



Brain Storming Session

Higher Education in India : Issues, Challenges & Expectations



September 8, 2012

Organized by:

Faculty of Management Studies

Banaras Hindu University

Varanasi - 221005 (UP)

www.bhu.ac.in/fms

A Report

The Genesis....

In the recent years, India has witnessed a rapid proliferation of institutions of higher education. While the intention of making higher education accessible to the masses is noble, yet it must not be at the cost of the quality of education. With the industry getting intensively selective about recruitment standards, the pressure is on the institutions to deliver. National surveys conducted by reputed organizations point out lack of quality-orientation at most of the institutions in the country. The ultimate loss is to students who are the important stakeholders in the education system.

The present initiative is an effort to bring top academicians, educational experts and policy makers on a platform to explore further in to the issues and challenges faced by the Higher education domain and expectations from these institutions towards future development of the society.



Faculty of Management Studies, BHU organized a brain storming session on the theme “**Higher Education in India: Issues, Challenges and Expectations**” on **September 8, 2012**. The session was unique and aimed to create a platform for academic administrators and academicians so as to bring out certain valuable insights on to the key theme.

Eminent Speakers in the Session were

Prof. Harikesh Singh, Faculty of Education, BHU

Prof. R S Dubey, Department of Biotechnology, BHU

Prof. A K Tripathi, Dept. of Computer Science, IIT BHU

Prof. A S Raghuvanshi, Director, Institute of Environmental and Sustainable Studies, BHU

Prof. Srinivasan, IIM Bengaluru

Prof. A K Agarwal, Dept. of Mechanical Engineering, IIT BHU

Prof. S K Sharma, Dept. of Mining, IIT BHU

Prof. S P Srivastava, Faculty of Commerce, BHU

Prof. H C Chaudhary, Faculty of Management Studies, BHU

Prof. I L Singh, Dept. of Psychology, BHU

Prof. Rakesh Singh, Head Dept. of Agriculture Economics, IAS, BHU

Dr. Rajnish Singh, Faculty of Law, BHU

Dr. Raju Majhi, Faculty of Law, BHU

Dr. Shushant Srivastava, Department of Hindi, BHU

Prof. Neeraj Kumar, Faculty of Ayurveda, BHU

Faculty members of Management Studies & Doctoral students.



The Session Progressed...

The program started with the lighting of lamp and garlanding of bust of Mahamana Malviyaji. In the inaugural speech Prof. S K Singh, Head & Dean of the Faculty of Management Studies welcomed all the eminent guest and speakers and appreciated their participation in the program. He emphasized on Malviya ji's vision and how the vision can be realized through imparting higher education. He said higher education has been a key factor for its ability to change and to induce progress in the society. Not surprising that in today's globalised economy; it is the globalization of knowledge that will enable us to deal with the present and future challenges that is confronting us in every sphere of life, whether it is in environment, health or food security. Today India and China are in advantageous position with the young demographic profile in the graying global world as they would be providing the bulk of skilled and semi-skilled workforce to the world in near future.

It's an opportunity that China has been preparing to leverage since the early 90's. However, in India, higher education is confronted with formidable challenges and must proceed to the most radical change and renewal it has ever been required to undertake, so that we can transcend not just the mere economic considerations but also incorporate deeper socio—cultural dimensions that will enable us to create an environmentally sustainable world. It is heartening to see that higher education reforms are high on the agenda of the new government with emphasis on Expansion, inclusion, and excellence as the pillars of higher education.



Prof. Hari Kesh Singh talked that since independence, higher education has always been identified as a critical component of India's growth story. When Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru established the Indian Institutes of Technology, he understood the need for educated and skilled human resources only too well.

This ongoing emphasis has resulted in India having one of the largest higher education systems in the world, consisting of over 20,000 institutes enrolling more than 12 million students. Growth in numbers, however, has not been accompanied by an improvement in the delivery of higher education and consequent outcomes. The Indian Higher Education system continues to be bogged down by the challenges of inadequate access, poor quality and inequity. The primary purposes being neglected and secondary purpose gaining importance. The Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in India has grown slowly and is estimated to be at 12%, with wide disparity across regions of the country, leaving a lot of ground to be covered to achieve our dream of universal higher education. The Indian Higher Education system is characterized by a large rural-urban and gender divide. GER in rural India is estimated to be about 7%, while urban areas have a GER of about 23%. He also emphasized that GER (gross employment ratio) cannot be an indicator of quality.



Prof. RS Dubey said that there is a wide and long gap between education & providing access to higher education. Education is a changing process and the main aim is to bring the underprivileged under the net of higher education. The main aim of higher education should also be development of entrepreneurial skills. The need of the hour is to upgrade the Indian Higher Education system to train the increasing proportion of young population so India can truly realize the prophesized 'Demographic Dividend'. We have identified five imperatives for making the Indian Higher Education system future ready - Financial Innovation, Innovative Use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT), Reinvigorating Research, Thrust on Vocational Education & Training (VET), and Regulatory Reform.

Prof A.K Tripathi delivered about core issues and the constraints in higher education. He talked about the ground root of the problem that the country cannot have sound higher education system unless it has good primary and secondary education. He envisioned the Indian Higher Education system of the future to be one where a large number of public and private high quality institutions co-exist and flourish in a supportive and transparent regulatory environment.

Going forward he envisioned Indian higher education institutes use financial innovation and ICT to rapidly enhance scale, improve infrastructure and have a strong focus on research. Simultaneously, a healthy vocational education system should be created, which works in alignment with the higher education system, enhancing the overall skill levels of the population and increasing productivity

Prof. Raghuvanshi said quality is a relative term and talk about quality should be with reference to developing countries and not with developed countries, curriculum should be developed in according with the market needs & university system should be used to train faculty. The Indian higher education system has witnessed significant expansion in recent years, both in terms of the number of institutions as well as the student enrollment. India has more than 600 universities and over 30,000 colleges, of which almost half were set up in the last decade. Student enrollment has crossed 14.9 million in 2010-11, clocking a compounded annual growth rate of 6.2% since 1985-86. The private sector has enthusiastically participated in the growth of the higher education system with about 63% of the total higher education institutions being private unaided institutions. Though these are clearly positive trends, the Indian higher education system continues to demonstrate many structural shortcomings which in turn create challenges in meeting future expectations. Despite having more higher education institutions than any other country in the world, hardly any feature in the leading institutions in the world. At about 12%, our GER is almost half of that of China, and lower than many developing countries. Inequity is also pervasive in the system, with the GERs of women and backward castes being much lower than the national average.

Prof Srinivasan, emphasized that education has no connection with the ground reality and teaching should be pragmatic and linked with the requirement of the changing times. He also said that there should be continuous thrust on vocational and educational training due to limited relevance and poor outcomes of higher education system.



Prof. S K Sharma said about financial innovation. He emphasized key challenges as: very low per-capita spending on higher education leading to significant paucity of funds for expansion and quality enhancement. Inadequate exploration of alternate revenue streams by HE (Higher Education's) poor coverage of scholarships and student loan schemes to support needy students and enable tuition fee rationalization.

He also emphasized that government should encourage private sector investment in education through the development of innovative PPP models and to build an enabling environment to generate alternative source of revenue by higher education.

Prof. A K Agarwal mentioned about the innovative use of information and communication technology. He said that there is a lack of ICT infrastructure in higher education and low technology/people readiness. He stressed on developing mechanisms for development and free distribution of high quality content across languages & improving connectivity across higher education.



Prof. Rakesh Singh spoke on Poor standard of research across Indian higher education institutes, Lack of qualified faculty, limited funding for research as well as poor linkages between academic institutions and industry/Government R&D labs. He emphasized to Incentivize research in universities, while creating an enabling environment in terms of teaching hours for researchers, greater budgets and access to better infrastructure Increase the number and quality of doctoral students through the launch of innovative programs, provision of attractive fellowships and enhanced industry collaboration.

Prof. Neeraj Kumar stressed on the regulatory framework operating in the system. He said that there are multiplicity of regulators with varying roles & limited transparency, low autonomy and poor quality control systems. He said that there should be creation of single independent agency for regulating higher education and simplifies the regulatory framework. He also talked about improving transparency and disclosure in the system.

Prof. H C Chaudhary stressed on quality of research in higher education. He said that doctoral studies are generating limited attractiveness and plagued by poor quality. There is shortage of qualified faculty to conduct research and mentor researchers & poor linkage of education institutes with industry and research bodies. He also said that the number of doctoral students has not kept pace with the overall growth of students in higher education and the overall quality of doctoral studies in many institutes is questionable.

Concluding



At last Prof. A K Triptahi concluded the whole session by giving his remark on the regulatory framework governing higher education in India is complex with both the central and state governments sharing roles and responsibilities. The current regulations allow only not-for-profit entities in higher education. There is an absence of clear regulations for foreign education providers although legislation is under discussion & there have been repeated judicial interventions to regulate the fee charging mechanism of private higher education institutions.

He also mentioned that this kind of event should be organized more frequently which can facilitate the cross fertilization ideas across different disciplines of the University.

Prof. S. K Singh, Head & Dean FMS, BHU honoured the eminent guest by presenting memento and at the end Dr. Amit Gautam, FMS (Coordinator of the program) proposed the vote of thanks.