
PARADIGM SHIFT IN INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION – THE NEED OF THE HOUR

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Abstract: All over the world today countries such as the United States of America, England, Australia, Germany and China have taken up ambitious programmes to reform their respective Higher Education sectors. Despite the crucial role of primary and secondary education it is the quality and size of the higher education system that will set apart a dynamic economy from a marginalised one in the global knowledge-based economy. In this respect India has a unique opportunity with technological changes and demographic dividend to mobilise its human resources to become a leader in both the fast expanding sectors of services and highly skilled manufacturing. Higher Education sector holds the key to harnessing the full potential of the India's most important resources being the human resources. The need for change in this field is, therefore, very vital. The purpose of this paper is to identify the lacunae and the weaknesses in the higher education system in the country and to suggest certain measures as to fill the void in this field to bring it on the road to progress.

Globalization has had its impact on all fields including higher education. In the context of the changed scenario, meaningful and productive education with assured avenues for development is the need of the hour. Quality has become the keyword in higher education and India needs to prepare for such a vital change in this field. The present Paper makes an attempt to study what ails the Indian Higher Education system and suggests measures to reinvigorate the institutions of higher learning in India.

Keywords: Knowledge-based, demographic dividend, harnessing, reinvigorate.

In Tune with Technology: The new technologies have the potential to change the teaching-learning process in a way that has not been possible before. With rich capability of illustration, visualisation and possibility of individualisation modern, innovative technological tools could ensure that the most difficult concepts can be understood by all in an easy and interesting manner.

However, it needs to be realised that the computer will never replace the teacher; but it will change the role of the teacher to increase the time and attention that can be spent on groups of people who are often neglected at present in the form of extremely gifted children and the ones who lag behind. Also new technologies would have a profound impact on the way the research is conducted. Interactive and easy access to the World Wide Web would ensure that existing base of knowledge is readily available to all at all time.

Post-globalization the world over the field of higher education has undergone tremendous change with the wave of technology making its entry. Information and Communication Technology has accelerated the teaching and learning process. Western countries quickly adapted and used the technological advances to their advantage and made huge strides of progress. Countries such as India lagged behind in use of technology in its classrooms and hence remained on the sidelines. Now it has become imperative for higher educational institutions in India to develop capability to use technology to enhance quality in

teaching and learning processes. Though there has been delayed response to the use of Information and Communication Technology from certain private and corporate institutions the potential of the technological tools has not been fully realised for the benefit of the stakeholders. However, public-funded institutions largely remain mute witness to all these technological developments citing various inherent problems in the system for their inability to use technology for the advantage of their students. Urgent reforms and steps need to be taken to bring the public-funded higher educational institutions on a par with others. Provision of infrastructural facilities for use of ICT in the classrooms, posting of sufficiently trained teachers for the effective use of modern gadgets and appointment of technicians for the proper maintenance of the equipment are some of the issues urgently need to be addressed to transform teaching and learning process towards quality enhancement.

Unfolding Scenario and the Changing Role: With the advent of Information and Communication Technology new trends are emerging continuously in the field of education which needs to be carefully studied and adapted to the individual requirements to keep abreast. The changed scenario has also been the cause of concern among the teachers as to their role. There are certain misconceptions and misgivings with regard to using technological gadgets which tend to diminish their prominence as teachers. Fears such as their becoming an endangered species and

being replaced by computers are prevalent in teaching community. These misapprehensions and fears can be allayed giving them necessary training and support in use of ICT tools which help them in making their teaching more effective.

In the present changed context the traditional role of teachers as dispensers of knowledge is no more relevant as they have become proactive facilitators in knowledge-building and sharing in collaboration with the stakeholders. Frequent Training and Orientation programmes by Departments of Higher Education required to be conducted to infuse interest and enthusiasm among the practising teachers at higher educational level.

The Changes and the Challenges: The changes as a result of globalization have also brought challenges which need to be attended and addressed immediately for the success of higher education in India. Though steps have been initiated in this direction they are to be speeded up for tackling them on war-footing. The widening gap between student expectations and faculty capabilities for delivery as per the global standards is to be bridged for a positive image of Indian Higher Education on the map of the world. This could be possible when the benefits of the emerging trends and technologies are creatively exploited in Higher Educational institutions of India. Development of global competencies among Indian students of higher education and enriching teaching and learning environment are the challenges that require to be instantly resolved.

Besides this there is an important and urgent need to conduct Professional Development Programmes to acquaint and update the knowledge of teachers with the technological developments and to train them in the best use of these resources in teaching and learning process. Though a few crash and short duration programmes have already been conducted they have not been extensive since they focussed only on use of computers and internet. Mastering ICT use and integrating it in teaching and learning process is a difficult task which requires comprehensive and extensive training as frequently as required. It is a challenge which should be welcomed as it also offers new avenues and resources to the benefit of both the teacher and the taught. Hence teachers need to be motivated and encouraged to acquaint themselves with emerging technologies and to enhance their performance by suitably utilizing these modern tools in their classrooms for quality enhancement.

Need for Paradigm Shift: Most of the teachers at Higher Education level still continue with traditional methods and approaches of teaching which are totally subject-centered and provide little scope for students participation and interaction in the process of teaching and learning. These approaches

concentrate only on content with focus on knowledge and information related to the subject and pay less attention towards skills development of the students. Although it is also important to learn fully about the subject, application and practical skills on the subject are more important as the students leave the portals of educational institutions in search of avenues of employment. Participation and interaction of the students besides their needs and interests must be given primary focus and for this the teacher has to operate with students as the centre of his teaching process. Student-centered approach is most ideal wherein the teacher becomes a facilitator and simulator of the learning activities involving students as main participants in the process of teaching and learning. Unfortunately, many of the teachers at higher education have not given this approach the attention it deserves and real-time doing and problem solving by students have been pushed to the background.

Student-centered approach is the need of the hour as it facilitates the cognitive understanding and practical skills of the students. Innovative approaches in teaching and learning process will enhance the quality of education ensuring holistic development of the stakeholders.

Professional Progress of Teachers: Quality is the keyword in higher education today and a teacher's role is one of the vital components in maintenance and sustenance of quality in teaching and learning process. Though quantitatively teaching profession is the largest among all the professions quality-wise the picture is not very encouraging. One of the reasons for this being the poor quality of teacher education in our country. The National Policy on Education (1986) laid great stress on teacher education and training of teachers. University Grants Commission has established Academic Staff Colleges for conducting Orientation and Refresher courses in order to maintain professional standards and to train the teachers accordingly for enhancement of quality in higher educational institutions. It is observed that these trainings are conducted as a formality and unfortunately they generally lack the advanced academic orientation expected of them. Teachers attend such courses out of compulsion without any interest such in-service training and development courses. An assessment of the needs of the teachers and the skills and competencies required in effective classroom handling should be made before the conduct of training programmes so that there is cohesiveness and relevancy between training needs and training courses. Useful and relevant aspects of pedagogical role of teachers need to be included in these in-service training programmes in order to perform effectively and qualitatively in the

classrooms.

Apart from this there are certain measures which need to be taken up by the teachers themselves for their professional development. Teachers at higher education should regularly read and publish in professional journals and periodicals and regular updating of their knowledge and skills referring to latest books in specific areas. Professional development of teachers is a continuous process and it has an immense effect in quality delivery in higher education.

Adequate Public Funding: While many developed nations have been spending billions of dollars for innovations in education, the money spent on higher education by India is far too insufficient for any remarkable achievement in this field. Public funding of higher education has not kept pace with its growth and inadequate funding has resulted in the deterioration of standards of higher education in the country. The cost of higher education is gradually shifted from the government to students with the increase in tuition fees and introduction of self-financing courses in public institutions. Absence of student grants and increasing costs have kept the marginalized sections away from higher education. Adequate public funding of higher education will

ensure proper infrastructural facilities such as good classrooms, better-equipped laboratories, digitized libraries, best teaching tools and aids which support the teachers in providing quality education.

Conclusion: The role of the government in funding of higher education and to leverage change through funding is getting marginalised. Public funding on higher education has not been adequate for its healthy growth. In fact, poor funding has become a deterrent and has resulted in the deterioration of standards of higher education in the country. Though other sectors get increased budgetary allocation every year, the sector of Higher Education has not received the quantum of allotment and attention it deserves from the policy makers of our country.

The problems faced by higher education on issues such as quality, excellence, resource crunch, governance are partly due to lethargy and unwillingness to change with time and also partly due to inherent loopholes in the system which needs to be brushed away for achieving real progress in the field of higher education. Globalization has changed the character of higher education to be more qualitative, productive and meaningful and higher education system in India should prepare itself to be competitive to survive.

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