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Globalisation and Reforms in Indian Higher Education System

Abstract

Globalisation has opened the higher education sector in its process of integration of world economies and education under GATS has become a tradable and movable service which is increasingly becoming an engine of growth and factor of comparative advantage among emerging knowledge economies where knowledge is legally protected and commercially exploited. The market forces has put pressure on the fast expanding higher education system to adopt reforms necessary for bringing efficiency and performance to survive in the global competition. Higher education sector in India is also undergoing rapid transformation with ever increasing private participation and structural changes. The objectives of access, equity and quality are still to be accomplished among growing demand of higher education in the country. The issue of volume and speed of implementation of long awaited reforms is still to be resolved. This paper analyses the need and relevance of the various kind of reforms to be activated.

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Keywords: WTO– World Trade Organisation; GATT- General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs; GATS- General Agreement on Trade in Services; TRIPS- Trade Related Intellectual Property Rights; CCS– Centrally sponsored scheme; RUSA- Rastriya Ucchattar Siksha Abhiyan; NKC –National knowledge Commission; NAAC –National Assessment and Accreditation Council; POA –Programme of Action

Introduction

It has been widely recognized that socioeconomic and technological advancement of any country is determined by the strength of their higher education system. The linkage between higher education and development has already been recognised. Today knowledge has become key factor of production in knowledge economies and therefore, higher education as the source and storehouse of this knowledge is being given priority in its development and expansion to get required competitive advantage among nations. Brunner J.J said "As we enter the 21st century, the challenge faced by developing countries is to advance rapidly along the path of growth and, at the same time to join the emerging knowledge based economy, and the global information society." Today the comparative advantage of a country is increasingly determined by how well it uses knowledge and innovation. success in leveraging knowledge and innovation is only possible with a sound infrastructure of higher education …the role of education has thus become central to the development and competitiveness of the economy.(Murthy Narayan N.R. : 2009) It is now recognized that a nation aiming to bulid a strong knowledge society cannot overlook the decisive role of higher education. (Tilak J.B.G.: 2013) The experience of USA , Europe and emerging Asian counties of China, Japan, Korea , Hongkong and India has proved the linkages between creativity and innovations and economic growth. Higher education provide an environment of imagination, fresh thinking, search of truth and new ideas , perspectives and approaches leading to the state of the art in all fields . Winston Churchill had rightly remarked, "The empire of the future are going to be the empire of the mind."

In the era of globalization national economies are being integrated with world economy with openness, free and unrestricted flow of goods, services and intellectual properties which includes information, ideas, knowledge and technology. In world trade regulated by WTO, the goods, services and intellectual capital are separately being dealt by GATT, GATS and TRIPS respectively as its constituents with the provision of cross retaliation. It means in case of infringement or violation of rules in one area by any member of WTO would be subject to the cross retaliation in any other areas. Moreover, members have to provide national treatment to the individual as well as institutions of other member country. Clearly, the

knowledge is protected for economic gains and technology is increasingly being transferred for value. In such a scenario higher education which was previously free and confined to national boundaries, is now open to cross boarder transactions for commercial value. The rapid advancement in information and communication which facilitated the delivery of content without influenced by limitations of time, volume, speed and distance. "In the world of higher education, markets and globalization are beginning to influence universities and education, not only in terms of what is taught but also in terms of what is researched". (Nayyar Deepak: 2007) In open market environment higher education sector is exposed to stiff competition, the higher education is becoming a tradable good rather than mere a public good. consequently the private participation is on the rise and that too in the demand driven areas witnessing lopsided development of the sector with marginalization of basic sciences and humanities. The commercialization of the sector resulted in wave of profiteering, substandard and deteriorating quality, lack of effective regulatory framework, old curriculum without relevance to dynamic present day needs, lack of quality faculty , governance incapable of striking a balance between autonomy and accountability and the resistance to bring necessary changes in the existing structure of higher education which is unable to face the challenges of assuring quality in the present market environment.

The present paper is an attempt to analyses the need of reforms in the Indian higher education system and outlines the reforms necessary for bringing the quality in it.

Aim of the Study

The paper is aimed at suggesting ways to speed up the process of reforms in order to face the challenges of globalization on higher education. At the very outset , the impact of globalization and privatization on higher education has been analysed and in view of the lopsided development of this sector the long awaited reforms has been outlined to implement while ensuring the accomplishment of the objectives of access, equity and quality and the need for enhancing the role of government in revamping the research development and innovation in universities and colleges .

Need of reforms

The issue of reforms in Indian higher education system is not new however after globalization and internationalization of higher education, the issue has come at centre stage. From Radhakrishnan commission (1949), to Kothari commission (1968) and from Education policy of 1986 and POA (1992) to NKC Report (2006) a long list of reforms has been proposed. The mission mode flagship CCS of RUSA being implemented by MHRD has initiated a strategic plan of comprehensive reforms in higher education sector in India. The reason behind this situation has been the mismatch between the objectives of access, equity and excellence and constant degradation of quality on the one hand and pressure of market forces on account of globalization, consequent competition, and emerging need of efficiency and performance for sustainability on the other. These emerging forces were in favour of privatization of higher education which was projected as an efficient system capable of improving access with quality and equity. Nilekani observed " Our higher education system has become inert and incapable of adapting to a rapidly evolving economy, and even its best central institutes arguably Nehru's most enduring legacy to India- are in danger. These weaknesses have become particularly critical with the rise of knowledge economy, and as India's legions youngsters enter institutions that seem less and less capable of giving them what they need." (Nilekani N.: 2008) It is essential to stimulate the private investment in higher education as means of extending educational opportunities. (NKC: GOI)

India has a large and diverse system of higher education comprised by a total enrolment of 32.3 million students in 723 Universities, 36634 colleges and 11664 Stand Alone institutions with a faculty strength of 13,67,535 teachers. The demand of higher education had tremendously increased over the years. In 1947 there were 19 universities and 500 colleges which increased manifold in 2005 adding about 320 universities and about 15500 colleges. In the globalised era particularly during 11th plan there has been spectacular rise in number of institutions in the private sector. The Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in 18-23 years of age group in Higher education in India has been tremendously increased to 23% from about 13% at the beginning of 11th plan. A significant part of this contribution may be attributed to private sector constituted by 219 privately managed Universities and 75% aided and unaided Private colleges which caters to 65% of the total enrolment. The bulk of this enrollment comes in professional and technical disciplines. However, the private colleges have kept very small size and single programme which is not conducive to create ambience of higher education in interdisciplinary fields. Out of the total 43% Colleges, running only single programme, 80% are privately managed of which 27% colleges run B.Ed Courses only. In fact, Globalization and privatization has its own limitations and drawbacks. Profiteering and other vested interests came on the way of academic interests, compromised standards, could not promote the research culture and often easily escaped the regulatory framework.

Table-1
Type Wise Number of Universities

Universities Type	No. of Universities	
	2012-13	2013-14
privately managed.	201	234
Central University	42	43
Central and State Open Universities	14	
Institute of National Importance	61	68
State Public University	290	322
Institute under State Legislature Act	5	5
Deemed University Government	38	36
Deemed University Government Aided	11	11
Other	03	04
Total	**665**	**723**

Table 2.
Number of Affiliating Universities As Per Range of Colleges

Range number of colleges	number of affiliating universities	Cumulative number of affiliating universities
0-100	137	137
100-200	47	184
200-300	25	209
300-400	17	226
400-500	8	234
500-1000	13	247
>1000	1	248

Source : AISHE 2013-14

Unlike business enterprises where mergers and consolidation is sought for economies of scale and efficiency, in higher education smaller size of affiliating universities is presently being advocated to sustain quality. Reforms constitute the decentralization through clustering of colleges in one region or area into a university, giving constituent status to bigger colleges, opening new universities preferably as unitary universities and conversion of POE colleges into autonomous colleges which function like universities except awarding degrees. This would facilitate the affiliating universities to focus more on academic and research function which presently has been marginalized qualitatively if not quantitatively due to heavy burden of handling the increasing number of affiliated colleges.

Academic Reforms

Teaching and Learning

The quality of any institution is known by the quality of its students and faculty who are attracted to the institutions on the quality of peers and alumni. When we analyze the higher education sector of India we are faced with duality and inequality. On the one hand there are renowned universities and institutes but on the other majority of institutions are satisfied with remaining last lots of student quality. In general higher education the picture is more dismal where highest number (40.4%) of students is enrolled in Arts/Humanities/Social Sciences courses at Undergraduate level Commerce (13.9%) and Science (13.8%). Similarly at Post Graduate level M.A. pass number of students is maximum followed by M.Sc. and M.B.A . In general higher education the incidence of unemployability is maximum even to the extent of about 90%. At present universities providing general higher education are 398. Academic Reforms vis a vis semester system, revision of syllabi on academia industry linkages, skill development and vocational courses and adoption of technology enabled teaching learning pedagogies are needed to be implemented. The following list of reforms which is illustrative but not exhaustive may be uniformly adopted and implemented.

1. Semester system may be introduced at UG level from next academic session.
2. Private examination may be replaced simultaneously by distance system.
3. All PG colleges may be sanctioned UG honors classes in first stage and rest may be covered substantially.
4. Choice based Credit system (CBCS) in teaching and evaluation may be implemented.
5. The classroom teaching may be improved with MIS monitored pedagogical reforms like time bound teaching plans, feedback system, project oriented studies, inter and intra departmental workshops , seminars.
6. The locally available experts from non academic fields may be engaged in teaching and learning for skill enhancement.
7. Institutional clustering for sharing faculty within district/region may be initiated to enrich learning experiences.
8. The number of faculty positions must be created /filled as per norms laid down by UGC as this is the dominant factor behind students migration and deterioration in quality.
9. Teacher quality may be improved by regional/ state wise short duration training and orientation during vacations.

Examination Reforms

The higher education system in India is often criticized for the present one time evaluation system and the need for the uniform credit based Continuous evaluation has been advocated by numerous committees. Now uniform implementation of Choice based Credit system (CBCS) is also required for facilitating mobility of students across institutions and countries. The following reforms are needed to be implemented :

1. Evaluation must be both through continuous system and term end system.
2. Examination calendar must be declared in advance and implemented time bound.
3. The term end evaluation may be given appropriate time to maintain judicious evaluation and quality.
4. The examination results may be made online and time bound to support timely admission and teaching learning process.

Research and Innovations

Teaching and research are complementary and each enrich other. Universities become greater not just by good teaching but by undertaking leading edge research (Murthy:2009) .However universities and colleges in India has been mainly centres of dissemination of knowledge right from their inception under British rule which is slightly changed by research became a priority area, with the establishment of postgraduate departments in the universities since 1920, however after independence the talent was moved to new focused research institutions of science and technology and research in universities has been inversely effected by this. Universities remain centres of teaching and research activity pushed to secondary place. Secondly the research outcome and quality of research in universities by and large has not been outstanding as compared to foreign universities, barring some exceptions. In Only 2.2% Colleges run Ph.D. and 35% Colleges run Post Graduate Level programmes. 107890 students are enrolled in Ph.D. which is less than 0.4% of the total student enrolment. At Ph.D. level, maximum number of students is enrolled in Science stream followed by Social Science. On the other hand at Post Graduate level maximum number

of students is enrolled in Arts stream. Thus, the need of the hour is to expand the postgraduate and research programmes in the universities and colleges. Similarly, the undergraduate research is needed to be introduced on the pattern of US universities. The Coordination across specialized sectors of education, research and industry may be established by the following:

1. MOU with local / regional research organizations and industry for training and skill development leading to placement
2. Sharing resource persons reciprocally and faculty/student exchange programmes
3. Conducting programmes and cooperation in extension activities
4. Making research collaborative

Administrative and Governance Reforms

At macro level the coordination between regulatory bodies is required to be made. The proposal of a super regulating authority for this is already recommended by NKC. The state governments are also required to amend the state regulations in view of the rapid and widespread expansion of higher education in the emerging environment and increasing participation of private sector in it.

Assessment and accreditation of colleges and universities is increasingly becoming mandatory for various purposes. Moreover, this is a process of participatory assessment of institutional strengths and weaknesses and facilitating a time bound mechanism for quality sustenance and improvement. There is a need to decentralize this task to state accreditation agencies in view of the heavy workload of NAAC. It has also been suggested to establish regional council of NAAC to expedite this task. However at micro institutional level the following measures may be taken …

1. Formulate institutional development plan
2. Formulate strategic intent involving vision, mission, goals and objectives
3. Set in place planning, implementation and monitoring committees.
4. Compare achievements with established norms/ benchmarks
5. Reform institutional performance
6. Report performance timely through MIS to the concerned monitoring authority

NAAC over the years has been able to identify common quality gaps among institutions which act as barriers to get through the four step assessment process vis a vis from Filing Letter of Intent (LOI) to clear Institutional eligibility for Quality assurance (IEQA) leading to peer team visit and awarding of grades. At present, these colleges may clear the first step of LOI with advance submission of self study reports (SSR) but due to huge quality gaps they have little chance to get through the next steps of this assessment. Therefore, the need of the hour is to prepare the colleges to fill these quality gaps through strategic planning. The assisted colleges have to minimally enhance their performance by :

1. Fill all vacant faculty positions to enhance student teachers ratio.
2. Each faculty writes at least 02 national / international paper annually.
3. Each department organize at least one seminar/workshop annually.
4. Create ICT infrastructure and effectively utilize it.
5. The college library must have reading room facility separately for teachers/learners with documentary proof of users and subscribe some national / international refereed journals.
6. Subscribe INFLIBNET for accessing/ sharing knowledge networks.
7. Create sports infrastructure and augment higher sportsmen performance.
8. Encourage cultural activities and ensure higher outcome.
9. Establish IQAC and make it functional.
10. Establish fully Functional guidance and placement cell.
11. Mobilize maintenance resources for upkeep of infrastructure.
12. Introduce some add on vocational course.
13. Make college friendly for differently able learners.
14. Conduct extra curricular events and extension programmes.

Conclusion

From the above analysis this is clear that sustainability of any higher educational institution in an open knowledge based economy is a function of efficiency, performance, outcome and effectiveness. To improve institutional performance both micro and macro level reforms has to be implemented. Primarily, structural, academic and regulatory reforms are required to be planned and implemented at central and state government level. The academic, examination and institutional governance reforms then may be initiated from states governments to universities and higher education institutions. While expansion of higher education must be collaborated by active participation of private sector under effective regulation, the role of government in financing and supporting higher educational institutions should not be reduced Keeping in view the need for inclusive development. The government should come forward to make the universities and colleges as excellent centers of research in addition to dissemination of knowledge. The cooperation of industrial sector may be taken in this endeavour with their expertise in training and R&D as well resources. In market economy the cost of higher education is bound to be collected for better quality but it might be reduced in the short term by scholarships and financial support to ensure equity and by increasing the scale in the long run when the cost differentials would be eliminated.

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