The descriptive study on need for transformational change in Higher Education system in India

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ABSTRACT: *India is hastening toward economic success and modernization, counting on high-tech industries such as information technology, bio-technology and Robotics to drive the nation to prosperity. The economic and cultural environmental factors have heavily impacted higher education system; the rapid changing economical, cultural, demographical and other factors have led to the faster pace of change in the higher education system. It is very important to update our education system and style as per the social and industrial norms. The higher education institutions are more important for cross border relationships and continuous global flows of public, information, technologies, and financial capital. Higher education focuses more on research based teaching rather than traditional way of classroom teaching. This paper focuses on history, development, challenges and need for changes in higher education for global scenario and emphasizes on teaching, research and consultancy requirement in higher education.*

Keywords: Indian education, higher education, history, issues and challenges in higher education

I.   INDIAN EDUCATION SYSTEM

Education is a societal process. Education, particularly higher education, as the instrument of the individual, societal and economic transformation in India became well recognized in the second half of the twentieth century. Since independence in 1947, there have been larger reserves in higher education, with the related increase in the number of students who opt for higher education. The transformation of Indian education system from the ancient 'gurukula' system to today's virtual learning system is a reflection of the changing social context. The new social realities, particularly the interplay between democratization of education, emergence of knowledge society and globalization, greatly influence the educational processes in all societies (UNESCO, 2002)1

In this context, the quality of education assumes added importance and becomes the primary concern of all the stakeholders in education. These statements may appear like description of the very obvious, but this apparent obviousness is also equally contentious, and it is even more so in the case of higher education. One cannot presume that all means the same by quality higher education. The discussion on quality has generated philosophical debates on many issues of quality, including the meaning of 'quality'. Also, there are several operational controversies and different perceptions about the process of quality assurance and the responsibilities for quality. For a long period, India did not have an organized way of educating its population.

The gurukula system was prevalent in India in ancient times, which rendered access to education very difficult for the common person. The organized system of education is a British legacy, introduced by the British in the middle of the nineteenth century. There was a progressive quantitative expansion of the system in the early part of the twentieth century, and at the time of independence in 1947; there were approximately 21 universities and 500 colleges in the country (Gnanam, 1999)

Higher education costs in India have gone up significantly in recent years. Full costs are recovered for most of the professional programs whether these are offered in private or public institutions. While fee levels may continue to be low in central universities that form a very small part of higher education in India, the fee levels are quite high in many state universities. The drive to make higher education socially inclusive has led to a sudden and dramatic increase in the numbers of institutions without a proportionate increase in material and intellectual resources. As a result, academic standards have been jeopardized. (Béteille, 2005)

II.   REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The review of the related literature has its own significance in the conduct of any investigation. By working out the historical perspective, the investigator is in position to pick up the thread of investigation already conducted in the area so as to lead it further and enrich the funds of knowledge. It also helps the investigator to avoid any type of duplicity in the area of the study. It also enrich the investigation by getting acquainted with the methods and technologies already in use to conduct such researches, which makes the investigator to adopt any of the theme as to go in for the combination of some or to adopt his own technique more suitable to him.

Jayaram (1976) while describing the relationship between education and social structure observed that even though the admission to higher and professional education was based on merit, in actuality it seemed to be determined by a set of non-academic and socio-cultural factors like the caste, economic background, ability to

afford, status of parents, medium of instruction at school etc. Thus facilities for higher education were available to the higher stratum of society. He noted that most of the students in higher and professional education were generally of a select group and the medical students were elite within it.

Sethi (1983) deals with the fall down of the system of higher education. This study also focuses on few aspects of higher education which are fundamental to crisis. The author argues that the social, economic and political realities do not seem to help either the existing education system or any essential change in it. The international economic, political and educational orders have contributed a lot to introducing numerous alterations in the Indian education system (Sethi, 1962).

Singh and Sharma (1989) deal with the social circumstance of higher education in the country. The social circumstance of higher education is generally so little understood that even amongst academics there is not as much clarity about the purpose and context of higher education as there ought to be. This issue is discussed in some detail in the introduction where it has been argued that many problems that universities and colleges face arise because of the reasons which are non-academic (Singh, 2008)

Chand,Piar and Sharma, Himanshu(2013) have investigated the role of different factors which affect the higher educational choices of senior secondary science students of Himachal Pradesh. The objectives of the study are to analyze the higher educational choices of the science students studying in higher secondary classes in government and private schools, and examine the factors which influence the choice of students. (Chand, 2013)

Issues and Challenges of Higher Education In India
Peter Drucker shocked many in 1997, when he suggested, ―Universities won‗t survive and argued ―today‗s [college] buildings are hopelessly unsuited and totally unneeded. Although Drucker was perhaps amplifying but he helped in creating awareness that while higher education is becoming a dynamic, global venture, the strategic management of higher education facilities is becoming increasingly complex.

Role of Regulatory Bodies - Quality
Higher education in India is coordinated by several agencies. While most of common higher education falls within the power of the UGC, professional institutions are coordinated by different authorities. The AICTE is legally responsible for coordinating technical and management education institution. The other statutory bodies are Central Council of Indian Medicine, Medical Council of India (MCI), The homeopathy Central Council, The Pharmacy Council, The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), Indian Nursing Council, The Dental Council, The Bar Council of India, and The Indian Council of Agriculture Research (ICAR) etc. There are also a small number of such bodies at state level, such as State Council of Higher education that were established currently. There is yet another form of a coordinating agency, called AIU, which was earlier known as Inter-University Board of India. AIU has no decision-making powers, but plays an important role as an agency in the dissemination of information and as an adviser both to the UGC as well as the government along with Universities.

Today in this scenario there is a lesser amount of clearly defined policy for promoting and regulating institutions and especially the private initiatives. ―Whatever policies exist, they are of extemporized nature prescribed by either the central regulatory bodies and /or by the various states and Union Territories. Often because of inconsistencies, vagueness, and uncertainty especially in the light of different legal mandates of these agencies and the concomitant status of higher education-there have been a excess of legal battles resulting in huge expenditure to the governments and the institutions (Anandakrishnan, 2003)

Unprecedented Privatization
The forces of globalization, liberalization have created a new wave of demand for higher education where it was deemed necessary to support full involvement of private education providers wherein the regulatory bodies needed to play the role of facilitators and not regulators. Over the last two decades, there had been a sudden jump in the number of deemed universities. This intensified the competition in higher education in the country. Meanwhile, many state governments realized that education was on the concurrent list of the Constitution and that they could establish private universities through legislation. By near the beginning 2009, 7 private universities set up in different states were recognized by the UGC. This also led to a new state – Chhattisgarh - in central India indulging in an astonishing misadventure by allowing the setting up of 97 private universities with all India jurisdictions in the year 2002. The Supreme Court struck this down in February 2005 leaving the fate of nearly 50000 students registered in these universities hung in balance; the future of those who obtained degrees from these so-called universities remains uncertain.

Decline in Quality

Private educational institutes alone are not to be blamed for the current ―declining stagnation (Dr. Manmohan Singh Harvard Alumni Meet, 2006) in higher education, the Chhattisgarh misadventure has been replicated by Uttar Pradesh Technical University which ignored all the basic formalities and requirements while allowing affiliation to over 700 professional colleges of B. Tech and MBA created a chaos, where the supply far exceeded the demand. The number of colleges was clearly higher than the number of aspiring students in Uttar Pradesh, which gave rise to the unethical practices by a new class of middle men who beguiled the rural students with a promise of Professional degree.

The mushrooming of various universities and colleges has led to a decline in the standard of higher education and a loss of credibility in the mind of the students who is searching for alternative avenues of employment. Currently a number of higher education family owned colleges have become profit enterprise where quality is surrendered at the cost of quantity. At the same time, the spread of distance education learning institutes has created confusion more confounded where quality controls have become increasingly difficult to monitor. Although distance learning was primarily promoted to increase the student enrolment at the higher education level, the growth has largely been chaotic and the quality is both unsatisfactory and uneven.

Employability

With more than 500 Universities and around 37,000 Colleges churning out nearly 25 million graduates each year, in terms of the volume of production India is clearly one of major providers of human resource to the world market. At this juncture, India‘s burning issue is not the lack of talent pool, but the lack of talent pool, which is employable. Two of the greatest concern of manager today, are finding good workers and training them. The difference between the skills required and those possessed by applicants, sometimes called the skills-gap, is of real concern to HR Managers and Business owners looking to hire competent employees. The employers prefer to hire people, who are trained and ready to go to work, whereas only around 15% of people coming out of Indian colleges are employable, the rest are branded 'not employable'

Quota

The Directive Principles of State Policy of Indian Constitution visualized a reservation of seats in jobs and education for the hitherto exploited sections of the society: the Schedule Castes; and the Schedule Tribes. Initially this reservation was to be implemented for a period of a decade, despite Mahatma Gandhi‘s open resistance to implementation of quota, successive governments have used the reservation system to enhance their political base. The crowning glory came with the implementation of Mandal Commission report in 1991 by under-siege prime-minister Mr. V. Singh, unleashing caste clashes and an out breaking at all India level students‘ agitation, which witnessed a large number of upper caste students publicly committing suicide.

In most of the government run institutes despite enormously tough competition nearly 49% of the seats are reserved for SC, ST, OBC and other sections. The impact of this has been adverse on those students who might be competent but fail to make it to these highly reputed institutes. Such students become bemused, disenchanted and dissatisfied with the current education system, choosing to move abroad which appears to be the only logical solution to their future insecurities.

Adding to the woes is the rise of unethical practices, where the temptation of obtaining a seat in government colleges with comparatively lower fees and better placements, drives many a parent and student into obtaining bogus caste and income certificates while applying to colleges for higher education. All this is leading to a total loss of credibility in the mind of industry as well as the students.

Increasing cost of higher education

In the global education scenario, the cost of higher education comparatively rises high. Global education provides high infrastructure with high financial commitment which affects the academic performance of the respondents. The students find it very difficult to accommodate themselves after their higher secondary education. The attractiveness of global education creates problem to their future entry in the higher education and it makes them unhappy to continue higher education. The global education provides quality education by promoting financial assistance. To give quality education government should promote financial encouragement to the students.

Higher education in India: The need for change

 Former President A P J Abdul Kalam today advocated a "complete" change of the higher education framework in the country and stressed on skill development to come up with a workforce to meet future challenges. Speaking on the occasion of the third Malti Gyan Peeth Puraskar in New Delhi, Dr Kalam suggested that students in schools and colleges be handed over "skill certificates" apart from the conventional degrees. "In

decades time, India will need 300 to 500 million employable skilled youth and there is a need to completely change the university education syllabus and secondary school education syllabus," he said. (NDTV, 2015)

Higher education in India continues to muddle its way through its identity crisis. Neither a specialist in teaching for skills, employability or even global citizenship, nor a flag bearer for advancement of higher order knowledge, it stands stymied. It's dismal rankings on the world table stand testament year after year not to its mediocrity but to the unwillingness or inability to change itself.

Of the millions of graduates and professionals churned out every year, a large proportion is deemed unemployable. These are the students trained for today's needs, often for lower order requirements in the service sector. Tomorrow's students need to aim higher - higher up in the value chain to serve the knowledge economy of the future. It is time to design a strategy that seeks to harness the past, leverage the present and build for the future.

Focus on skill based education

Our education system still focuses on teaching and testing knowledge at every level as opposed to teaching skills. The students forget the subject after the semester exam is over. Indian students focus on cramming the information, the best crammers are rewarded by the system. This is one of the fundamental mistakes of our education system.

Reward creativity, original thinking, research and innovation

Indian education system focuses more on memorizing rather than learning. Our education system rarely encourages research based learning. Our marking and grading system need to be based on research and creative learning.

Get smarter people to teach

Teaching jobs are considered in India as safe, well-paying, risk-free and Low-pressure jobs. It is high time to persuade luminary teachers. The performances of the teachers need not to be restricted within the four walls of the classroom. The better teacher focuses on bridging the gap between industry and academia. We need entrepreneurs, leaders and scholars in teaching positions.

Implement massive technology infrastructure for education

India is fastest growing country in terms of Information and Communication Technology (ICT), now that we have computers and Internet; it is a wise decision to invest in technology infrastructure that will make entrance to knowledge easier than ever. The universities and colleges need to focus more on building Human capital rather than outdated models of brick and mortar colleges and universities.

Re-define the purpose of the education system

Our education system is still a colonial system geared towards generating 'Attender' under the newly acquired skin of modernity. We need engineers who can build another Wipro or Infosys for our country but our most of the engineers and graduates are busy in running the call centers of the rest of the world – that is where our engineers' skills end.

The goal of the Higher education system should be to create innovators, entrepreneurs, scientists, anthropologists, artists, thinkers and writers who can develop knowledge based economy rather than low quality service provider nation that we are running into.

Effective deregulation

Until today, education is considered as a not for profit industry. Many people are using education institutions to hide their black money and bypassing the rule with respect to not earning profit from recognized educational institutions. Certain private equity companies which in turn provide services to non-for profit educational institutions and earn huge profit. Higher education are so costly that they are outside the reach of most Indian students.

There is number of regulatory boards like UGC, AICTE, NAAC and other Local bodies make the education institutes operation bit difficult with their strict rules and regulations and repetitive inspection from several bodies with huge amount of annual fees. There should be one universal body to regulate the education institutes rather than having several bodies which makes the institutes operation difficult and hectic.

Make reservation irrelevant

The entire world is moving away from the reservation system except one country i.e. India. Education has to based on rule of 'Equity' not on the 'Equality'. If we want to emerge as a country build on a knowledge economy, driven by highly educated people. Reservation need to be 'need based 'rather than based on caste.

Industry and Academia Connection
Most of the Indian graduates are not employable in senior position in reputed companies due the gap between industry and academia. Skill building is really important to ensure employability. Industry and academia link is necessary to ensure curriculum and skills in line with requirements. The industry experts also need to contribute their knowledge and expertise to the universities to update and upgrade the curriculum as per the industry requirements.

Incentives to Teachers and Researchers
Teaching job is considered as risk- free as well as Incentive-free. It is very important to motivate the teachers and researchers to indulge themselves in research based teaching. Universities need encourage researchers with proper stipend which can sufficiently take care of their as well as research needs.

Public Private Partnership- PPP is most essential to bring in quality in the higher education system. Governments can ensure PPP through an appropriate policy. University Grants Commission and Ministry of HRD should play a major role in developing a purposeful interface between the Universities, Industries and National Research Laboratories (NRLs) as a step towards PPP.

International Cooperation
The Indian universities and government should encourage collaboration with foreign universities and government to encourage solitary globalised education system. We need to encourage student as well as faculty exchange programs to develop global teacher as well as students to match up the global market.

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