent to which private institutions have entered the scene and attempted to respond to the massive demand for education at the post-secondary level. This is particularly true in the fields of engineering, medicine, and

management, and much less at the broader level of university education. The institutional variants of privatisation range from small technical colleges to internationally recognised professional schools such as the Indian Business School in Hyderabad, the technical and teacher training institutions created by the Gondia Education Society in Maharashtra, major educational conglomerates like Symbiosis in Pune and elsewhere, or recent plans for the $3.5 billion and elite Vedanta University in Orissa. Many of these institutions owe their existence and success to the entrepreneurial spirit and resources of successful and/or visionary individuals such as the late Shri Manoharbhai Patel in the case of Gondi, S.B. Mujumdar in the case of Symbiosis or the 'metals-and-mining mogul' Anil Agarwal in the case of Vedanta; quite a few politicians appear also to have actively participated in, and benefited from, the growth of private professional education. The strong emergence of the private sector is reflected in the funding pattern: While the government's share in overall education expenditure has declined from 80% in 1983 to 67% in 1999, private expenditure on education has increased more than 10 times over the same period. In the field of professional training in particular, the size of the private sector is formidable. According to 2003 figures for 19 major Indian states from the Medical Council of India (MCI) and the All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE), of 198 Medical Colleges, 44% were private, and of 1102 Engineering Colleges, as many as 92% were private; similar conditions prevail in business management. In some instances, competition between public and private institutions has begun to produce improvements on both sides.

Governance

Besides its quantitative limitations and qualitative deficits, Indian higher education is also considered to be sub-optimally organised and significantly overregulated, limiting initiatives for change and stifling or misdirecting private efforts. In its assessment of the existing regulatory arrangements, the NKC 'In sum, the existing regulatory framework constrains the supply of good institutions, excessively regulates existing institutions in the wrong places, and is not conducive to innovation or creativity in higher education.' It is not surprising that one of the key recommendations of the NKC, right behind the expansion of the system, is to change the system of regulation for higher education, claiming that 'the system, as a whole, is over-regulated but undergoverned' and proposing to establish an 'Independent Regulatory Authority for Higher Education (IRAHE)' that is to operate 'at an arm's length from the government and independent of all stakeholders'. A particularly interesting part of the debate on this issue centres around the need for new forms of governance in Indian higher education, where the focus would be on the twin postulates of autonomy and accountability. An important step was taken in this regard by the Central Advisory Board of Education (CABE) which set up a special committee to design ways for promoting both autonomy and accountability in Indian higher education. The committee has come up with a wide range of recommendations in 2005; to judge from the analysis of the NKC, however, no major breakthrough in this matter seems as yet to have been achieved.

Large number of Affiliation of colleges

There are a number of weaknesses in the existing affiliation system. First, the relationship between state university and affiliated colleges is one of administration affiliation, course recognition, syllabus prescription, and examination. The university departments as source of academic strengthening of college teachers are generally very weak and unstructured. Secondly, since a typical affiliating university has to cater to hundreds of colleges, it cannot provide customized curricula to meet the local needs of colleges, but instead offers the same curriculum to all. The academic condition of affiliated colleges also prompts strong resistance to curriculum revision. The university departments and affiliated colleges are then reduced to common, minimal curriculum with no scope for improvement and innovation. One of the schemes of UGC, namely 'Autonomous Colleges' scheme does encourage colleges to acquire autonomous status, but there are systemic problems encountered, with the result that only about 414 colleges in the country have acquired that status so far.

SOLUTIONS

India needs to make sure that private universities are encouraged, and that the legislation to create them is enabling. It is a maze right now with multiple governing bodies that have conflicting mandates. Several states do not yet have a State Private University (SPU) Act. Because universities and institutes are so tightly controlled, there is little autonomy and flexibility in governance structures. Private universities, like government-owned universities, have little scope for innovation in designing their course curriculum.

All of this needs to be looked at immediately. There is some hope that this can happen. A few states, mainly Haryana, Rajasthan and Gujarat have progressive SPUs.

To improve higher education in India the following necessary steps must be taken by the authorities, such as effective spending, re-working, breaking academic bureaucracy, prepare the syllabus based on what the industry wants and attracting the world's top foreign universities to open up campuses in India

CONCLUSION

A challenge of major dimensions considering both the multitude and the magnitude of the difficulties that Indian higher education faces, it would be easy to be overwhelmed by the problems and to despair of finding solutions. At the same time, given the tremendous potential of India's booming industry and technology and the considerable progress made in higher education and research in recent decades, it would also be easy to reach a state of exuberance and expect that, somehow, India will surmount these difficulties. Neither of these two reactions appears warranted on the basis of a sober assessment of the situation. The problems India faces in higher education and research are, as this paper and other analyses show, very real and very serious; they will not go away by themselves, nor are they amenable to easy and

routine solutions. For them to be overcome seems to require not only massive rearrangements in both the provision and the utilisation of public as well as private resources, but also profound and durable changes in institutional cultures inside and outside higher education. At the same time, the gains to be derived from overcoming these problems and from moving boldly in the direction of an internationally competitive system of higher education and research are tremendous. Dr. Mashelkar's vision on India becoming 'the world's number one knowledge production centre' is extraordinarily ambitious, but by no means beyond reach; for this vision to be achieved will require an unprecedented effort on the part of everybody concerned, especially if it is to be reached by as early as 2020.

The Draft National Education Policy 2019 (DNEP 2019) which is under the process of finalization. The draft NEP is based on the foundational pillars access, affordability, equity, quality and accountability. We hope this may be fruitful to solve the problems of higher education in India.

Despite all of the present problems, India has a number of assets that appear to bode well for living up to that challenge. Having built up a modern system of higher education and research virtually from scratch since independence has been a major achievement and should be a solid predictor of future growth. Furthermore, and especially for an outside observer, one of the most impressive aspects of the current situation in Indian higher education is the emergence of an extraordinarily lively and critical discourse on the further direction that the Indian system of higher education should take. This critical discourse, some of which has found its way into the present paper, is fully cognizant of the problems the system faces, but is also a very valuable source of ideas and proposals for change. It appears that, in many ways, the work of the NKC is aggregating this discourse into actionable proposals for India's body politic. The decisions that are going to be taken on these and similarly bold proposals are likely to hold the key to India's future as a centre of knowledge production.

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