

Factors compromising quality in higher education

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Abstract

There is not a single Indian university in world's top 200 universities. The aims of higher education is to provide leadership. Leadership devoid of quality ensures only failure. The remunerations, incentives, etc. in the education sector are not comparatively enough to attract the best talents in serving education. Majority (90%) of the masses are not being able to avail higher education. Thus, we are exploring quality only within ten percent country's "human resources"! Majority of the Indians' basic survival need, hunger is not met. Expecting higher education and even quality from them is nothing but day dream! Corruption, role of money power and unemployment add fuel to the fire which burns quality in Indian education. Reservation and faulty method of choosing educational manager disrespect deserving quality the right berth, which casts cumulative shadow on the educational quality. Favouritism catalysed by campus politics also dishonour quality in Indian higher education. We have no option but to survive in this globalized world of teeth and nail competition and quality in education is the only tool, which must be preserved and sharpened.

Keywords: Higher education, poor quality, searching quality only in 10% population, poverty, money power, biased and inefficient institutional manager, campus politics

1. Introduction

In our country the education structure above XII level is termed as higher education. It operates at colleges and universities. Not all the children who are getting enrolled in class one are lucky enough to have access in higher education. According to a MHRD report, only 5.7% of such children reach up to class XI ^[1]. That means an absolute majority of 94.3% students are lost in between! But the curriculum and other things are designed to suit all the students to enter into the arena of higher education and research. Had this planning worked, then quality of higher education would have been at a respectable level. But the present state of our higher education casts very sorry picture. A glimpse of the hard reality is reflected in the recent reports. There is not a single Indian university in world's top 200 universities! ^[2] Nearly 47% graduates from our country are too bad to employ anywhere! Close to 84% graduates were found to lack the right levels in cognitive ability and 90% graduates don't have required proficiency in English communication! ^[3] This worse picture of our higher education is nakedly demonstrated once again in one of the States (U.P.) of our country very recently, where 255 Ph.D. degree holders were the applicants for the post of peon! ^[4]

This means, things are not going as per the planning. Internal and external factors are responsible for this very poor state of affairs in higher education here. One of the aims of higher education is to provide leadership to the country. And no good leadership can be produced through this below average higher education system. Thus the country is passing through the phase of leadership crisis, which causes irreversible loss to us in this globalized world affairs. So, it is high time to analyse the whole system of higher education in our country, identify the factors responsible for quality compromise and mend the affair, sooner the better.

2. Factors Responsible and Remedy

On analysis, the factors responsible for the poor state of our higher education can be identified as below

• The Best Talents are not being Attracted in Serving Education

Although the NPE-86, National Knowledge Commission and other Education Commissions emphasised on the need of attracting the best talents in the field of education, but that did not materialized. The salary, incentives, etc. provided to the teachers are not up to the mark of that being provided in other professions, e.g., in multinational companies, banking services, etc. As a result, the best brains, instead of coming into the teaching profession, are easily being attracted elsewhere. The rampant brain-drain to the more advanced countries is one such case. As a result, our higher education suffers from paucity of true intellectuals. This is the reason that we failed to produce even one true intellectual through our system of education during the long period of seven decades after independence! In this perspective, the Vice-chairman, Indian Centre for Assessment and Accreditation suggested, "With the increasing globalization of higher education, Indian universities need to compete to attract the best students, as well as best qualified faculty from across the world." ^[2]

In today's globalized world of tough competition, merit and quality are the ultimate surviving factors. As these are being cultivated only in the field of education, so, talents must be retained and attracted here at any cost. Then, only we can push talent in other fields and hope to win the race of globalization.

• Low Enrolment in Higher Education

Study reveals that only 10% of our college and university age going students have access to higher education! ^[5] This is less than one-fourth of the world's average access to higher education (42%). So, the probability of getting genuine talents

from this very low percentage of the country's population is mathematically poor.

This one type of monopoly in higher education by the socio-economically most advantageous group must be stopped. The possibility of getting the best human resources from the rest 90% disadvantageous Indian citizens must be explored by devising systems compatible to them.

- **Poverty**

Poverty is another reason here. The intensity of poverty is such that about six (5.47) Indians die every single minute in here!^[6]. On the other hand, one Indian farmer, who is supposed to feed others, commits suicide every 30 minute due to poverty!^[7]. In this situation, the poor students, those who manage to get admitted in higher education, are forced to devote more time and effort in earning their livelihood, than in improving quality of his /her educational achievement. These students are mainly engaged elsewhere in job – casual /part-time, or are offering private tuition to lower grade students. Thus, they can devote only partial effort and time in higher education with the aim to just get a pass certificate anyway! Thus, the quality in higher education becomes the casualty.

Poverty eradication is the need of the hour. At least a healthy sum of monetary assistance in the form of stipend or scholarship should be arranged for all the economically weak students in higher education.

- **Rampant Corruption**

India is the 4th most corrupt country in Asia Pacific region^[8]. Rampant corruption in and out of the education system devaluates the worth of genuineness /excellence, at least apparently. This demotivates young learners to strive to quality, and lure the rich/ influential to adopt shortcut, while push the dis-advantageous one to despair.

Education system should be made autonomous, as far as possible. Zero tolerance to corrupt practices in education should be norm of the day.

- **Role of Money Power in Higher Education**

Big money giants are largely coming in the field of education as the Government is withdrawing her social and constitutional responsibility in providing quality education to the citizens. This situation cause havoc to the quality education in this country of poor people. Role of moneypower pushes the genuine meritorious students to the backbanner. On the other hand, intellectually weak but monetarily strong candidates become the “deserving one” in securing birth here. As a result we are living in a society, where three girl students of SVS Yoga Medical College at Kallakurichi near Villupuram in Tamil Nadu committed suicide on 24th January, 2015 accusing the administration of charging excess fees^[9]. In IITs & IIMs, where large sum of money is essential for getting education, Muslim students being generally poor, constitute only 1.3% and 1.7%, respectively.^[10]

In order to cultivate quality in higher education, the money power barrier in access and continuing education must be removed. The Government can't shed off her responsibility in providing quality education to the citizens in public expenditure.

- **Huge Unemployment**

The popular conception in our country is that education is for employment. And when this corollary fails to bear fruit, people start thinking negatively. Reluctance is being shown in pursuing education or investing much in it. According to a report, there are 116 million (9.60%) unemployed in our country^[11]. This huge unemployment scenario demotivates the guardians and learners to pursue higher education.

The need of the hour is to solve this burning problem of unemployment, so that a positive signal is sent in the society regarding the need of education. Government and non-Government efforts are welcome here.

- **Reservation**

Reservation also, to a certain extent compromises with quality in higher education in our country. But reservation is a social need. A balance is needed between this social need and the need of quality assurance in higher education. The solution can be that the reservation can be for the seat /berth not for the quality /merit. This means, a certain percentage of seats /berths may be reserved in higher education for the different sections or cultural ethnicity of our Indian society, but certain level of merit must be maintained in order to get access to these reserved seats /berths by the members of that respective sections or cultural ethnicity. Pre-admission education or training initiatives should be undertaken by the State.

- **Educational Management**

Management is an art of efficient utilization of resources. Our Govt. and semi Govt. educational management is compromised to constraints. This also affects quality badly. The management leader or the Manager in the educational institution i.e., the Principal / Headmaster /Headmistress in many a times does not possess the required level of managerial skills. In the case of appointment of Teacher-in-Charge, in many Universities only the seniority factor of the teacher is being considered as the sole criterion. Whereas, nobody can claim that seniority automatically gives birth to managerial skill. Now, if the leader is incompetent, what better can be expected from the team? -The easy casualty is the quality education.

Constraints to education management should be overcome. Only competent persons (irrespective of seniority) should be given the authority to lead educational institution.

- **Campus politics**

Campus politics is another factor for compromising quality. Many a times the administration is forced to take pleasing decision instead of quality decision. Students Union as well as the Principal / Headmaster many a times are indulged to take such decision which pleases the concerned political party outside to which they have their affiliation. Such decisions are not always in consistent with the health of quality assurance in the institution.

Campus politics should be detached from the outside political party's affiliation. Higher educational institutions should be granted academic autonomy and the political training to its students should be delinked from out of campus real-life politics.

• **Favouritism**

Lastly, favouritism both by the administration as well as by the staffs also affects quality badly. Teachers generally do this to get cheap popularity among the students.

There should be some effective code of conduct to be followed by the institutional manager, teachers and office staffs. Corrective or punitive measures should be adopted against those found in indulging cheap popularity, favouritism or violating the set limit of such code of conduct.

3. Conclusion

In order to survive in this globalized world of tough competition ensuring quality is essential. Therefore, it is high time that we must overcome these above factors in order to ensure quality in our higher education and survive here.

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