

Reforms in Higher Education-Structures, Barriers and priorities

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ABSTRACT

Education is an integral part of human life. It is the basic condition for the development of the whole man. It is anything which an individual acquires through formal and non- formal organization. India has one of the largest higher education systems in the world. Higher educational institutions in India include universities, colleges, and other institutions. The universities award their own degrees, and colleges award degrees through the universities to which they are affiliated. The most important barrier in academic reform is population. India is second in population only to China. India is known for one of the highest rates of female illiteracy in Asia. The quality of most graduates is poor because of unstable and unequal provision of post-secondary education which results in an uneducated workforce. Teacher development is considered crucial for the future of higher education in India, particularly for state government support systems. The primary concern for all institutions is the poor quality of teaching in higher education across all levels of study, particularly at undergraduate level. The poor learning outcomes in many Indian institutions had at its roots in some interrelated issues like Lack of teaching skills in the faculty, the use of outdated pedagogies, a rigid assessment system, which encourages rote-learning and does not test the students' broader skills or deeper learning, Lack of an effective quality assurance system for teaching and learning etc.

Keywords: Reform, effective, pedagogies, barrier and assessment

1. Introduction- For each and every human being Education is an important part of life. Education is the chief defense of the nation. It is the most significant instrument invented by mankind to form and mould oneself in a desirable style. The individual can acquire education with the help of formal and non- formal organization. It helps to develop the personality of an individual as well as to adjust with the different environment in order to execute his basic requirements. Education not only transforms the human animal into a balanced human being, but also prepares and develops him to live on and regulate with ambience so as to lead his personal as well as social life fruitfully.

2. Definition of Higher Education- It means education beyond high school, specifically that provided by colleges and graduate schools, and professional schools. Education at a college or university where subjects are studied at an advance level. Higher Education in India is defined as education obtained after completing 12 years of schooling or equivalent and is of the duration of at least nine months (full time); or after completing ten years of schooling and is of the duration of at least three years. The nature of education can be General, Vocational, Professional or Technical (MHRD, 2008 – 2009).

3. Reforms in Higher Education-

Reforms is necessary in academic field. It emphasis from an “input centric and credential focused” approach to a more “learner centric” approach. This is to be achieved through: regular revisions of curriculum, the implementation of a choice based credit system, the introduction of a continuous and comprehensive student evaluations, a cumulative grade point system, new marking, grading schemes, semester system etc. Educational system all over the world has never been consistent over the year. Through advancement and exposure to new concepts, educationists investigate possibilities to teach texts in various feasible manners. According to Myron Tribus (1994), there are innumerable proposals/suggestions for reforms and changes in educational system and there are infinite number of good ideas and research results. The target is not just to pick one of them but rather it is to have comprehensive attitude and approach within which to bring to action many good works known to us. Introduction of semester system in colleges and school can be said to be the product of these investigations. A semester system is an academic term. It is division of an academic year, the time during which a college holds classes. It is also applicable in the universities and schools. Usually, a semester system divides the year in two parts or terms. Literally, semester means six-month period. In India this six-month system is generally followed in Higher education as well as in schools. We find the year divided in between two major examinations in and around the vacations.

Now days education is changing very fast. This change is known as systemic changes in educational field. The reason for this rapid transformation is because of Liberalization, Privatization and Globalization (LPG). As a result of these changes there are changes that occurred in teaching methods, art of teaching, curriculum, textbook and evaluation pattern. Each and every year there are some innovations in the field of

education. Semester system is one of the examples of it. Schools, colleges and society demand this kind of change in the teaching and learning process. This is possible only with the help of dedicated teachers and students to accept new ideas.

4. Structure of Higher Education -

In India the institutional framework consists of Universities established by an Act of Parliament (Central Universities) or of a State Legislature (State Universities), Deemed Universities (institutions which have been accorded the status of a university with authority to award their own degrees through central government notification), Institutes of National Importance (prestigious institutions awarded the said status by Parliament), and Institutions established by State Legislative Act and colleges affiliated with the University (both government-aided and unaided)

In India technical education is treated as a separate sector. There are 65 centrally funded institutions like IITs, IIMs, NITs, IISc, etc. Additionally, State Governments have also set up technical institutions. AICTE and equivalent sectoral regulators (like the Medical Council of India) both approve and regulate technical institutions in engineering/technology, pharmacy, architecture, hotel management and catering technology, management studies, computer applications and applied arts and crafts. Vocational Education is another stream of higher education in India. For this a network of public and private polytechnics and vocational institutions exists, controlled and supervised by the Councils specializing in each discipline. India has also developed an Open University system to encourage distance learning. Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) was the pioneer and now there are 14 open universities in India

The open universities in India are regulated by the Distance Education Council of India (DEC), New Delhi which maintains the standards, encourages and organizes the activities of Open and Distance learning in India (ODL).

The Higher Education sector ensures the quality of the educational process with the help of accreditation agencies established for the purpose. The main agency which accredits universities and colleges in general education is the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) established by the UGC in 1994, whereas a similar function is done for technical education by the National Board of Accreditation (NBA) set up by AICTE in 1994, in 1996. NAAC proposes to introduce the India Education Index (IEI) for ranking institutes based on academic, research performance and other parameters.

5. Barriers in Higher Education -

India has a population of 1.15 billion people in 2009 and is second in population to only China. In the next 20 years, India's population is expected to exceed the population of China. The uncontrollable population expansion in India is a significant barrier to the country's educational system. Overpopulation contributes to a number of economic, health and education issues.

India's caste system is comprised of constitutionally recognized population groupings made up of social classes that are ostracized, typically minorities and sectors of the population that are considered polluted or impure due to breaking the law or medical illnesses. The funding program is in an effort to increase enrollment in select castes of boys and girls to improve the provision of education to underserved populations. The number of castes or tribes in India continues to increase annually.

The quality of most graduates is poor because of unstable and unequal provision of post-secondary education which results in an uneducated workforce. As a result, little or no training is provided by the majority of employers.

India's literacy rate continues to be a barrier to educational reform and the success of the educational system. India is known for one of the highest rates of female illiteracy in Asia. In 1991 it was reported that less than 40% of the 330 million women were illiterate. There are more than 200 million illiterate women in India. High literacy rates in both men and women affect the lives of their families. Illiteracy contributes to poor economic development, poor nutritional status, low earning potential, and negatively impacts the education.

India's higher educational institutions and educational structure are not adequate to provide basic literacy skills to the population of India. As a result of this, the majority of India's population is uneducated and this contributes to the level of poverty.

6. Priorities in Higher Education -

A) Quality assurance- The accreditation and regulation of the higher education system is in the process of considerable reform. These changes include the expansion of NAAC's scope, acting through the formation of

multiple agencies. States will have greater responsibilities for quality assurance through state regulatory bodies.

There is wide agreement at state government level and among those involved in national policy planning that, currently, universities are not held accountable to government or students, do not provide information about their operations and achievements, and that there is no effective system of performance-based control or support.

B) National qualifications framework- The need for a unifying national qualifications framework for skills and higher education to enable mobility across streams in both directions.

C) University and college teacher training- Teacher development is considered crucial for the future of higher education in India, particularly for state government support systems. However, there was little confidence that central government could effectively act in this area. Leaders of institutions were concerned that the onus of responsibility would fall on the institutions themselves, but that they did not have the capacity, experience or skills to respond.

D) Teacher development -The primary concern for all institutions is the poor quality of teaching in higher education across all levels of study, particularly at undergraduate level. The poor learning outcomes in many Indian institutions had at its roots the following interrelated issues:

- Lack of teaching skills in faculty and limited understanding of the learning process
- The use of outdated pedagogies (input oriented, lecture-based approaches, rather than student-centred, enquiry driven and outcomes-based)
- Outdated and inflexible curricula
- A rigid assessment system, which encourages rote-learning and does not test students' broader skills or deeper learning
- Lack of an effective quality assurance system for teaching and learning

7. Conclusion-Education is not preparation of life; education is life itself and is very vital for a human being to survive. Literacy is a bridge from misery to hope.

In spite of the institutional framework consisting of Universities established by an Act of Parliament (Central Universities) or of a State Legislature (State Universities), Deemed Universities, and Institutes of National Importance, the Government's commitment is hampered by an ever increasing population..A country's literacy rate is the proportion of the population over the age of 15 that can read and write. Literacy rate continues to be a barrier to educational reform and the success of the educational system. India is known for one of the highest rates of female illiteracy in Asia. There are more than 200 million illiterate women in India. If one wants to slow the rapid population growth in India the thinking goes, the highest priority should be putting more girls in school.

Compared with illiterate young women, educated ones desire smaller families and generally manage to achieve that goal. Illiteracy contributes to poor economic development, poor nutritional status, low earning potential, and negatively impacts the education, health etc. India's higher educational institutions and educational structure are not adequate to provide basic literacy skills to the population of India. Without well-qualified teachers, colleges are little more than buildings and equipment. Higher-paying careers continue to attract the best and the brightest students and there will not only be a shortage of teachers, but the teachers available may not have the best qualifications. Our youth will suffer and when youth suffers, the future suffers

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