



Higher Education In India:

Issues, Opportunities and Challenges

Editors

Dr. Vinayak A. Jadhav

Dr. Arvind M. Nawale

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CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES BEFORE HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE THIRD DECADE OF TWENTY FIRST CENTURY

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Introduction: Challenges before higher education (HE) in India in the third decade of twenty first century are ample, but it brought some opportunities also. In fact, every challenge can be seen as an opportunity. It largely depends upon the angle of the beholder. But the real side of it is that if the challenges are not identified at the right time and if not addressed timely, then they can become grave problems which further worsen and double too. Addressing the problem timely not only reduces its adversity but also gravity too.

At present mostly universities are affiliating and colleges are affiliated, for affiliation system prevails in India since the beginning of the higher education in India. In 1857 Calcutta University was established as an affiliating university, since then affiliation remained a part of HE in India. (UGC, 1857) In the course of time, it created a number of problems. In this regard Asit Das says, "Universities /Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in India have to obey the dictates of several regulatory agencies." (Das, 2018)

Challenges and Opportunities:

1. **Adopting New Education Policy:** Draft New Education Policy 2019 (NEP19) suggests a sea change in the present or old education policy. Part II of the NEP19 deals with HE. Its chapter 9 is entitled as "Quality Universities and Colleges: A New and Forward Looking Vision for India's Higher Education System". And its objective is "Revamp the higher education system, create world class multidisciplinary higher education institutions across the country - increase GER to at least 50% by 2035." In it the words 'New', 'Revamp' and 'multidisciplinary' are pivotal. They indicate a sea change in the present HE system. The draft says number of problems existing in the present HE system can be addressed only by adopting multidisciplinary approach. "If higher education is moved entirely into large multidisciplinary HEIs, it would address many of the problems that higher education faces today:" (Kasturirangan, 2019) The HEIs which are running single faculty in their institutions will suffer a lot. Mostly such colleges are in the most remote parts, with skimpy infrastructure, a poor strength of students, of the nation. Such colleges provide access to those students who may not have access to HE if such colleges are closed. Running mono faculty college itself is difficult thing in such areas, if additional burden of other faculties may worsen the problems. But with the optimism and proper planning of the administrators and management in such areas, the colleges can

adopt multidisciplinary approach. In this sense it is a challenge as well as an opportunity.

2. Developing Employability based Degree Programmes and Courses: The present degree programmes are mostly not employability based. But the third decade of twenty first century demands employability based degree programmes and courses.

It is great challenge before the existing higher educational institutions (HEIs) to develop such degree programmes and courses. The present affiliation system does not allow the colleges to develop their own curriculum and syllabus. And hence they have to follow the same curriculum, as it is, which is given by the affiliating university. As the NEP19 emphasises on autonomy, in near future the affiliated colleges will get an opportunity to develop their own curriculum, for they will get autonomy.

3. Skill Development: The year 2020 made India the youngest nation in the world. Nearly about 1.2 billion people –half of the population— are under the age of 26. Fortunately, the median age of the country is 29. (Kasturirangan, 2019) Such a huge number of youngsters need work otherwise; they may be misguided and misused. It is great challenge to train and make them skilful such number of youth. The present education system is inadequate as well as insufficient to bear this challenge. If more number of colleges are opened and given autonomy, then there will be open and healthy competition to train the students and in designing the curriculum so as to make the students skilled in one or the other skill as per the demand of the market.

4. Infrastructural Developments: On one hand Assessment and Accreditation (A&A) by National Assessment Accreditation Council (NAAC) and autonomy will pave the way of quality in HEIs in rural areas. But on the other hand, lack of infrastructure or skimpy infrastructure will create a great hindrance in the way of Assessment and Accreditation by NAAC. Infrastructural development plays a significant role in it. And the problem is that grants from University Rants (UGC) Rashtriya Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSSE) largely depend upon the grade of HEI after A&A by NAAC. And the grade largely, either directly or indirectly depends upon the infrastructural development of HEI.

5. Autonomy: As per the, NEP19 HEIs will be made autonomous. Not only academic autonomy but also administrative as well as financial autonomy will be given to the HEIs. It will create open competition amongst the HEIs. Earlier education was not supposed as industry in India, but it will underline it. As the government aids of all types will stop the HEIs will strive their best to survive, in this attempt those who are fit will survive and unfit will automatically succumb. But still there is hope that the NEP19 says, “Financial autonomy will not mean a cut in funding, but rather the freedom to decide how best to spend funds to maximise educational attainments;” (Kasturirangan, 2019) but still doubts of ceasing the supply of funds from the Government dawdles.

6. **Competing with foreign Universities:** The policy of Globalization Liberalization and Privatization as accepted by India opened the doors of many possibilities. It made the doors of India open for foreign investors. Philanthropists across the globe will open their HEIs in India along with the best HEIs like Oxford University, Cambridge University, Harvard University and so on. It will bring some of the best HEIs to the doors of Indians who are living in urban and semi-urban areas; but it will also initially trammel the local HSIs and later on de minimise them to such an extent that,; they themselves extinguish. It will be the end of the spirit of social-welfare in India. It may bring quality, but at a heavy cost.

7. **Internationalization of Student Mobility:** In the process of globalization, education industry is also expanding its horizon. Earlier students from local area or nearby areas were the target, later on it expanded its circumference and attempts were made to attract from nearby states. But globalization expended its scope and now higher education in India demands student trafficking across globe. In this regard it woth to quote Kriti Dagar: "An expanding higher education system is a necessary condition forsaking of the benefits of global competitiveness. India, with the third largest higher education system in the world after USA and China (World –Bank, 2018) sebds 305970 (0.3 million) students across it boards but attracts only 1/7th of that share (i.e.46703 students enter India's boards) (UNESCO, 2018-19)." (Dagar, 2018)

Summing Up: India has to prepare itself in all together different way to cope with the challenges before HE. Government, HEIs and all stake holders go hand-in-hand to meet this new challenges, for the progress of any nation solely depends upon the education system of that nation. It is not individual responsibility, but a collective work.

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