

Challenges of Higher Education in India

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INTRODUCTION

“Higher Education is not a luxury, but is a necessity for survival”. Education refines sensitivities and perceptions that contribute to national cohesion, a scientific temper and independence of mind and spirit—thus furthering the goals of socialism, secularism and democracy enshrined in our Constitution. Education develops manpower for different levels of the economy. It is also the foundation on which research and development flourish, being the ultimate guarantee of national self-reliance. Besides inculcating scientific temper and independence of mind and spirit, education also provides basic employable skills. To integrate the values of our culture with educational transformation in teaching learning process in academics is very much required to bring reforms in higher education so that students develop thinking as well as analytical ability, he/she gets equipped with necessary skills ultimately making him/her suitable for an employment. This can be made possible by introducing Choice Based Credit System (CBCS) at Undergraduate level, Developing Curricula that would facilitate student centric learning, Examination Reforms and Administrative Reforms.

In ancient times, India had the Gurukula system of education in which learning was closely linked to nature and life, and not confined to memorizing some information. Now- a-days teaching is confined to classrooms and the link with nature is broken, as also the close relationship between the teacher and the taught. Today the educational system in India is more of theoretical in nature. This restrains the students to act practically when they enter into their professional life. Because of Traditional Teaching in the present Indian education system, students become passive receptors, as a result of which they acquire only short term memories, instead of gaining true knowledge. Rather than this kind of Traditional or Passive Learning, Activity Based Learning should be encouraged as it involves students and helps them understand and gain practical knowledge.. Education should be planned keeping the requirement of industry and business in mind. The required changes should be brought about to make the system more effective and development oriented.

The current higher education curriculum does not impart the necessary skills that would make the students employable adequately. There is a lack of Interdisciplinary approach as well as there is very little scope for value based courses to be taught. In addition the evaluation methods are largely based on memory recall processes. Besides, the students don't learn to think and analyze on their own. Also, the system is not effective enough in empowering students to think on issues independently. Our education system is geared towards teaching and testing knowledge at every level as opposed to teaching skills. If you teach a man a skill, you enable him for a lifetime. Knowledge is largely forgotten after the semester exam is over. Still, year after year Indian students focus on cramming information. The best crammers are rewarded by the system. This is one of the fundamental flaws of our education system.

The system of education in India should be learning-centric rather than exam-centric. The general education system is focused only on examinations rather than training students for the future and really testing their knowledge. Because of this, students are forced to take tests that show only their retention powers, not their actual capacity or knowledge. Today, students are completely professionally-oriented and they take examinations for the same rather than to gain knowledge, or do research in the subject. . The curriculum is also built around clearing an exam and getting into particular professions. Those who are regulating and making policies are primarily responsible for deteriorated education level. It is not enough to have mere rules and regulations, but it is equally essential to implement them.

Instead of gaining knowledge from voluminous books and lectures, students must be made to interact in groups and express their views on various topics. They must also be allowed to choose subjects according to their interests. Rather than taking notes from the teacher and textbooks, they must be made to research information on their own from library books and Internet and share them in the class room. This will help them develop good reading habits, self-confidence and openness to criticism. It will also help them in developing critical reading and analytical skills. It will enable them to remember what they learn when they apply it practically.

Our educational system needs serious reforms to be undertaken. . In addition to academics, human values should be taught in order to make them as complete beings. That would surely make a difference in student attitude and help him/her mould in different real life circumstances.

Education has been a problem in our country and lack of it has been blamed for all sorts of evil for hundreds of years. Creating a few more schools or allowing hundreds of colleges and private universities to mushroom is not going to solve the crisis of education in India. We are in a country where people are spending their parent's life savings and borrowed money on education. Despite that people are not getting standard education, and are still struggling to find employment of their choice.

When a child opens eyes in this world, their parents start dreaming and making effort for the better future of their child. Parents are first school, therefore educated parents and their understanding of the issues, play an important part in the children's life. Children may perform better in school and feel more confident about themselves if they are told that failure is a normal part of learning, rather than being pressured to succeed at all costs. Students will benefit from education that gives them room to struggle with difficulty. Teachers and parents should emphasize children's progress rather than focusing solely on grades and test scores. Learning takes time and each step in the process should be rewarded, especially at early stages when students most likely will experience failure. In this country, millions of students are victims of an unrealistic, pointless, mindless rat race where their creativity and originality is crushed. It is also driving brilliant students to commit suicide.

Our education system rarely rewards what deserves highest academic accolades. Deviance is discouraged. Risk taking is ridiculed. Our testing and marking systems need to be built to recognize original contributions, in form of creativity, problem solving, valuable original research and innovation. If this is done successfully Indian education system would change drastically. Use of electronic gadgets will also enable us to enhance the standard of Indian Education system.

There are crooks, money launderers and politicians opening "private" educational institutions which extract money from the educational institution through creative structuring. The focus is on marketing rather than innovation or providing great educational service. The government does not have enough money to provide higher education of reasonable quality to all of us, and it has no excuse to prevent private capital from coming into the educational sector.

There appear to be endless problems with the Indian higher education system. The higher education system produces graduates that are unemployable, though there are mounting skill shortages in a number of sectors. The standards of academic research are low and declining. An unwieldy affiliating system, inflexible academic structure, uneven capacity across subjects, eroding autonomy of academic institutions, low level of public funding, archaic and dysfunctional regulatory environment are some of its many problems.

From the early 20th century, there have been several high level commissions set up to provide policy orientation to the development of higher education in India. Sadler Commission (1917–19) was set up to define the general aims of educational policy and coordinate the work of various provinces and universities by guarding against needless duplication and overlapping in the provision of the more costly forms of education. In 1976, education was made a concurrent subject with the 42nd Amendment of the Constitution. The report given by the Kothari Commission (1964–66) became the basis of the National Policy on Education, 1968. With this, a common structure of education (10+2+3) was introduced and implemented by most states over a period of time. A beginning was also made in restructuring of courses at the undergraduate level. Centers of advanced studies were set up for post-graduate education and research. It is important to develop a new national policy framework for higher education in the current and emerging contexts. Such a policy framework should not be developed by political processes, but by an independent, high-powered commission.

A variety of interactive activity oriented teaching modules based on locally available resources and social principles can certainly stimulate interest and involvement in the teaching – learning exercises. In the 21st century, internet has become a knowledge portal and e-books have become inseparable part of library. By transforming the existing libraries into tech-savvy e-learning centers, the quality of teaching and learning processes in colleges and universities can be strengthened. Our country is now engaged in the use of higher education as a powerful tool to build a knowledge-based information society of the 21st Century. Hence, the UGC has acknowledged addressing manpower issues as one of the toughest challenges in our Twelfth Five Year Plan.

Finally it is apt to conclude with the quotation given by Aristotle - "Education is an ornament in prosperity and a refuge in adversity." Education is not just something that provides a person with means to a livelihood but also helps them to identify



their potentials and choose the right path to follow in life. It empowers a person to live a fulfilling life, be an active member of the society, enjoy their rights and fulfill their duties.

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