

Life, Culture and Education Today

(Book 1)

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Higher Education: Concepts, Realities & Remedies

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Introduction:

India has been a major seat of learning since ancient times. Proceeding along the sands of time with the advent of British Empire brought English education. Higher education in India has developed the problems of multi-organ failure. The condition of the Indian Higher education is not much different from Indian Agriculture. Both have the problem of people committing suicide, both had glorious history, both are badly in need of modernization. Agriculture is in utter need of basics and organic approach and higher education the value inculcation.

Main features of Indian Higher Education system:

Highly bureaucratized system with multiple controls and regulations exercised by Central and State Governments, statutory bodies (UGC, AICTE and others), University administration and local management. System is heavily subsidized by the Government. Up to 90 percent of the operating costs are paid for by the state. The efficiency of fund utilization is very poor due to internal rigidities.

Salary and compensation for teaching staff is poor and therefore higher education institutions are unable to attractant retain qualified and trained teachers. Besides unattractive compensation packages, recruitment procedure is lengthy and working environment not conducive to retention. As a result, a substantial proportion of high ranking students who could fill up such assignments prefer to work elsewhere or go abroad. In a recent move UGC has further damaged the pay and promotion prospects of college teachers by reducing promotional grades thereby creating more stagnation and frustration amongst college teachers. (*Economic Times, 15 November 2005*)

Most institutions offer outdated programmes with inflexible Structures and content. While course content has been updated and restructured over time in the world's best institutions, Indian university curricula have lagged behind. Infrastructural facilities range from inadequate to dismal. Classrooms are often unattractive and laboratories inadequately stocked leading to poor teaching. It is estimated that barely 20% of the institutions have the basic minimum laboratory equipment.

Steady electric power supply is not available. Laboratories are poorly stocked and computerization, where it exists is generally dependent on poor communication lines.

Manpower requirement:

Demographic studies showed that by 2020 India could be one of the few countries with surplus of personnel within the employable age group. However, there is possibility of shortage in terms of skilled personnel for IT and ITES even by 2009.

Strategy recommended by the Report:

Interaction with industry and academia to home in on the exact nature of training and skill building required.

To inculcate the right skills and establish standards to certify quality of skills.

For formal education the initiatives suggested are

Upgrade Regional Engineering Colleges to National Institutes of Technology.

Set up more Indian Institute of Information Technology (Design and Manufacturing)

The service providers in the private sector to work with the State Governments to enhance quality of Higher education.

Launch umbrella programmes for quality improvement in Higher education. It was also stated that IT enabled services require a much broader range of skills and a lot of these are not available through the for midland non-formal system. The main recommendation, however, is for a Common Certification System for some standard skills. This could also save 50 per cent of recruitment and training costs (and time). A common agency that is industry approved and government recognized can handle testing and certification at a national scale. Based on a historic patent filing, it is stated that India's R & D efforts have been prolific in some key areas including IT and Electronics, Pharmaceuticals and Biotechnology. Engineering and Design. India has great scope in the health-care, bio-technology, e-governance, e-services and core IT research and development.

However, what is required is a comprehensive strategy for manpower development that will pan across all other ministries with stakes in the knowledge sector BPO such as the Ministry of Health, Finance, Chemicals, Tourism, Aviation etc. rather than leaving it to the Ministry fo Human Resource Development.

Entrepreneurial Universities:

It short, the emerging higher education system can be summed up as a transformation of academic institutions into "entrepreneurial universities" and "commercial institutions". The single most important objective of which seems to be mobilization more and more resources.

The “higher education bazaar” is growing everywhere in developed as well as developing countries with all its ugly faces.

The emerging private moderate or highly private or predominantly private higher education systems are found to be creating serious problems in terms of access, quality and equity in higher education. Earlier reviews have exploded several myths about the superiority of private higher education.

Developing countries require a rapid growth of good quality higher education for their every survival in the highly competitive globalized world. Some have argued that the threshold level of gross enrolment ratio in higher education is about 20 per cent. Only those countries that could have such a ratio, could become economically advanced and vice versa.

Present position of values in Higher Education

The word value is derived from the Greek term *Valera* means to be of worth or to be strong of the right conducts of an individual with his fellowmen. “The Education as socialization process of acquiring necessary values for living is well recognized and emphasized. It is also increasingly realized that the present education is largely oblivious of its role as a value building institution. Tertiary education is expected to contribute to promotion of civic behavior, nation building and social cohesion through transmission of democratic values and cultural norms.”
(Prof. V S Prasad)

It is the physical, mental, emotional, spiritual and social elevation of the individual is the epicenter of whole education system in India. The value laden qualities are: compassion, commitment, conviction and courage to lead complete life. Deterioration of values is a worldwide phenomenon. Despite its several thousand years old value based cultural tradition, India to have massive erosion: corruption, scandals, scams, anti-social and anti-national activities. The mosques, the temples are sought to be made more significant than poverty. We advocate nationality as a guiding principle to be followed in private and public life but the inner psyche we still guided by blind rituals superstitions orthodoxy and egoism. The rapid degradation of the values is a challenge before higher education.

Solutions:

- 1) *Restructuring the curriculum*
- 2) *Re-charging teacher*
- 3) *Re-educating the institute*
- 4) *Rejuvenating the co-curricular activities*
- 5) *Re-invigorating extra-curricular activities*

Shortly, Recharged, existing aids and application of ICTs will pay rich dividends and create the feeling of self-realization to each stake holder.

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