

Higher Education in India –Approach of the Higher Education Institutions



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Abstract

There are numbers of challenges before the higher education system in India from time to time and at present, it has become evident to reflect over all the changes and think over the strategic approach. Especially, the HEIs located in rural area surrounding require numbers of changes in their approach towards the quality enhancement process. It is the time to think over the opportunity to reflect on the purpose of higher education, the role of Management, Leadership and the staff in rural area surrounding. There is a need to have proper coordination between all these to have a quality output. The time has come now to create a second wave of quality institution building in the fields of education, research and capability building. At present, the only requirement is to have higher educated people who are skilled and are visionary leaders in their respective fields. The need at present is to develop positive thinking as a model. When the stakeholders of higher education develop positive thinking, the higher education in India will overcome numbers of issues and challenges.

Keywords: Higher Education, Rural Area Colleges, Management, Leadership, Staff, Stakeholders, Positive Thinking.

Introduction

The present research paper intends to examine the various reforms that have been taken place in higher education since independence. Numbers of scholars have already discussed in details about the present-day educational scenario. But their scholarly views are solely related to the talks before some elites, research articles or books. But the present reality necessitates concentrating on the real quality improvement among the students. The responsibility ultimately falls on the shoulder of Universities and Higher Education institutions. The Universities and Higher Education Institutions are expected to take a leading role in making the research output in all the disciplines more and more socially oriented. The present scenario of the educational institutions unveils the fact that most of the institutions seem to be lethargic in a society oriented extension activities. The HEIs in the present day scenario is expected to motivate the teachers to make research output more and more socially oriented. It is not only in the form of stage programmes, but the students and the teaching faculty are expected to spend some time in the field work. Present research paper intends to make HEIs aware of it, to fulfil Institutional Social Responsibility. It is in the form of frequent visits to the society around the teachers and students can understand the social and economic problems of the people belonging to the economically educationally backward sections of society.

Objective of the Study

The objective of the paper is to throw light on the present condition of higher education in India. It aims to highlight the significance of student-centric approach. Teacher in recent legislation and statutory guidance is a professional who takes responsibility for student and school performance, pastoral care and social change. The responsibility relies on 'dividing practices', obliging some teachers to involve the stakeholders in the process. But the main question is: Whether the HEIs give any importance to the teachers and students.

Higher education in India has been facing many challenges today. These include inadequate infrastructure and facilities, large vacancies in faculty positions and poor faculty thereof, low student enrolment rate, outdated teaching methods, declining research standards, unmotivated students, overcrowded classrooms and widespread geographic, income, gender, and ethnic imbalances. Apart from concerns relating to deteriorating standards, there is reported exploitation of students by many

private providers. A major challenge today is to provide equitable access to the students from economically and educationally backward sections of the society. Students from poor background are put to further disadvantage since they are not academically prepared to crack highly competitive entrance examinations that have a bias towards urban elite students having access to private tuitions and coaching. Students from poor background are put to further disadvantage since they are not academically prepared to crack highly competitive entrance examinations that have a bias towards urban elite students having access to private tuitions and coaching. The subjects in the curriculum are not in tune with the changing global scenario. Research in higher education institutions is at its lowest ebb. Education in basic sciences and subjects that are not market friendly has suffered. Research in higher education institutions is at its lowest ebb. There is inadequate financial support for higher education from the government. Colleges established in rural areas suffer from various problems these include under-enrolment and poor infrastructural facilities. A series of judicial interventions over the last two decades and knee-jerk reaction of the government – both at the centre and state level and the regulatory bodies without a proper understanding of the emerging market structure of higher education in India has further added confusion to the higher education landscape in the country. There is an absence of a well-informed reform agenda for higher education in the country. The higher education system in India has been facing many challenges today. These are inadequate infrastructure and facilities, large vacancies in faculty positions and poor faculty thereof, low student enrolment rate, outdated teaching methods, declining research standards, unmotivated students, overcrowded classrooms and widespread geographic, income, gender, and ethnic imbalances.

A few efforts made now and then are not rooted in the new global realities based on competition and increased the mobility of students and workforce. The government has adopted measures to bring a change in the higher education system. It has been trying to overcome the new challenges that the higher education system comes across. Some of the leading challenges before the higher education system are continuous change in curriculum; to keep in pace with the rapid growth of science and technology globalisation and the new challenges from the international universities; grooming of many private institutions without any method of ensuring the maintenance of quality standard; the need for adequate funding to meet the demands of various innovative programmes; developing a meaningful and purposeful interface between the universities, National Research Laboratories, industries, government and society, etc.

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reaction of the government – both at the centre and state level and the regulatory bodies without a proper understanding of the emerging market structure of higher education in India has further added confusion to the higher education landscape in the country. There is an absence of a well-informed reform agenda for higher education in the country. The higher education system in India has been facing many challenges today. These are inadequate infrastructure and facilities, large vacancies in faculty positions and poor faculty thereof, low student enrolment rate, outdated teaching methods, declining research standards, unmotivated students, overcrowded classrooms and widespread geographic, income, gender, and ethnic imbalances.

ICT in higher education policy cannot helpfully overcome all these challenges though it plays a role in information and resource sharing.

The changes in the higher education system cannot include all the people in the country. The present era requires making the education system include all the natives of the country. The government has to rethink on these areas to implement more on the policies. The implementation of new policies requires sufficient funding to meet the international standards of education. The constitution of the country says that this is the responsibility of the central and state government to build a good education system. For that, the higher education system needs to have funds. No doubt, the higher education system has sufficient funding, but where it goes is a question. Central government prepares policies and plan while the responsibility of State government is to run those policies in reality. The standard education facilities are higher in the states which are very rich. There is a need to change such defects from the country education system which can only be influenced by increasing funding and providing better facilities to students.

No doubt, there is always an increase in the fund for the education system but never implemented in that area. The government should adopt proper measures to focus on such areas. The government provides funds, but the majority of the fund goes in the pockets of officials working for this. There is a vast need to improve the quality and standards. The present era requires improving the education system so that the country can get much more technically graduated people who can help the country to developed state. Today's youth always try to go foreign for his higher education as they have much better facilities and quality of their system. The government should encourage quality education in the country itself. There is no doubt that the governments are trying for various challenges faced, but no one is doing well for that. The government comes and goes but, the system remains intact. The higher education system in India is very diverse in all the quality aspects. So the challenges and issues are faced by higher education system are equally diverse. The process of education is not only digesting books. It also requires motivating the higher education institutions to undertake several co-curricular and extra-curricular activities that give a broader meaning

to life in general and education in particular. In reality, the opportunities for such holistic development are not enough in India. Facilities for the same are lacking or not easily accessible in India. Even where facilities exist, there is a lack of information about the same. There is a lack of universities and institutes for education but, one most important fact is that the quality of education is absent in higher education.

There is no doubt that the revised NAAC framework has put more stress on the use of innovative techniques in the higher education system. But the main hurdle is the approach of the HEIs in the effective implementation of all the quality measures suggested by NAAC. It has now become imperative to have voluntary involvement of the stakeholders of higher education in the quality enhancement process. The present-day scenario of higher education system requires it. The revised NAAC framework requires the voluntary involvement of the teachers in the quality enhancement process. The teachers, on the other hand, do not have sufficient freedom to use innovative techniques in the teaching-learning process in higher education institutions. The teacher in recent legislation and statutory guidance is a professional who takes responsibility for student and school performance, pastoral care and social change.

A lot of scholarly work has already been done in this respect. NAAC revised framework and various scholarly discussions have been taken place. However, instead of discussing their views the present research paper intends to undertake a realistic approach.

The approach of the Higher Education Institutions

The higher education institutions in this age must be to give quality education to the students. Therefore, educational institutions must adopt an innovative approach to have a better quality education. Most of the higher education institutions have implemented various innovative measures in the curriculum, research and infrastructure. But the majority of the educational institutions located in the local area situation seem to be lethargic in their approach towards having such innovative measures. There are numbers of reasons behind this sort of approach. These include:

The Leadership

A true leader leads the college only with the help of the staff members. However, in reality, most of the leadership in rural area colleges is quite far away from it. There is a lack of positive thinking among the leadership of most of the rural area colleges. In reality, leadership in such colleges is ego driven. It is, there, not so ready to involve all the faculty in quality enhancement process as per the NAAC norms. The result is that there is an ever-widening communication gap between leadership and the faculty. The condition of higher education institutions requires a change in this situation. There is a need to have proper coordination to implement quality measures for the overall development of the institutions. The NAAC revised framework gives a lot of importance to the coordination. The coordinated efforts on the part of leadership and the faculty can improve the condition of the educational institutions. Development of

decision-making spirit is another important expectation from the leadership. Eleventh-hour decision making is harmful to the quality development in the institution. Therefore, the students fail to acquire anything in activities like sports, youth festival, elocution competitions, debate etc. The revised NAAC norms have many expectations from the leadership of the colleges to improve the quality of higher educational institutions.

IQAC Coordinator

The IQAC Coordinator plays a significant role in the maintenance and enhancement of the quality of the institution. He is the main link between the management and leadership of the college. He is supposed to maintain proper coordination in the institution. He is responsible for the college website, preparation of AQARs and SSR of the college. He plays a major role in the academic and administrative audits of the college. The staff members must provide proper feedback to the coordinator in the maintenance of the documentation related to teaching and research output. The leadership also is supposed to give individual freedom to the coordinator. So that he can think of some innovative measures for the quality enhancement of the institution. But, at present most of the higher educational institutions have converted coordinator into one of the members from the non-teaching staff of the college. The ultimate result is that the coordinator is not able to give time for the implementation of innovative measures for institutional development. His role as a "Think Tank" appears to have been lost in the process. He is not allowed to think, but he should follow the guidelines of the leadership. The result is that the coordinator is merely a sandwiched creature, sandwiched between excessive expectations of Government, NAAC, Leadership and the non-cooperation movement followed by the ardent followers of Mahatma Gandhi, the staff of the college.

The Committee Members

IQAC Coordinator is supported by the staff members each having one of the criterions to his lot. The committee members are supposed to meet at least four times a year. The committee members are also expected to give suggestions to the coordinator about the innovative measures to be followed related to a particular criterion. But in reality, no such meeting gets taken place in most of the colleges. Everybody feels that other members in faculty must also work. The result is that only two or three members have to handle the total NAAC work. Even when the members meet, they blame either coordinator or the leadership of the college. They are very apt in pointing out as to how overloaded he is due to NAAC work and routine of the college.

These and many such others are the obstacles that most of the colleges have been facing at present. Such thinking, of course, appears to be a negative one. However, this is one side of the coin. It is now necessary for the educational institutions to reflect over it, and attempts must be made to find out the way to overcome it. The leadership should give due importance to find out the ways to overcome the situation. The revised NAAC norms have made the

total quality enhancement process transparent one. Therefore, while giving freedom to the NAAC coordinating committee due importance should be given to the average mentality of the staff members. The leadership should make efforts to have coordination in all the affairs of educational institutions. It should understand the fact that the unity among the staff members is essential in the quality enhancement process. The revised NAAC norms give utmost importance to the quality enhancement in almost all the activities of the institution. Therefore, timely meetings having a proper dialogue with the staff members carry immense importance in this situation. It should create a healthy academic atmosphere in the institution. The universities also should take initiative in the arrangement of a separate workshop of the leadership of the colleges and acquaint it with various means to maintain and enhance the quality of educational institutions affiliated to it.

The time is still there, but the only need on the part of the educational institutions is to involve all the stakeholders in the quality enhancement process. The educational institutions must attempt to have such involvement of all the stakeholders in the quality development process. No doubt, the rural area institutions are lacking in numbers of things. The main obstacles these institutions have been facing is the unavailability of proper infrastructure, students' approach, inadequate knowledge of funding agencies, the unwillingness of the staff members and others. These are posing some genuine problems for the higher education institutions in the quality development process. The major things that require serious attention include:

Voluntary Involvement of the Stakeholders

Most of the educational institutions are suffering due to the unwillingness of the stakeholders in the quality enhancement process. Almost all the stakeholders of the higher educational institutions do not show any concern to the institutional development. The stakeholders are always prompt in showing defects in the system, but are not ready to help the authorities to overcome these. Therefore, the need of the time is to make the stakeholders conscious of the fact that their involvement is essential for institutional development.

Student Support

The important element and the very base of all the quality enhancement process are the students. Everyone in the educational institution works having the student at the centre of all the institutional activities. The NAAC also expects that the educational institutions should attempt to have the all round personality development of the students. The staff members also work for the all-round personality development of the students. The main concern of almost all the staff members is teaching and evaluation. However, the important element that is learning output seems to be missing. The students are not so keen about learning on their own. They do not participate voluntarily either in curricular or co-curricular activities. The staff members adopt numbers of strategies to have the participation of the

students in such activities. But fail to get any response from the students. It is now time to think over innovative measures to involve the students in the process.

Lack of Proper Knowledge of the Funding Agencies

Most of the higher educational institutions received funding from UGC. Among these, most of the higher educational institutions have misused UGC funding. The result is that UGC in the recent years has stopped funding to the institutions. Another fact is that state governments have also stopped giving the non-salary grant to the institutions. Therefore, funding has been the main concern for institutions for undertaking various quality measures. On the other hand, there are numbers other funding agencies other than UGC. But most of the educational institutions do not have proper knowledge about all these funding agencies. Whereas, most other educational institutions lack initiative taking spirit to approach such funding agencies. The revised NAAC norms expect these educational institutions to undertake various innovative measures. It is possible only when the educational institutions approach the other funding agencies.

The educationists have already discussed these and other issues regarding the quality of higher education. The revised NAAC norms also put more emphasis on all these issues. But in reality, the present condition of higher education is entirely different. Neither HEIs nor teachers are ready to adopt all these quality measures for quality improvement. There is now a need to probe deeper into the psyche of all the stakeholders of higher education. The stakeholders of higher education need to come forward to bring a change in the situation. They must be ready to adopt innovative measures to improve the quality of higher education in India.

But in the present situation, the stakeholders of the higher education institutions are not ready to adopt such innovative measures for the development of the quality of the institutions. There are numbers of reasons which impede the various obstacles in the way of the Institutional committee. The stakeholders have weaknesses like negative mindedness, lack of innovative approach, argumentation on the simple issues and indulgence in unnecessary things not so related to institutional development. Most of the elements in any educational institution have one or the other sort of such weakness. It ultimately poses problems for the institutional commitment on some of the people who are willing to do something authentic for the institution. One of the reasons behind this sort of approach on the part some of the staff members are that they find pleasure in being in touch with the traditional situations. They do not have the willingness to something creative for the higher education system. They do not have any concern with these changes and always want to let the system work as per the traditional norms. These people do not think about the better future of the educational institutions. Such people involved in the higher education system have developed a sort of thinking which poses hurdles in adopting innovative measures. These are:

Lack of Objective Thinking

Objective thinking is very influential for one to focus on the available institutional data. It helps one to look for gaps in knowledge and enables either fill them or take account of them. It prohibits one from the misuse of faulty information. But the institutional committee never takes into account the importance of objective thinking for the quality enhancement process.

Role of Ego

The stakeholders must take caution while discussing institutional development. In reality, the staff members disagree about a particular issue. This sort of situation results in no solution after discussion. The outcome is that some of the staff members get driven by ego and are always reluctant to accept the opinion of others. This kind of attitude disturbs the whole of the affairs and results in the negative mindedness on the part of some of the staff members.

Expression of Anger

The institutional committee members are never in agreement about a particular matter. Some of the staff members openly express their anger. Therefore, the decision-making committee fails to take proper decision.

These are some of the challenges before higher education institution. There is an opportunity to overcome these challenges if the stakeholders adopt parallel thinking. It includes:

Need to Develop Parallel Thinking

The parallel thinking enables everyone to use intelligence, experience and knowledge for the overall development of the higher education system. The ultimate result is that everyone thinks and works in the same direction. The same is not the case with an argument or free discussion. The parallel thinking allows everyone to look in the same direction. It enables one to reflect on possible remedies for the possible reforms in the higher education system.

Development of New Ideas

The stakeholders of higher education must look at the new ideas for sustainable growth in quality development. The new ideas must flourish like a plant in a natural manner. This sort of natural progression of ideas yields better quality output for the higher education system.

Positive Thinking

Thinking in a sunny and positive manner helps the stakeholders to concentrate on the possible quality measures. It helps one to avoid ego while discussing the possible quality reforms in the higher education system. This sort of thinking prohibits a man from the excessive use of negative thinking. Positive thinking helps men to develop a harmonious relationship with each other.

Suggestions for Improving the System of Higher Education

Parallel thinking no doubt can play a crucial role in changing the present scenario of the higher education system. It will help all the stakeholders of higher education to concentrate only on Quality Enhancement and Sustenance of higher education in India. Besides these:

1. There is a need to have proper coordination between Management, Leadership and the staff.
2. Timely decision making results in the quality enhancement of the institution. Leadership should take decision in time so as to improve the quality of institution in all the aspects.
3. Motivation to the students is important. It is by means of involvement of students in curricular and co-curricular activities the institution should initiate the process.
4. The institutional leadership is expected to other funding agencies to raise funds for the quality enhancement of the institution.
5. The global changes require skill based courses along with the degree education. The institutions must take initiative in that direction, so as to develop interest among the students.
6. Universities must arrange a separate workshop for the leadership of the colleges.
7. Voluntary Involvement of the stakeholders is must. Need to adopt proper approach to involve the stakeholders in quality enhancement process.
8. Student is at the centre; therefore, the teaching faculty must adopt innovative approach in teaching-learning process.

Conclusion

The higher educational institutions require proper approach to enhance the quality of higher education. In order to have the quality the higher educational institutions must attempt to involve all the stakeholders in the process. The main figure to have such change is leadership which should be transparent one. The revised NAAC norms expect innovative approach in all the criteria. Eventually it is a prime duty of the leadership and staff to have proper understanding of the surrounding. The knowledge of the surrounding will definitely provide a better platform for the higher educational institutions. It will make them realize the importance of the extension of the research to the society around. It is by this means the institutions can create interest among the students, which will be beneficial for the all-round personality development of the students. This development is possible only when the educational institutions adopt strategic approach having everybody's voluntary involvement in the quality enhancement process. The purpose of quality enhancement is possible only when all the stakeholders adopt parallel thinking.

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