

Promotion of Excellence in Higher Education

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Abstract

Indian Higher Education system is the third largest system in the world. Country has made significant progress in terms of quantity but a general feeling of dissatisfaction prevails relating to quality. In the battle of quantity and quality many important aspects like values, social cohesion, ethics etc have been overshadowed. As a result slowly and gradually the social fabric of our system is getting affected. Research is the most important constituent of higher education. The chief function of higher education is to generate new knowledge and resolve problems of human society through research and thereby promoting excellence & quality in human life itself. We must keep in mind Accessibility, richness of educational inputs and processes including Research, transparency in recruitment of teachers to achieve excellence in Higher Education. The present paper discuss few ways to promote excellence in Higher Education , viz - Do away with Affiliating System, Establishing Research Parks and Improving Quality of Faculties & Attitude towards Teaching as a Profession. How with the help of these ideas we can achieve excellence is being discussed.

Key Words: Higher Education, Excellence, Affiliating System, Research Parks

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Introduction

Today (as of February 2017) with **789** universities and **37,204** colleges the Indian Higher Education system is the third largest system in the world. The phenomenal growth in the field of higher education with no commensurate improvement in academic faculty, infrastructure facilities and financial resources triggered decline in the standard of higher education. Many of institution and universities which were once reputed and popular are now just surviving somehow. Given the situation as it is, the country has made relatively noteworthy progress in quantitative terms but a general feeling of dissatisfaction prevails relating to quality.

Even in this era of fastest communication technology, Indian higher education system is not able to reach many deserving doors. GER is mere 18.8%. Institutions are not adequate for the access of rural and tribal aspirants of higher education. Social progress which ought to be the key output of a good education has also bleak appearance. World Bank data indicates that while income growth is helping reducing poverty, the number of poor people actually rising. In our higher education, the Constitutional Mandate of a Welfare State is not realized in its real sense as the development taken place is not proportionate and inclusive. In the battle of quantity and quality many important aspects like values, social cohesion, ethics etc have been overshadowed. As a result slowly and gradually the social fabric of our system is getting affected. Heinous crimes like rapes, murder and honour killings are on rise. Rampant incidents of scams, frauds and corruptions indicate the Indian tradition of concept of building character through education, which has also been adopted by the Indian parliament through education policies is fading. Youth of the country in general and teacher education in particular is affected with the spate of confusion and restlessness. The paradoxes of our systems have been well illustrated by his Holiness Dalai Lama as, *'We have more degrees, but less sense; More knowledge, but less judgement; More experts, but more problems; More medicines, but less wellness; We have multiplied our possessions, but reduced our values.'*

Above paragraph reveals evils exists in society, value crisis, problem of equity and access and thereby lack of quality in higher education.

Research is the most important constituent of higher education. The chief function of higher education is to generate new knowledge and resolve problems of human society through

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research and thereby promoting excellence & quality in human life itself. Today Indian higher education system is facing many challenges. One of the major problem is lack of meaningful and fruitful research, thereby no patents & IPR. Lack of research skills and climate are root causes. Lack of sound understanding of research methodology is found in a large majority of students of higher education.

Educational excellence is a passion for quality. We must relate excellence to character formation-to the demand that children become involved in the formation of their own best selves. Quality education, training and research that is illumined by faith promotes character formation, genuine human values and ethical formation to make them fit to live in a changing environment. The degrees the students obtain should not only be a symbol of what they have accomplished, but also a passport to a better future and **a meaningful life.**

Ways to Improve Quality and Establish Excellence:

- **Legacy of Affiliating System (Do away with Affiliating System)**

Affiliating system though has a long legacy of more than 160 years in Indian sub-continent is to be revalued for its continuance. This mode of dispensing higher education is found nowhere else. This has virtually bifurcated undergraduate and graduate education that leads to opportunities of higher learning and research. Most of the universities in India do not teach undergraduates and thereby denying the opportunity of providing the excitement and interest in further education and research. 17% of the undergraduates who go to colleges opt for post graduate studies and hardly one per cent take up research. None of them had opportunity to mingle with distinguished researchers and therefore miss the excitement of discovery and intellectual ambience. This ultimately results in leaving behind a vast majority of talented individuals from pursuing the research studies. Many quality students are left behind as a part of the routine workforce. This is the major factor that afflicts the quality of research output. Therefore, in the interest of research and discoveries that are crucial for the modern society, the crucial academic reform in this regard will be to do away with the affiliating system. All universities in the country, therefore, whether they are private or public should teach undergraduate programs as a mandatory requirement along with whatever they do(Gnanam,2011).

- **Establishing Research Parks**

Research park is a joint effort between an academic institution and industry. It provides a common platform to both industry and academic personnel for innovation, creativity, technology generation and product/process development. It binds together the two namely

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industry and institutes for mutual growth and prosperity. It is a place where innovative minds of student and professors on one hand are matched with innovative minds in industry on other. Establishment of Research Parks in universities and autonomous colleges is recommended by Anil Kakodkar committee in its report to government of Maharashtra. The report says China in the recent past has installed more than 300 Research Parks. It is more on account of them that the institutions have become innovative in character. They are playing a driver's role in development of china. Research Parks are found to be a means to convert intellectual capital in both the university and industry in to usable goods and services. Can and should we not learn lessons from China, US and rest of the world.(Naik, 2014)

- **Improving Quality of Faculties & Attitude towards Teaching as a Profession**

Time and again worried opinions and concerns have been expressed by the scholars and policy makers about the 'Quality of Teachers' or 'Quality of Teaching'. Central cabinet minister, Mr. Jairam Ramesh, who himself is an IIT Bombay alumnus, articulated the following depressing view not long ago: 'There is hardly any worthwhile research from our IITs. The faculty in the IIT is not world class. It is the students in IITs who are world class.' His agony is quite relevant as no IIT or IIM features in the Global top 200 list of the world's best institutions and universities.

Teaching is an ART and not a science. Though the profession of teaching is also like any other profession for earning for living, but then there are some basic (**ethical**) differences. Teaching has to be passion. Teaching cannot be considered as 10 am to 5 pm 'job'. Moreover it should be a 5 pm to 10 am assignment. But at the same time teachers should also be treated well in all aspects, viz., salary, promotion, dignity and other career advancement aspects. *Therefore, drive should be made to retain bright & talented people into academics and to attract more talents, more bright people towards academic, even if this requires mandating higher salaries and better facilities.*

Teachers and institutions, delivering better results and imparting genuine learning, should be celebrated and rewarded. Performers and non-performers should not be treated at par, there must be encouragement for performers. Promotion has to be earned, it should not be doled out to all irrespective of performance. Alternatively, the total number of posts in a university department may be kept fixed, but the number of posts to different cadres should be variable/open so that the university does not face any problem due to lack of post when a teacher is competent enough and deserves a promotion to higher post or a new talent is to be recruited to a higher cadre. The competent authority of the national higher education policy

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may relook into prevailing Career Advancement Scheme (CAS) if it is all helping the universities achieve quality in higher education.

- **Admission of students and recruitment of teachers should be purely done on merit bases. Nepotism, Favoritism and political influence of the candidate should not govern the selection process at any level.**

Conclusion

Quality in Education should not be narrowly conceived. Academic and professional excellence must form part of the all-round development of an individual, who learns to consider life as a gift and a service. Higher education should equip young people to become honest citizens who are rooted in their culture, open to other cultures, and capable of interpreting social processes, so as to take responsibility for bringing about transformation in society. Transformation of society demands promotion of excellence in higher education, which will produce citizens equipped with knowledge, skills, values, morals, character, sense of responsibility towards self & others.

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