CHALLENGES OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN INDIA DURING 2020

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ABSTRACT

The UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs estimates that COVID-19 may cause the global economy to reduce in size by nearly 1% by the end of 2020, while the International Labour Organization projects an increase in worldwide unemployment of between 5.3 million and 24.7 million, and the World Trade Organization projects a 13% to 32% global trade decline this year. Indian Economy which was already very fragile with falling GDP numbers and financial sector crises before the virus, has come to a standstill with the lockdown. The pandemic has proven challenging for both students and educators, who have to deal with the emotional, physical and economic difficulties posed by the ill health while doing their part to help control the spread of the virus. An economic recession could impact higher education institutions in many ways, including a reduction in employment opportunities, possible delays in students paying fees or an inability to pay tuition, the inability of governments to meet commitments to publically funded institutions to the level desired, and the changes in student behavior towards the mode and preference of particular degree programs. Covid-19 has forced universities across India, and the world indeed, to suspend physical classrooms and shift to online classes. There have also been debates on the nature of classes and the future of examination and evaluation -whether they could be conducted online or not. Higher education institutions require high-speed internet and education delivery platforms or learning management systems, besides stable IT infrastructure and faculty members who are comfortable teaching online. Students also need high-speed internet and computers/mobiles to attend these sessions or watch pre-recorded classes. I have tried in this article to show an overview of the challenges of higher education in India during the year 2020.

Keywords: *Pandemic, Recession, Covid-19, Higher Education.*

Introduction

The United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs estimates that Covid-19 may cause the global economy to reduce in size by nearly 1% by the end of 2020, while the International Labour Organization projects an increase in worldwide unemployment of between 5.3 million and 24.7 million, and the World Trade Organization projects a 13% to 32% global trade decline this year. Higher Education in India is one of the most developed in the entire world. It is the third largest in the world in terms of system of education. There has been considerable improvement in the higher education scenario of India in both quantitative and qualitative terms. The pandemic has proven challenging for both students and educators, who have to deal with the emotional, physical and economic difficulties posed by the ill health while doing their part to help control the spread of the virus. An economic recession could impact higher education institutions in many ways, including a reduction in employment opportunities, possible delays in students paying fees or an inability to pay tuition, the inability of

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governments to meet commitments to publically funded institutions to the level desired, and the changes in student behavior towards the mode and preference of particular degree programs. Covid-19 has forced universities across India, and the world indeed, to suspend physical classrooms and shift to online classes. This paper discussed the situation of challenges in Indian higher education by dividing into four parts. First part of the paper deals with colonial inheritance, Second part deals with globalization effects, third part deals with pandemic effects and last part offers concluding remarks.

Higher Education System in India

Higher education in India starts after the higher Secondary or 12th standard. It takes 3 years for completing a B.Sc., B.A., or B.Com pass or honours degree from a college in India, pursuing engineering course would take four years and five years (with 6 months of additional compulsory internship) for completing a bachelor of medicine or bachelor of law degree. Postgraduate courses generally are of two years duration. But there are some courses like Master of Computer Application (MCA) that are of three years duration. For those who cannot afford to attend regular classes for various preoccupations can pursue correspondence courses from various Open Universities and distance learning institutes in India.

Mapping Higher Education Scenario in India

Universities and its constituent colleges are the main institutes of higher education in India. The system of higher education in India has been an impressive growth since independence. The number of universities was 25, number of colleges was 700 and total enrolment was 0.1 million in 1947. There are at present 993 degree awarding universities/ Institutions, 39931 colleges, 1416299 teachers, 37399388 students and colleges per lakh population is 28. The academic profile may be enriched by the following information- Average enrolment per college 693, teacher-pupil ratio (regular mode) 23, Gross Enrolment ratio 26.3. The Break-up of Universities in India[1] is as follows: Central Universities -46, State public university- 371, Deemed University (Government)-34, Deemed University (Government aided)-10, Institution of National Importance- 127, Central Open University-1, State Open University-14, State private university- 304, Institutions under State Legislative Act-5, State Private open University- 1 and Deemed University (Privte) – 80.

"This is however not a complete picture. It is afflicted by low quality, ill governance, engorged bureaucracy and uninspiring leadership. Additionally, the system suffers from fund deficit – India spends less than 2 per cent of GDP". [2]

Objectives

•   To discuss an overview of higher education in India

•   To study the challenges in the higher education system in India.

Methodology

The paper is based on secondary data. The paper is descriptive in nature. Many Books and research papers on the condition of higher education in India have been published. All these papers have discussed or analysed the challenges of higher education before pandemic situation. The paper will try to fill up the gap in the research done so far in this regard.

Challenges of Higher Education in India

Covid 19 has changed the scenario in all sectors of almost all countries. India is not the exception. Higher education sector affected highly. It is to be remembered that before entry of covid 19, Indian higher education has already turned into a system where there are many challenges. Some of these challenges have entered into higher education sector after the economical changes in the world economy in the name of globalization, liberalization and privatization since 1990s. These changes have also thrown many challenges. Now some of the important changes are mentioned which will help us to understand the challenges before Indian higher education at the first quarter of 2020 when covid 19 has not started its attack.

Part-A: After independence but Before globalization in 1990s

Three characteristics can be identified as far as colonial inheritance is concerned – a) top-down approach b) affiliation c) examination based evaluation. East India company ruled India using top-down approach where only privileged group was considered worthy of rendering useful information before taking any decision. The commoners neither had any access to nor were informed of the decisions taken. They were just ordered to comply with. This policy was continued during the post independence period where the key stakeholders –students, teachers, parents and society were hardly took on the board while deciding educational matters. Several expert committees were set up to recommend measure as to

vision, policy and programmes of higher education. Almost all the committees reflected the class interest of the privileged sections more than the demand and expectations of the commoner. At the time of framing syllabus, same approach was applied. In many cases they copy the syllabus of the universities abroad without considering local socio-economic and educational conditions. The same colonial monotonous rote and omit methods are used in class room teaching. A system of affiliation got rid the universities of original attire, leaving them irrelevant, ruptured in these challenging time. India is following written exam mode of evaluation since British raj. Entire academic aspect suffers from bureaucratic interference and /or control. It is observed from study of different books and papers that the focus on mobilizing resources for higher education before 1990s was as follows-

- Emphasis on public resources
- Emphasis on diversification of public revenues
- Better methods of allocating public resources
- Reallocation of resources from less productive sector to education
- More efficient methods of public finance

Part-B: From globalization but before Pandemic Period

Covid 19 situation included some additional challenges with all challenges inherited after 1990s in India. Let us see what are changes come after globalization in 1990s in India.

- Foreign Universities & Institutions coming and establishing franchise.
- Second & third grade private universities involved in the quick-money–generating scheme.
- Commodification became reality in the higher education sector
- Higher Education became tradable service
- The expansion of Private educational institutions mainly in skill oriented professional disciplines. There are doubts about the legitimacy of many of them.
- Maintenance of proper balance between basic and applied research
- Increasing dependence on private Initiatives
- Increasing Influence of market forces
- Focus of education on Technology and Vocational education
- Deregulation of the education system
- De-licensing of higher education, conferring institutional autonomy

Change in financing of higher education after 1990s

- Reduction of Public Expenditures in higher education
- Introduction of Cost-recovery Principles
- Self financed higher education
- Decreasing funding from governmental sources.

Philosophical Changes in higher education after 1990s

- All kinds of welfare are measured in terms of money.
- Welfare state concerns have been replaced by the free market philosophy.
- TINA ideology and "market can do everything for everybody'' entered the education sector
- Reducing the role of the government promoted as an economically and educationally efficient proposal.
- Philanthropic role of private sector has disappeared.
- Legitimisation of profit making in education
- State patronage of profit-hungry private institution

Change in Focus in Mobilising public Resources after 1990s

Higher education in India is faced with deteriorating conditions resulting from expansion and shrinking resources. "Regular university-industry interaction, which is critical to raising funds from

corporate sources as well as restructuring the curriculam ….." [3] on regular basis is missing in India. Focus in mobilizing resources take the following shape from 1990s.

- Mobilisation of non-governmental resources.
- Diversification of finances
- Cost saving
- Cost recovery
- User Charges
- Privatisation

Part-C: During Pandemic Period

Flavours added during Pandemic during last 3 Quarter of 2020

Since independence in 1947 to the first quarter of the year 2020, some important changes has entered into higher education scenario, that changes are discussed earlier. At the end of 2020, Actual challenges which are facing by Indian higher education sector are the sum-total of the challenges inherited from the previous period of pandemic and that are added during the pandemic.

- The pandemic has proven challenging for both students and educators, who have to deal with the emotional, physical and economic difficulties posed by the ill health while doing their part to help control the spread of the virus.

- An economic recession could impact higher education institutions in many ways, including a reduction in employment opportunities, possible delays in students paying fees or an inability to pay tuition, the inability of governments to meet commitments to publically funded institutions to the level desired, and the changes in student behavior towards the mode and preference of particular degree programs.

- Covid-19 has forced universities across India, and the world indeed, to suspend physical classrooms and shift to online classes.

- Higher education institutions require high-speed internet and education delivery platforms or learning management systems, besides stable IT infrastructure and faculty members who are comfortable teaching online. Students also need high-speed internet and computers/mobiles to attend these sessions or watch pre-recorded classes.

Concluding Remark and Suggestions

Issues of colonial inheritance, poor academic culture may ruin the system of higher education in India. The institutions of higher education need to be freed from the practice of handing readymade curriculum, teaching-learning technique, examination pattern and subjects options. The system of affiliation, a colonial inheritance, needed to be broken down if we were to rebuild a fresh system of higher education. There have also been debates on the nature of classes and the future of examination and evaluation -whether they could be conducted online or not. Concentration on reforming, reorienting and revitalizing the entire education system to meet the emerging needs and challenges is needed. Required professional, technical and academic assistance should be available as to make them stand on their own feet. A probing continues and skill nurturing mode of evaluation is the need of the hour. Academic activities need to be innovatively designed and brilliantly implemented. Performance based academic indicators should continue if we wish to earn a decent place among research respecting system of higher education. Innovative programmes should be introduced by higher education institutions. It is necessary to attempt to arrange fool proof examination system. Stable IT Infrastructure is needed. Higher education institutions require high-speed internet and education delivery platforms or learning management systems, besides stable IT infrastructure and faculty members who are comfortable teaching online. Students also need high-speed internet and computers/mobiles to attend these sessions or watch pre-recorded classes.

Limitations

The paper has not covered all challenges emerged in the field of higher education in India.

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