

Higher education and social awareness



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INTRODUCTION

India's higher education is the third largest one after the U. S. A. and China. For years India has made an impact in the world economy by providing intellectuals to the world. But that alone will not serve the purpose. The expectation from higher education is more than that. University Grants Commission proclaims the objectives of Indian higher education in its 12th five year plan

“ Higher education is about promoting excellence in more ways than one: at individual level, it is an instrument of upward mobility through cultivation of excellence; for national economy, excellence of work force is a pre-requisite of sustained growth; and for humankind, excellence is a must for extending the frontiers of knowledge and cultivation of values”

Higher education should bring intelligence, workforce and Values. While analyzing the above objectives India has brought intelligence and workforce for the country but the question is whether the higher education system brings values or social concern among the students. Education should not stop with just acquiring the intelligence to earn more income and leading a sophisticated life. It should create social awareness and self-awareness. Today the social life is eroding in India. The educated persons are ignorant of not only the long accepted social values but also the modern values of secularism, socialism, democracy and professional ethics.

A recent news paper reveals that a husband and wife, both who are in Indian Administration Service have amassed lot of wealth through corruption. This brings us the question that why these highly placed people engage in

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corruption. Also another recent report on newspaper shows that most of the criminals today are the educated people. Now we have to think that what is wrong in the education which they acquired. It is the lack of social concern in the education. In this regard it is important to analyse whether higher education is providing the right platform for social thinking.

AUTONOMY IN HIGHER EDUCATION

One of the radical changes in higher education is the introduction of autonomy. Autonomy and accountability goes hand in hand. This provides the college freedom to design their curriculum. Unfortunately most of the colleges use this status as a means for fund raising. Also while designing the curriculum they give prime importance to employability and least importance to ethical and social values. This will pave way for a self-centered attitude among the educated elite. Transparency of curriculum to the common man is crucial in making autonomy by bringing social values in it. The government should monitor the autonomous colleges through universities so that autonomy is not misused by the colleges. But the sad aspects of the universities are that their focus and objectives are far away from developing the higher education.

CHOICE-BASED CREDIT SYSTEM

Today most of the colleges are following the CBCS system in providing education. This system, which was imposed by the government, also provides only a minimum scope for imparting social values. The important feature of CBCS is that it concentrates more on skill based electives and non-

major electives. Even the system adopted by the government is not providing a platform for socially relevant higher education in India.

PRIVATISATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION

Today the government allows the private parties to compete in higher education. The role of private parties in higher education is inevitable. But private education mostly concentrates on technical education rather than Arts and Science. Social values are not a part in the technical education. Also an extension activity was not a part in its curriculum. Again these private institutions compete each other to admit students. So they spent crores of rupees for advertisement and campus interview but they do not concentrate on the wholistic development of the students. Finally the students become intellectuals without social awareness. A strict control on private higher education institutions are the requisite for creating social ethics among the students.

FOREIGN UNIVERSITIES

Today the much debated topic on higher education is allowing the foreign universities to provide higher education in India. The argument kept by the current UPA II government is that it creates a healthy competition which in turn will increase efficiency and efficiency will bring quality in higher education. This argument is correct partly. But the main question unanswered is whether these institutions can provide a platform for our students to learn our traditional values and customs. The qualities of such universities are doubtful because only the third ranked foreign universities are coming to India and their motive is to make profit only. So they do not

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provide the socially relevant higher education. Again even if they provide the social values in education that will be the westernized values which does not suit our country. The social values will erode and finally a chaos will prevail in our country.

Another danger of allowing foreign universities in India is that the Indian institutions, mostly private has to compete with foreign universities in admitting the students. So in order to encounter the competitions of these foreign universities, our universities also have to engage in concentrating on providing only employable skills and not the social values. So this move is also going to endanger the minimum social values provided in India today. So the government has to be cautious in bringing foreign universities to India.

GOVERNMENT AND HIGHER EDUCATION

The role of government is crucial in bringing higher education with social concern. The government of India in its action plan report of 12th plan has emphasised that higher education should be taken out from the non-profit zone and a nominal profit should be implemented. Thus the main stake holder of higher education is trying to bring higher education towards profit earning sector. So social values will take the second seat. The government considers higher education as a liability. There is also lack of co-ordination among the institution like HRD, UGC, AIT etc. which monitors the higher education in India.

MARKET ECONOMY AND HIGHER EDUCATION

Today all aspects are determined by the market economy. It has also touched the higher education. The market economy always imparts a pressure on the students from the school education. It wants people to acquire employable skills to work in the private concern. On the one hand the employment in organized sector is diminishing and on the other hand the job opportunities are only available in private concerns. So survival of the fittest is the order of the day and this makes the students to concentrate more on acquiring knowledge rather than participating in social agitation or discussions in social aspects. The education providers are also not providing the room for the students to discuss the social evils. The joy of learning is missing today. Thus the market economy provides the students with lop sided development. A capitalistic attitude is prevailing among the educated students.

The market also fixes the wage for the teachers in private higher education institution. As the supply exceeds the demand, the market wage is low. So these teachers do not have the urge to provide a socially relevant education. They are not ready to discuss things which are outside the curriculum (i. e) social issues and the management also does not permit them. Only good salary and job security can motivate the teachers to discuss social issues.

It is also disheartening to note that 80 percent of the graduates of Metropolitan cities prefer to work in foreign countries. This shows that our education was not able to inspire the young generation to a moral commitment of working in India for the well being of common man.

CONCLUSION

The above analysis highlights that the present higher education provides a lop-sided development. It provides only intelligence, but not the emotional intelligence and social concern. This is a dangerous sign as most of these students may be intelligent criminals. There is difference between education with social concern and education without social concern. A best example is the terrorists who demolished the twin buildings of U. S. A. He is very intelligent in hijacking a flight and entering into the territory of U. S. A. But he does not have the social concern and compassion to the persons in towers and their relatives. So there is an urgent need for a radical change in the higher education through which we have to include social concern, which will in turn will bring peaceful co-existence of the people of India.

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