Globalization and Indian Higher Education: Challenges and Opportunities

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ABSTRACT

system in general and to the higher education in particular by way of encouraging a The present paper analyses the development of higher education in India since independence and identify major issues and problems faced by it and understands the urgent need for necessary amendments and revision in it. The paper is based on secondary sources of data collection. The higher education in India, particularly in last two decades or so, has remarkably transmuted and developed in a remarkable manner to emerge as one of the largest system of its kind. Arguably, these developments in higher education may directly be linked with the several changes that have occurred in the global economy, which calls for more knowledge and skilled worker force, and workers with extensive understandings of new business methods all over the world. The emerging social processes in India have brought forth new opportunities and challenges to the educational new standard of social, economic, technological, cultural and political development and discourse.

Keywords: Globalization, Higher Education, Issues and Challenges, Knowledge Society, Marginalized people

I.   INTRODUCTION

Any system with a huge network operating in a diverse social, economic and cultural setting is bound to face numerous issues and challenges. Same is the case with Indian Higher Education. These issues are related to relevance of the programmes to changing societal needs and the quality of programmes offered by diverse nature and types of institutions. Infrastructure facilities possessed by these institutions, resources at their disposal etc., determine the ultimate efficiency and effectiveness of these institutions. Particularly with declining funding from the state, the higher education institutions are left to generate and mobilize their resources, which

are a major challenge and does affect the performance of these institutions. Globalization and privatization are the major issues faced by the Indian Higher Education leading commercialization and exploitation of the students. To overcome a crises situation a search for alternatives continued. One of the major alternative that emerged is the growth and development of the open and distance education system.

II.   PRESENT SCENARIO OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN INDIA:

As on today we have more than 300 universities, institutions of higher learning and deemed universities, out of which 95 deemed to be universities, 13 institutions of national importance, 19 central universities, 203 state universities, 5 institutions established under state legislation act and about 16,885 colleges including 203 Autonomous colleges. Education System has increased fourteen-fold in terms of the number of universities and thirty three-fold in terms of the number of colleges, in comparison to the number at the time of Independence. It is significant that despite these impressive statistics the system caters to hardly 6 percent of the relevant age group, as compared to more than 80 per-cent in the developed countries. This is partly because the expansion has been offset by the growth of the population in the relevant age group.

Nevertheless, the fact illustrates how difficult it is for developing countries to bridge gaps and to keep pace with the developed world. Massification of higher education has rather been responsible for this expansion. Resource constraints are severe, and the quality of education available to most Indian students is questionable in terms of its ability to face the challenges posed by further education as well as employment market. The situation is further complicated by the rigidities of the higher education system, the political pressures from regional, religious and caste-based groups, and related problems.

III.   GLOBALIZATION - CHALLENGE OR AN OPPORTUNITY:

Two of the strategic and long-term questions that Globalization poses to the higher education system are: (I) 'Commodification' - the use of knowledge as a purchasable and saleable good. (ii) 'Alternative providers' with profit motive of higher education's landscape that are engaged in the transmission of knowledge using Information and Communication technology. Displacing and reinterpreting knowledge raise fundamental questions to the Universities, more so, in the area of autonomy and academic freedom. They also pose questions with regard to the very objectives of Higher Education system in terms of its ethical obligation to make knowledge freely available to those who seek for it. The apprehension is, that the globalization, may herald a basic change in the very role that the Universities play in the society. Defining universities simply as 'service providers' and changing their responsibility to the society for the shorter gains, may in the long run, ruin the very objectives with which the universities were established. The dynamics of Globalization is no doubt a challenge as well as an opportunity.

Higher education today, is no more constrained by geographical boundaries. Innovative forms of translocation and transnational education have become a possibility. Multi campus institutions, "franchised institutions learning centers providing university degree, off campus education, distance learning, internet based distance education, virtual universities merging of part studies to combine into a whole for obtaining national as well as international degrees are only few models as examples. As far as higher education is concerned, an enthused and well-informed student has umpteen choices, for the first time in the history of education, to access for a "global marketplace". Yet, the matter of the fact is, this access remains only as availability. Who can reach to it and how? What alternative provisions are made for those who cannot afford to reach is the crux of the matter.

As a result of Globalization the opportunities in India in the field of Higher Education now, appears to be immense, and areas are diverse. The remarkable development in information technology has promoted learners' method of learning in both the formal and distance modes. With one global world, the aspiring students who are left out and failed to secure their seats in India's premiere Institutions can now go abroad to fulfill their aspirations. With the fast growing Information and communication technology the availability and flow of academic resource materials is providing input to the academicians to compete with their counterparts anywhere in the world. It assists in avoiding of duplicacy in research and inspires the Indian academicians for research and publications on issues that are of international importance in order to make their mark in their respective disciplines. The envisioned policy reform has facilitated in opening up space for establishment of private universities, easing and eliminating research restrictions, entry of graduate students, encouragement for "foreign collaboration" in the university sector and joint ventures in an academic activities as it now exists in private industries. State wise higher education reform and incremental approach to liberalization of higher education may help India to take advantage of opportunities in the new global environment. Policy makers in India might have to be concerned with increasing adult participation in continuing education and training, particularly in relation to enhanced employability. It is expected to facilitate new international orders centering on lifelong learning and the "learning society".

Globalization, as a process no doubt has given importance to decentralized educational governance and control. The centre has viewed decentralization as a way to increase efficiency by giving more responsibility to local level functionaries, which in turn is expected to increase motivation and accountability. Further it is trying to involve the local community in the very planning and decision-making process of education and making them responsible for "the state of the art". It has been realized the role of Internet, is as interactive medium with potential global reach. It has the capacity to bring knowledge and prosperity to isolated and marginalized individuals and nations. But Unequal access to the Internet, the "digital divide," creates inequity that exacerbates other inequities. No developing country has benefited more from the digital revolution than India, and in no country is the digital divide wider or deeper. On the other side of the digital divide are the 45 percent

of the population who cannot read or write (57 percent of the female population), 44 percent who survive on less than Rs. 50 per day, and those who live in the 370,000 villages where there is no telephone connections.

Budgetary restraints in most of the states in India have placed increasing emphasis on improving cost-efficiency in educational provisions. This has led to widespread interest in new forms of quality control and performance evaluation at all levels of education which is giving more avenues to the private education and in turn affecting the equity consideration. The major concern of globalization has been "how to fulfill the national objective of equality"? As a part of the liberalization policy, it has been suggested that education should be progressively privatized and that access to it should be made subject to the payment of appropriate prices. The government, therefore, encourages the establishment of a larger number of private institutions. Simultaneously mechanism to cater to the needs of those who cannot afford payment of high fees in also being evolved.

The process and effects of economic and cultural globalization are becoming evident in our educational Programmes and are expressed by teachers and students with particular reference to the ways in which the global media (such as television media and internet) are deployed in the construction of knowledge. The threat is possibility of erosion of national values by imbibing the alien culture. The changes that are taking place in the country, even at the bottom level of the country; there seem to be shift in the power relations and consciousness at various levels of civil societies. The macro change brought by international capital, technology and mass media has brought new culture, but to what extent the new cultural assertions of identity will enable the people of various regions to face the new capitalist order, remains to be seen. No subject has been so much neglected as has been done to the development of humanistic values, creativity, cultural, moral and spiritual dimensions in the teaching-learning process. The threat is for the erosion of rich and old culture of human values. The ideologies of the states and of multinational agencies brought the technological revolution. The process has been promoted by the transport system, communication network, and it has increased the Economic activity, but Globalization does not necessarily result in homogenizations; on the contrary, it is leading to the strengthening of the ethnic identities both at local & regional levels (Edward, 1994). The threat is to the Nations Integrity.

IV. CONCLUSION:

As we have seen that globalization is both an opportunities and a threat. The issue still remains with regard to: (I) the quality of the Indian universities when the cream of students and staff opts for Global choices; (ii) the choice that universities will make towards the poor who cannot afford the global choices; (iii) the standards of universities and the capacity to compete with the world market. Our universities will raise standards and employ all those business tricks to attract foreign students to our universities. (iv) the political complexities impinging on the higher education system and the possibilities under given circumstances; (v) the state of the art resource condition and its impact on the infrastructural, library and laboratory conditions; (vi) the computer facilities and Internet access etc are only a few to be mentioned.

Under these circumstances the so-called India's elite institutions and their capacity to attract and retain world-class faculty and students in the face of attractive offers from foreign universities, research institutes and multi-national corporations is the main issue. It would be equally interesting to view globalization as a real opportunity for India and can benefit significantly from the global revolution in higher education. Obviously, it would require major policy reforms with regard to university structure; function, structure function relation, funds and the way universities are regulated. It would require closer links between industries and institutions especially in the growing technology-based sectors, and an entrepreneurial style of leadership to head the Indian universities.

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