

THE STATUS OF WOMEN IN HIGHER EDUCATION: EMERGING CHALLENGES

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ABSTRACT

Women in the Vedic ages not only received their due recognition in society but also got equal treatment in the matter of educational training. Education of women remained somewhat neglected during the British period. However, as society became orthodox, there was change in their status. They were confined to the four walls of kitchen and occupied in rearing children. Men became bread winners and it was considered necessary for them to be educated. The roles of men and women were thus separated. But now the social scene has considerably changed. Women all over the world are being educated in almost every field that men were so far normally associated with. The knowledge of arts, science, technology and politics is no longer the privilege of men alone. Women have begun to study these subjects and have brought great credit to themselves and their nation by contributing actively in those fields. As a result every school is now conscious of imparting education to girls. Education of women can be helpful in eradicating many social evils such as dowry problem, unemployment problem, etc. Social peace can easily be established. Women education and empowerment are the indicators of development. Women education ensures the holistic and long development. The present paper focuses on status and importance of Women Education in the state of Telangana through analysing cases of few Government, Private and Corporate Colleges and it also studies the reasons for the dropouts of women in access of higher education. The constitution ensures equal status of women under Article 14 and also empowers the state to adapt measures of positive discrimination in favour of women. The Government of India is also monitoring the progress of women and girls by providing them with socio-economic support through multiple public policies and legislation. Higher Education is the shared responsibility of both the Centre and the States. The coordination and determination of standards in institutions is the constitutional obligation of the Central Government. The Central Government provides grants to UGC and establishes Central Universities in the country. Meritorious students, from families with or without necessary means, need an incentive or encouragement to keep on working hard in their studies and go to the next level of education in their academic career. Education-basic, functional or digital, always enlightens a person from the darkness of ignorance and innocence. Awareness about importance of cleanliness, good habits and knowledge about various disciplines helps a woman to support her family and groom her children as better citizens of the society. The present paper focuses on status and importance of Women Education in India through analysing cases study Higher Education in Telanagana.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Higher Education has an important role to play in the task of building a nation and paving the way for overall development of a nation. The twentieth century has witnessed several revolutions like Green revolution, White revolution, I.T revolution, transforming human civilization to the age of Information Technology. There is a universal view of privatizing education that can be seen these days. As part of this, government educational institutes are being privatized. Private institutes are being given a chance to provide higher education. The social demand for higher education, however,

continued to increase. The inability of the state to support this growing demand resulted in new financing arrangements for higher education. The recent reforms in this area could be broadly divided into two categories: the privatization of public institutions and the establishment of private institutions of higher education. Privatization implies the application of market principles in the operation of public institutions, while ownership rests within the public domain. Promotion of the private sector implies the growth and expansion of the non-state sector in higher education, and very often this sector does not rely on state funding for its growth and expansion. Both of these measures have paved the way for market operations in higher education.

In the situation, the State has to play an important role in education in the form of financing it. Government universities need help in promoting education, in providing higher education for poor students. But financial crunch has led to decrease in the funds for higher education in many countries. Especially developing countries have reduced the funds for education among their budget allocations. The state played a dominant role in financing economic development and educational progress in the second half of the past century. Consequently, public universities became the predominating mode for expanding higher education in most countries of the world. The economic crisis of 1980s reduced the fiscal capacity of states for continued funding of an expanding higher education system. Furthermore, structural adjustment programmes included policies that favored reduced public expenditure on education and diversion of public investment from the higher levels to the primary levels of education. The share of budget allocated to higher education declined in developing countries during this period and enrolment ratios stagnated at very low levels in many countries. The Indian corporate sector has discovered a million-dollar industry in services in education. It is yet to be fully explored and exploited. This industry is the area of education as 'service' with a huge global market in which students, teachers and non-teaching employees constitute as resources for profit-making. In this industry students are consumers, teachers and the institutions or companies offering education services are service providers and the teaching-learning process is no longer for the building of a nation but a business for public marketing. Education system in India currently represents a great paradox.

On the one hand, we have IIMs and IITs that rank among the best institutes in the world and on the other hand there are a number of colleges, and universities in the country that do not have the basic infrastructure. Even after more than 60 years of independence, we are far away from the goal of universal literacy. But on a positive note, the Indian professionals are considered among the best in the world and are in great demand. This signifies the inherent strength of Indian education system. In recent times, the impact of globalization led to rapid development in higher education sector, interestingly in South Asian Countries. Higher education all over the world, in the advanced as well as the developing countries, is undergoing tremendous change. The world is experiencing an unprecedented growth in student numbers, but the rapid growth in demand for higher education is met rather by inelastic supply of public higher education and declining public budgets in many countries. In any case, the Internationalization of higher education is not a new phenomenon. It has been around us for ages, during the medieval, modern, and contemporary periods, and even earlier. Universities are universal by definition and have always been international institutions. The most important form of internationalization used to be exchange of scholars. Many foreign scholars were on the rolls of ancient universities in India, such as Nalanda and Takshashila.

Today locally and globally, access to higher education has gained importance. Developed countries give a greater importance to access to higher education and have established institutes for higher education. Developing countries have a low focus on higher education, reasons being poverty, illiteracy, and negligence on the part of governments. In India, there is a less demand for higher education because it is expensive and unavailable to common man. All countries focus on higher education these days because of the impact of globalization and IT revolutions which in turn influence higher education policies. Every government and private institute now has a research wing for policy making, which has signaled the need of a higher education specialist to take proper decisions. Even the WHO, the UNESCO and other organizations are seriously working on higher education to create a better society in the future. According to the UNESCO Report on Education in the 21st century, Higher Education is the mandate to bridge the knowledge gap between countries and communities, enriching dialogue between people and cultures; international linking and net-working of ideas, research and technologies. Thus, higher education provides the competencies that are required in different spheres of human activity, ranging from administration to agriculture, business, industry, health and communication and extending to the arts and culture. However, the equity and quality in higher education are projected as dichotomous in India. It appears that there is very little truth in it. According to the World Human Development report titled "Equity and Development" emphasized Human Development and concentrated on equity. The report has emphasized the need for providing equality of opportunity to achieve development.

It is necessary here to draw from this report to understand the present predicament of higher education in India, which is suffering with a phobia of equity and quality determined by the historical conditions under which higher education was developed in the country and its achievements. It seems that those who are involved in the policy making have failed to use the intellectual inputs provided by the World Bank, the UNDP and other independent thinkers on this issue to resolve the so called dichotomy of equity and quality. The neo-liberal and traditional institutes that are present these days are leading in giving more importance to GATS because it opens up new vistas and goals for higher education. The for-profit providers

treat education just like any other commodity traded for profit. The expansion of private higher education has depended on the capacity and willingness of students/households to pay for their education. The depth of liberalization and its effects on the structure and growth of a country's education sector depends upon many factors. Most importantly it depends upon how the country's policy-makers view higher education. Is it viewed as an essential service for developing human resources as an intrinsic part of the process of development Or is it viewed only as any other trade generating services responding to market demands? The answer to these fundamental questions would determine how education is viewed in society, and how policy-makers frame the country's education policy. This, in turn would determine how the education sector is shaped as a consequence of liberalization.

India has traditional foundations when it comes to education. Even in the years of BC, there were universities called Takshashila, Nalanda. At present, the institutes and universities offering higher education are in great demand. However, the unfortunate state of higher education in India is because of the technical and employment oriented education being available at a low cost whereas higher education being costly. "More employment-orientation or 'professional courses' are viewed as an investment for future income generation. Courses that do not guarantee employment remain relatively cheap and this is where the country's economic inequality is reflected, particularly in higher education. Increasingly, education which would generate future income is becoming available to those who can afford it. Nevertheless, the Indian universities are the places for the knowledge and creativity for achieving social, economic and political development. Universities perform a critical role in an economy and society. They create knowledge. They impart knowledge. And they disseminate knowledge. Universities must be flexible, innovative and creative. They must be able to attract the best talent, be they teachers or students. They must have the ability to compete and the motivation to excel. We cannot even contemplate a transformation of our higher education system without reforming in our existing universities. For enhancing the human capacity, there is a need to promote higher education for better utilization of human resources. Particularly, the central and state governments have to play a responsible role in this direction of higher education. As far as the higher education is concerned, it should be linked with the development of human resources and formation of human capital. In the present situation, it is observed that alleviation of poverty, giving the right direction to the youth etc. can be ensured through developing proper manpower planning which will enhance the scope of employability of our human resources.

In this connection, the critical issues concerning higher education are access and equity. While economic rationale and the skills agenda take a central place in the discourse on higher education, the issue of expanding access has been intimately associated with the rising aspirations in the recent years. A young population and improvements in school education have put pressure on the higher education system to expand. Over the past 60 years, it is the unplanned proliferation of universities and colleges, rather than proactive, intelligent inventions that have expanded access to higher education. With the recent focus on inclusive growth, there is now a clear direction to the expansion of access. The issue of access is related to the size and nature of public funding for higher education. Due to financial limitations, there are constraints to the enhancement of access. Thus, access has improved largely due to expansion of private higher education in recent years. The impact of such expansion on equity and quality are debatable. As the socio-economic realities change and there is a gradual shift towards pro-market economic policies, public attitudes to private higher education have changed. Currently, almost 60 per cent school pass outs go in for higher education. Hence, there could be pipeline constraint in further expansion of higher education.

The higher education system in India has grown in a remarkable way; the system has many issues of concern at present, like marketing, financing and human resource management including access. Thus, access, equity, accountability and quality should form the four guiding principles. These issues are important for the country, as it is engaged in the use of higher education as a powerful tool to build an exited edge-based information society of the 21st Century. Even India is going have more than 1500 universities; it has to develop the educational system from the gross roots level itself. "The challenges that confront higher education in India is clear. It needs a massive expansion of opportunities for higher education, to 1500 universities nationwide, that would enable India to attain a gross enrolment ratio of at least 30 per cent by 2025. It is just as important, to raise the average quality of higher education in every sphere. At the same time, it is essential to create institutions that are exemplars of excellence at par with the best in the world. In the pursuit of these objectives, providing people with access to higher education in a socially inclusive manner is imperative. The realization of these objectives, combined with access, would not only develop the skills and capabilities we need for the economy but would also help transform India into a knowledge economy and society.

Nowadays, not only is higher education confined to the development of the individuals physically, mentally, intellectually and spiritually, but it is also a means to provide them with necessary skills for their well being as well as for the socio-economic development of the society at large. India has the third largest system higher education in the world after to the United States and China. In distance mode, India has occupied first place in the world with 3.5 million student's enrolment under the Indira Gandhi National Open University. According to the statistics of 2015, there are 45 Central universities, 290 State universities, 130 Deemed universities and 90 Private universities in India. Former Indian Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh had said that the India has very low enrolment in the field of higher education. Two-thirds of our universities are having percentage of below average in their progress. The challenge for Higher Education in India is not

privatizing it and not turning it into a mere business in the open market oriented and making it profitable. Corporate colleges have turned university education into a business. Among the developing countries, there is an increasing role for private parties under GATS. Under its influence privatization measures have led public institutions to adopt cost-recovery and cost-sharing methods and initiating income-generating and profit-oriented commercial ventures to mobilize resources needed for the operation of universities. Private universities, in many instances, levy high fees to recover the full cost (if not full cost plus), especially in the for-profit sector. The presence of the for-profit private sector in higher education has given scope for market speculation and resultant speculative investment in education. Some of the agencies have established educational institutions or corporations driven by profit motives. Therefore, the impact of Globalization has wide ranging influence on all sectors of development. Besides its impact on the pace and pattern of economic development, it has also cast its shadow on the system of education. A global education is the one that provides knowledge and understanding of culture, language, geography and global perspectives to understand the world through the eyes of others and teaches them how their actions can affect, and be affected by people throughout the world.

With over 200 of the Fortune 500 companies recruiting from campuses regularly the government now plans to establish India as a brand in the higher education sector and grab the attention of global education community under these circumstances. India offers a friendly environment, cultural diversity and best value for money option to student from SAARC, Middle East and South East Asia. According to statistics available while India has a potential to afford about 50,000 foreign students in next couple of years, presently only about 10,000 are studying in India. Privatization of education, it is argued, is one of the effective methods to enhance access to education, and to improve equity and quality in education, besides answering the problems of resource scarcity on the part of the government. While many tend to agree with the diagnosis of the situation and the need to expand higher education, as described above, there are differences with regard to the needed policy approaches for such an expansion. While some feel that the government has the ability to further expand the higher education system and to improve educational opportunities for all, some other strongly believe that the resource position will not allow the government to expand public higher education any further. They even argue that government subsidies to higher education will have to be drastically reduced, if not eliminated altogether. In the present neo-liberal framework, there emerges yet another strong school of thought which argues that even if the government has resources, it is not an efficient proposal for the government to expand public higher education.

In connection with the former school of thought, it is argued that it is not lack of resources, but lack of political will and lack of faith in higher education as an instrument of development that is responsible for this decline. The argument that the government does not have monetary resources for education gained support as a significant decline in public budgets for higher education in the country became widely noted. This resulted in deterioration in the quality of education, and adoption of several questionable measures of cost saving, including non-recruitment of teaching and non-teaching staff in institutions of higher education. And also attempts were simultaneously made to raise the levels of cost recovery in education, essentially through increasing student fee. The entry of foreign universities in India is very remarkable step in higher education system. In addition to that the "Foreign Educational Institutions Bill 2010 is considered only a legislative extension of economic liberalization to the educational sector. The ostensible reasons for the bill, viz, to address the low gross enrolment rate, and the poor quality and shortage of educational institutions in the country constitute the justificatory rhetoric that hides the agenda of opening the national higher education sector to world trade."

The Foreign University Bill would facilitate the process. A variant of the branches of foreign universities is opening up of courses in Indian institutions in collaboration with foreign universities. Everything can be said in favor of such a partnership. It will have a synergic effect on the progress of higher education in the country. Another way of augmenting facilities for higher education is the entry of foreign universities into India. They could set up branches or facilities to enable Indian students to pursue their course obviating the necessity of going abroad. It is articulated that in the beginning like the entry of multinationals, the entry of foreign universities may be looked at with suspicion. But with the benefits from such entry of universities from abroad are increasingly recognized. It is being argued that not only would they augment the facilities; they would bring new and higher standards and make our institutions of higher education more competitive which have been suffering from stagnation. They could introduce new ideas of course content and methods. They would also stimulate research. The system of Higher Education plays a crucial role in the development of a nation in view of its forward linkage with the corporate world, as well as with the society at large. Apart from primary and secondary education, higher education is the most important instrument for development and transformation. Higher education has the supreme role of preparing future leaders for different spheres of life: social, economic, political, cultural, and scientific and technological. With gradual liberalization and globalization of Higher Education, the challenges before the higher education system are immense.

All concerned citizens of the country have to realize that it is only a robust, innovative and brighter higher educational system can help in transforming India to enter in to the league of developed nations. Now-a-days, the overall demand for higher education, especially professionally related courses, is increasing. There are a number of reasons for this: changing demographics, the increased number of secondary school graduates, and the movement to lifelong learning, and the growth of the knowledge economy. While demand is growing, however, the capacity of the public sector to satisfy this need is

inadequate. At the same time, many changes are occurring on the education delivery side: innovations in information and communication technologies are providing alternative and virtual ways to deliver higher education. New types of providers are emerging, such as international companies, for-profit institutions, corporate universities, and IT and media companies. Public and private providers have begun delivering education across national borders to meet the increasing demand in other countries also. Alternative types of cross-border program delivery, such as branch campuses and franchise and twinning arrangements, are being developed. In India though there has been a very slow pace of growth of universities, there has been a disproportionate growth in the number of institutions, affiliated to the existing universities. The supporters of private initiatives in higher education argue that the establishment of private universities needs to be facilitated to meet the demand but at the same time necessary measures have to be taken to regulate the same to ensure required standards of education.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

The road ahead for India is directly linked to creation of quality Higher Education Institutions in a big way to meet the challenge of the knowledge hub, which India is fast becoming. India needs to have a proactive demand based policy towards private higher education including foreign institutions/universities desirous of setting up of campus in India or entering into joint-ventures. India could offer tax concessions/fiscal incentives for setting up campuses. The issue of raising the fees upwards to meet the cost of education is critical if we are to maintain and sustain the quality of education. Aided institutions as private institutions are already using a higher fee structure. In a competitive setting there is no reason why the fees should not meet a reasonable proportion of the cost of education. A figure of 20 per cent of recurring cost is considered reasonable in the international scale, although in some countries (such as South Korea) it could go up to 40 per cent. The need for financing higher education for students, especially those coming from low income households needs special attention. Like the United States, we may also evolve a guarantee system, where students coming from low income households are eligible for a student loan without parental security or guarantee, so there is no discrimination due to the financial background of the student. Subsidization of the interest rate for students should be based on his or his family income.

Open Universities need to be encouraged to offer quality programmes at the lower cost. This becomes the most cost-effective way of providing higher education, including technical and vocational education. In view of the expanding role of WTO, higher education would soon become an item under it. We should encourage foreign universities to come to India to set up independent operations or collaborate with existing Indian Institutions, colleges/institutes. Universities and Colleges should be required to restructure and revise curricula at least once in three years. Introduction of course credit system where degrees are granted on the basis of completing a requisite number of credits from different courses which provide student with choices. Introduction of research projects in undergraduate and postgraduate courses to enhance innovation and entrepreneurship among Universities and students. Re-organization and integration of various faculties, particularly in social sciences, around inter disciplinary and multi-disciplinary courses can also help in quality improvement in teaching, research and consultancy. Transparent credit as well as choice-based credit system and which could promote mobility of the learners should be promoted as soon as possible in higher education system.

Attracting and incentivizing best in class faculty to conduct research, adopting various models to develop research capabilities in institutions in India, promoting collaborations amongst international institutions, industry, and research centers for generating high-quality basic and applied research be given a chance. Promoting individual based funding, providing competitive access to public research grants, encouraging corporate and alumni funding and linking public funding to institutional performance. The issue of access has remained a great challenger for all those policy makers, planners and implementers in addition to the politicians, regulatory bodies, subject experts and academicians. In Indian, rising population resource crunch, literacy rate, geographical constraints, compounded with social, cultural and traditional link ups have made the issue a greater challenge than anything else. Access to funds through scholarships should be provided to enable students to pursue their chosen fields of study. Rural, urban and gender disparities must be kept in mind by policy makers in planning and implementing the higher education system.

3. CONCLUSION

The women participation in higher education is increasing in almost all states. The women enrolment in higher education is also increasing. The rate of increase is slow in almost all the states of India. The enrolment is dependent on women teachers. The expectation is still to achieve. Thus, establishment of higher educational institutes for women especially in rural areas are still in dearth and women enrolment is still low as compared men enrolment. The discipline-wise analysis may also be done. Finally, in the 21st century as higher education is very important for the social, economic, and political development of India, it has to be given top priority to compete with other countries. Indian universities produce the best process managers, who also display deep social, cultural and ecological sensitivity, and they can be the collaborative leaders and responsible citizens. In fact, the Indian graduate of today is not only an excellent human resource but also an admirable human being.

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