Indian Higher Education System: Contemporary Challenges

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Abstract

Education is the fundamental right of every child upto the age of fourteen years as it is been laid in our Indian constitution. But if we see our Indian higher education system, various loopholes persist. These loopholes are then become the huge challenges for the students to grasp education according to their interest. This becomes a challenge too for the teachers to impart education to the students in many ways. The challenges which are also the impeding factors in the growth and development of higher education system in India have been discussed in this research article. These contemporary challenges need to be discussed and addressed from the grass-root level to higher educational level.

Keywords: Contemporary Issues, Higher Education, Indian Educational System.

Introduction

It is like a big dream for many aspirants who are living especially in remote and rural parts of India to pursue higher education. As it is not a hidden fact that poverty is still very persistent in many parts of our country where people don't even get a time of meal for survival. In such a situation, the problem of imparting even the basic education lacks. Those who somehow complete their elementary education are not able to pursue for secondary and higher secondary education. Although, there is the provision under 'Article-21A' of our Indian constitution for free and compulsory education for the children upto fourteen years. But due to the lack of proper implementation of the policy and unfelt importance of education by the parents, accessibility of education is not grasped by the children. The children of migrant workers also face the same problems when they migrate to the urban cities in search of food for survival.

The students, who anyhow succeed to complete their schooling, face the problems of getting admissions in higher education. Financial crunch, reservation system, technology-based education which cannot be accessed by everyone, recruitment of merely qualified teachers etc. are some of the issues that are faced by the students in our country. Some specific contemporary issues in Indian higher education system are discussed here.

Specific contemporary issues in higher education system in India

Financial Crunch: To impart the education to everyone, the government has to play a pivotal role regarding quality of education, infrastructure, recruitment procedures etc. But due to some factors, government fails to incorporate above mentioned criterion which hampers the education most. One of the most prominent factors which inhibit the progress is lack of financial resources. The recent illustration can be quoted of COVID- 19 situation in which not only a particular country but the whole world is suffering with the financial crunch. The economy has been badly affected which in turn has affected our educational system. In such a situation where it becomes difficult to feed the needy, it becomes pathetic condition for the government to put attention towards the educational sector.

Reservation System: India is struggling with the reservation system much before the independence. When reservation comes to the matter of education, it ruins the career of students at almost all the levels. Reservation system means a set pattern of percentage which is prescribed by our Indian constitution for the socially and educationally backward categories. According to the constitution 15% is reserved for Scheduled Castes categories, 7.5% is for Scheduled Tribes and 27% is

reserved for Other Backward Castes (OBCs). It means in total 49.5% seats are reserved for aforesaid categories. Rest 50.5% is for General categories. It has been seen in many of the colleges / institutions / universities that the seats reserved for the reserved categories' students remain vacant. There may be so many reasons behind it such as the applicant applied might have taken admission any elsewhere, he/she might have admitted to other stream, not inclined towards the particular discipline, received admission in reputed colleges / institution / universities etc. It becomes painful for those who have applied through general categories and they don't get admissions in their respective fields they wanted to get into. Today's era is a cut-throat competition in which everyone wants to supersede. Those who succeed are considered to be the champions and this levies the hardest responsibility on the shoulders of those who fail. These failures, many a times, lead to the suicidal tendencies among youth.

Lack of education based on technology: The government is stressing more on technological use for imparting education among the students during the pandemic arisen. But the fact is that all the students cannot really afford the cost of technological equipment required for their education. In a survey conducted by anonymous shows the fact that the cost of laptops, tablets (mini-laptops), I-pods, mobiles etc. has arisen frequently. As the entire classes, whether schools / colleges / institutions / universities are being taken on such equipments, the reliance on digitalization mode has increased steeply. But it's not at par with each student to grasp education through digital mode. Due to worldwide COVID-19 situation, most of the daily wage workers have migrated to their villages with their respective families. In turn, their children have been dropped out from the school and even colleges. So, their education has been drastically affected. In the village, the children are involved helping their parents in agricultural activities and mobile networks, satellite connection is very poor. Due to which the migrated students are not able to study. These are the issues related to the digitalization mode for imparting education among students at all levels.

Recruitment of merely qualified teachers: Many times, we have seen the sting operation of the schools situated in some districts of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, and Jharkhand that the teachers do not even possess the basic knowledge of education. Even at various colleges and universities, candidates who have merely qualified the eligibility criteria for selection are recruited. Such kind of recruitment affects our educational system in a very negative manner as they hardly possess the knowledge about the subject matter. When the question comes for clarification, it becomes really hard for such teachers to sort it out. The lacuna remains unanswered and doubts remain doubts. This is a very threatening situation for our Indian higher education system to be dealt up with and the knowledge enhancing factor stagnates.

Privatization of higher education: Privatization is yet another factor for impediment in Indian higher education. Those students who want to seek admission in private universities are like dream for them to be fulfilled. Privatization leads to politicization of education. It might have seen in many cases that the children of big-named politicians are recruited easily on the basis of their political connections. Even if they have not scored well in their previous sessions, they are recruited. Whereas the children belong to middle or lower middle class, they are not selected for getting admissions in private institutions as they are unable to pay the fatty amount of fees. That's why the education has remained as a business entity in private institutions. In order to save taxes, the white-collared people invest in such huge-named private institutions for maintain the quality and infrastructure of the same. That is the reason why the private institutions charge huge amount of money for getting admission in their institutions and the knowledge remains the secondary matter to be dealt with.

Inbreeding in various institutions: Inbreeding means the person who has studied in the same institution is selected to teach in the same institution for teaching. This also hampers the higher education system in the way that the exchange of ideas from those who have qualified from other institutions remains un-imparted. For instance, if a person who has studied and qualified from University of Delhi, would share his / her experiences in that circumstances only. The students who are being taught might be familiar with those circumstances. Whereas if the person is recruited from other university like University of Kashmir, Bihar etc. would be able to share new experiences and circumstances among the students. The process of inbreeding limits the knowledge of students which in turn stops the progress of higher education system.

Meager salaries to highly qualified teachers: Another reason which impedes the higher education system is providing fewer salaries to the highly qualified teachers. For instance, a person who has achieved a PhD degree with specific area of interest and is recruited on the contractual basis with meager salary, it dissuades him / her to take effective and efficient lectures among the students. Achieving such a higher degree with less paid amount deters the candidates to be get recruited and if recruitment takes place, then efficacious learning is daunting.

Ethical issues: It is seen especially in Indian higher education that ethical issues arise whether the ethical

concern is related to behavior or the content of materials required for study. For example, at the time of writing the dissertation the scholar does not acknowledge the contribution of his / her fellow beings. Even he / she does not give credit to the person form whom the content has been taken as quotes for continuously writing his / her dissertation. Sometimes, the scholars copy the content in such a high manner that plagiarism arises. Plagiarism in simple words means piracy. It means the person has taken the content from somewhere else without acknowledging the name and task of that person who has originally written the content. This leads to a very serious concern in higher educational system. If the content is published without growingthrough the plagiarism checker, then the original author has the right under the Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) to file case against that author who has acknowledged his / her work without giving him / her due recognition.

Mushrooming of higher educational institutes: Besides providing the qualitative education to the students, the focus has now shifted to the widespread opening up of various higher education institutions in India. The problem is not opening up of new institutions but the most of these institutions are not affiliated and accredited by the nodal bodies of Indian higher educational system like University Grants Commission (UGC), All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) etc. As these institutions are not affiliated to these nodal bodies of education, the issue for their existence is questioned. The students don't easily get the jobs in reputed firms due to non-affiliation with above mentioned nodal bodies. The quality of education is hampered severely in such cases. Therefore, the qualitative aspects are compromised with the mushrooming of institutions.

Non-availability of labs: There are institutions where there are no lab facilities available. Students who need labs for conducting projects and practical, is of great concern for them. It has been seen in various institutions that the funds which are proposed for making the skill labs, are not paid attention towards it. In such situation, students have to face a lot of problems. Even if the labs are available, the condition of such labs is so pathetic. The equipments required for conducting and doing practical aren't available, poorly constructed labs, etc. are some of the concerns which are found absent in most of the labs contrived in some of the institutions. It is even seen that the sufficient space is not available for the students in the skill labs for doing experiments which is again a huge concern for the students as well as for the Indian higher education system.

Irregularity in continuous professional development: The concept of continuous professional development is apt defining in terms of higher educational development. It means the overall development of both the students and the teachers in professional manner. This overall continuous professional development includes the academic performance, personality development, extra-curricular activities etc. The academic performance for students involves performing well in studies and scoring well in the examinations whereas for teachers it is the matter of achieving higher Academic Performance Index (API) score. It is identified many of the times that the students do not pay serious attention towards their studies. In turn they remain unsuccessful. In order to achieve higher Academic Performance Index (API) score, the teachers try to finish the syllabus swiftly and without clearing the doubts of the students. As a result, the students do not able to understand and possess failures. The teachers attempt to present and publish their research papers nationally and internationally in order to improve their Academic Performance Index (API) score, but sometimes a lot of questions are raised at their presentation for the authenticity of their research study and it does not get published. Personality development again is not paid much attention in various institutions which hampers the continuous professional development of teachers as well as students. As they are not groomed well, their dissonance seems in their respective performances. Extra- curricular activities are conducted in order to shift their mental status from studies for sometimes. It is researched by some eminent psychologists that extra-curricular activities boost us physically and mentally and therefore is good for any concentrated mind. But due to the absence of such things the continuous professional development is not possible. Such kind of matters is of great concern in Indian higher education system.

Lack of standard and training: It is must for both the teachers and the students to be get professionally trained. Standard may be observed in the curriculum as what is being taught, how it is being taught etc. The study materials referred to the students in the classrooms are sometimes proved to be too substandard through which the quality education is not imparted to the students. Standard may also be observed in terms of infrastructure whether the necessary modifications are being inculcated in the institution or not. Training on the other hand is yet another concern for higher education. Due to the lack of proper training the students remain untrained and cannot flourish, which in turn may rank down the institutional image.

No provision of campus placement cell: In many higher educational institutions, there is hardly any provision for job placements. No campus placement

cell is created at fewer Due to this the students of the same institutions are bound to roam hither and thither in search of jobs. This in turn gives birth to the concept of inbreeding which is again a great concern for Indian higher educational system. Inbreeding can be done with fewer students of the same institutions from where the students have qualified the examination. Not all the students can be covered under the process of inbreeding. This in turn blocks the exchange of ideas from zones to zones, districts to districts and states to states.

Non-availability of fellowship grant: Various government and private institutions do not have the grants available for providing fellowships to the students. Grants help the students to easily pursue their education without any botheration. It is difficult for the students who belong to lower and middle-class families to pay the heavily levied fees imposed by the institution. In such situation, the student seeks the assistance as grant to be provided to him / her by the institution or the government. But when fellowship grant is not allocated to them, it becomes a very serious concern for them to pursue higher education. Many of them drop the dream of pursuing higher education due to this factor only.

Unapproved Academic Institutions: Unapproved academic institution means the institutions which are found fake on the basis of various factors laid by University Grants Commission (UGC). These institutions only make money from the economically well-off students. They do not follow the norms of nodal agencies or apex bodies of educational system. They follow their own rules and regulations or set of patterns. Due to which the students suffer a lot whether it's in academic or professional terms.

Semester System: Semester system has created a burden for the teachers positioned in the higher educational institutions. According to an anonymous survey done on the teachers of the higher institutions says that semester system has been proved to be burdensome for the teachers. Earlier they had to conduct the class tests and examinations of the students on yearly basis but now in every six months all this needs to be done and performed. They added that this semester system is not only ruining their professional and academic life but in turn is spoiling the life of the students. The teachers who are occupied in maintaining the attendance register, checking the class tests and examinations, uploading the progress of students and the work done by them on the regular basis are the tasks which they are supposed to perform and due to this they are unable to take the class or the entertain the students in their studies. That is indeed a serious concern in Indian higher educational system.

Dual attainment of degree at a time: There is provision of dual attainment of degree at a time. University Grants Commission (UGC) has passed this resolution that in an academic year two higher educational degrees can be attained simultaneously. With this the issue of quality has arisen. If the student attains the degree in one discipline and he / she simultaneously attains another in other discipline then quality of the education will hamper the system in the way of employability, academic integrity and performance of the students. The student who achieves the dual degree in different disciplines would be able to be recruited in both the disciplines with the greatest possibility. Then it would raise concern for those who are specialized in a single field at a time. This in turn would dilute the academic integrity in terms of imparting education to the students. Suppose a student has qualified the management examination and simultaneously he / she qualifies the engineering examination and is recruited to be taught under one discipline then qualifying another examination is not proved to be worth qualifying. The performance of the students would also impede as the dual attainment of different degrees scatter their concentration in their respective studies.

Classroom lectures are not attended: It is even more serious concern that the classroom sessions are not attended by the students. As the norms has been set by the University Grants Commission (UGC) that 80% attendance is compulsory for the students enrolled in higher educational institutions, but still the non-abidance of the regulation is ignored by many students. Due to this, the lectures delivered in the classrooms are attended and in turn lead to unsuccessful outcomes. The project work is also not completed by many students due to which it is difficult for them to understand the practical aspects without attending the theoretical classes. Then such students take the assistance of master keys, guide book, reference books, etc. to anyhow clear the examinations. The agenda of such students is to only qualify the examination with passing marks. Such substandard materials can only make the students to pass but these materials can't provide the qualitative education as it is imparted by the teachers in the classroom setup.

COVID-19 pandemic: This is most contemporary issue being faced worldwide. The learning has been affected drastically during this worldwide pandemic. The students are facing a lot of problems related to their studies. As they are not getting the regular guidance from their respective teachers, lecturers and professors, which they were able to seek during their face-to-face learning process in their classrooms; it is proving to be difficult for each student to impart education through

digital mediums. Although there are various digital mediums such as Zoom, Google Meet, Face-book Live, You-tube sessions etc. available but authenticity of such mediums are still questionable.

Conclusion

The factors mentioned above are contemporary in nature and leading to obstruct the growth of higher education in India. These inhibiting factors could only be curbed through the integration of decision-making from grass-root level to higher education system. These issues if not managed dexterously, would lead to the deterioration of our Indian higher education system.

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