**Reforms In Higher Education: A Necessity**

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His Excellency the president of India, Shri Pranab Mukherjee, said “education is the true alchemy that can bring India its next golden age”. He further said, “I envisage an India where unity of purpose propels the common good, where Centre and State are driven by the single vision of good governance, where democracy is not merely the right to vote once in five years but to speak always in the citizens’ interest, where knowledge becomes wisdom, where the young pour their phenomenal energy and talent into collective cause”, he described education as key to golden age.

Higher education as understood today is education after +2 levels i.e. the general and professional courses offered in colleges and universities. The objectives of higher education institutions are teaching, research and extension. In this Endeavour, the higher education system has been making greater stride. Today in India only 12.55% of the relevant age group get into higher education and get benefited. A large mass of our citizens do not get the benefit. A country can not progress leaving a part a large mass of people out of the system. One may argue that the benefit is garnered by the masses as the advantage of the innovation and change is shared by all citizens. But the illiterates and the uneducated can also contribute to the development of our nation not only as consumers but also as producers of knowledge.

The post independence era saw the higher education system grow at a note-worthy pace, such that currently it is one of the largest higher education systems in the world. An ever improving higher education system along with the demographic dividend make the perfect recipe for India to be a knowledge super power in the 21st century.

An attempt is made in this paper to focus on the necessity of reformation in higher education in the present era of globalization. Only privatization of higher education will not serve the purpose of the general mass. An inference can be drawn that India, which is lagging behind should generalize higher education for the interest of the nation.

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***REFORMS IN HIGHER EDUCATION- A NECESSITY***

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His Excellency the president of India, Shri Pranab Mukherjee, said “education is the true alchemy that can bring India its next golden age”. He further said, “ I envisage an India where unity of purpose propels the common good, where Centre and State are driven by the single vision of good governance, where democracy is not merely the right to vote once in five years but to speak always in the citizens’ interest, where knowledge becomes wisdom, where the young pour their phenomenal energy and talent into collective cause”, he described education as key to golden age.

**INTRODUCTION**

Education constitutes the backbone of a country as it produces the human force which plays the most determining role in the advancement of a nation and also in the progress of a civilisation. No nation could establish its dominance in the world history by virtue of its sheer military might or economic affluence. The march of a nation towards glory is carried forward by the competent human resource that a strong education system prepares. Education is one that provides the thrust in getting ahead and building up a powerful democratic society. India is today at a cross road of emerging as a major player in the global scenario. But this half way dream of the country will be realised once the problem of our education system are identified and remedied correctly. The irony is that while India’s strength lies in education, particularly in higher education in the emerging global knowledge economy. India’s main hurdle to achieving development also lies in education, as the quality of education remains poor for the majority of the population. Thus, it is high time India recognises the importance of reforms in higher education which is the key to the realisation of the vision of an inclusive society and vibrant democracy. The success, whether of an individual or a nation, is laid in the foundation of education.In this backdrop, the paper is an attempt to identify the areas of concern in India’s higher education system particularly in commerce education.

**Meaning of Higher Education**

Higher education as understood today is education after +2 levels i.e. the general and professional courses offered in colleges and universities. The objectives of higher education institutions are teaching, research and extension. In this Endeavour, the higher education system has been making greater stride. Today in India only 12.55% of the relevant age group get into higher education and get benefited. A large mass of our citizens do not get the benefit. A country can not progress leaving a part a large mass of people out of the system. One may argue that the benefit is garnered by the masses as the advantage of the innovation and change is shared by all citizens. But the illiterates and the uneducated can also contribute to the development of our nation not only as consumers but also as producers of knowledge.

**Slow Growth of Higher Education**

The post independence era saw the higher education system grow at a note-worthy pace, such that currently it is one of the largest higher education systems in the world. An ever improving higher education system along with the demographic dividend make the perfect recipe for India to be a knowledge super power in the 21st century. However, this willonly be true if the concerns of quality access, finance, reorientation of curriculum, accreditation, of institutions are ready to look at the present with the perspective of future in mind. The system needs to change with the change in the society and the stakeholders need to accept the flaws and work towards wading them off.

Before Indpendence, access to higher education was very limited and elitist, with enrolment of less than a million students in 500 colleges and 20 universities. Since independence, the growth has been very impressive. The number of universities as on December 2011 increased to 634, the number of colleges increased to 33,023 (UGC Report Feb2012.).

**Growth of** **Higher Education Institutions**

The number of universities and colleges in India are very small compared to other nations; e.g.for a populaton of 295 million USA is having 2364 universities, UK for 59 million populaton has 104 universities, Japan for 127 million populaton has 684 universities, Germany for 82 million populaton has 330 universities and India for 1120 million populaton is having only 634 universities.

**Low Enrolment in Higher Education**

Enrolment in higher education has been rising steadily although the enrolment rate has continued to remain low compared even to some of the developing countries of Asia and Latin America. Presently, the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in higher education is 20 percent. The government of India has set a Gross Enrolment Ratioin Higher Education target of 30 per cent by 2020

**Growth of Students Enrolment**

Currently 17 million students are admitted in the countries 33023 and 634 universities. It may however be pointed put that while India has the second higher system in the world, next to the US the student enrolment ratio in higher education is just12.4 per cent. However, this rate is very low as compared to other developed nations. The enrollment ratio in higher education is 86 per cent in USA, 55 per cent in France, 35 per cent in UK, 24 per cent China even in developing and less developed nations the enrollment ration is higher than India.

The faculty wise enrolment of students for the year 2009-10 is for Arts 42 per cent, for Science 20 per cent, for Commerce 18 per cent and other professional courses such as engineering, medicine, law etc. is 20 per cent. This means about 80 per cent students enrolment is in traditional courses such as Arts, Science, and Commerce and only 20 per cent enrolment is in professional courses. From this it is clear that the enrolment of students in commerce is less in comparison to that of the traditional other branches.

An attempt has been made by the apex body like NCERT to organise National Consultative Meet wherein representatives of industry, institutions of higher learning, professional bodies, teachers and teacher educators and other experts in the field of commerce education would have a chance to interact, deliberate on, draw some kind of consensus regarding strategies for strengthening the linkages between school and industry with a purpose of providing meaningful education to students of commerce.

The national Curriculum Framework (NCF) provides the framework and the roadmap, which ought to inform and enrich the syllabus and textbooks. The NCF has been widely criticised, especially the notions of context and local forms of knowledge.

While going through NCF Review it is realised that step motherly treatment is given to commerce education as only mention of it being made in it that ‘ at higher secondary stage a variety of courses from the social sciences and commerce may be offered to students and they may exercise their choice keeping in view their inclinations and preferences.’ The changing times i.e. liberalisation of nineties, the IT boom of the 21st century, the WTO multi-fibre agreement in January 2005-these and other events have radically changed the Indian Job market and have opened new vistas for students of commerce. Thus there is a need to create equilibrium so that there is no intrinsic bias and one section or subject should not gain any undue advantage over the other, i.e. Accountancy and Business Studies. Despite all odds, it is observed that commerce is prospering like anythig because of demand of commerce students in the market. Students are opting for commerce stream, as it not only opens doors for more conventional options like getting in to colleges of business administration, professional institutions like ICAI, ICWA etc, but also helps students to set up business on their own. The commerce stream offers a myriad opportunities and the liberty to choose one’s own path.

After establishing the importance of commerce stream and building positive attitude of people, especially policymakers, towards it, what is required is reorienting and restructuring commerce education to make it suitable to cater to societal and market demand. The following suggestions are made which need to be taken up by the policy makers for the reformation of higher education of commerce stream. Commerce as stream is misunderstood but its subjects of study are Accountancy and Business Studies. The curriculum is required to be related to business. Multimedia packages may be developed, case study of various business may be presented to the students in a audiovisual mode in a story form that they would like to view instead of studying from the text. Teachers need to be trained to teach commerce as teaching of Accountancy and teaching of Business Studies instead of commerce as a discipline.

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