



Privatization and Commercialization of Higher Education

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Abstract

Education is fundamental to an equitable society. An excellent education equips children and youth with the knowledge, skills, values, mindset needed to be empowered individuals and responsible citizens. The students are consumers, teachers are service providers and expert speakers, and the institutions or companies catering to education services are organizers, and the teaching-learning process is no longer for the building of a nation but a business for profit making. This paper outlines the meaning, need and major implications of the increasing Privatization and Commercialization of Higher Education in India. The objective of this paper is to study the issues in Higher Education in India, especially after globalization and the entry of the private sector in Higher Education and examine some solutions to improve the quality and availability to those who deserve it. The quality of teaching, learning and research needs to be upgraded if India is to evolve as a World class Education hub. Huge success was seen in Higher Education system in India due to the participation of private sector in terms of infrastructure, teaching quality and over all climates of the colleges and universities. Ministry of HRD informed that the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) for Higher Education in India increased to 24.5% during 2015-16.

Keywords: Higher Education, Private participation, Globalization, Quality of Education

Introduction

The Higher Education System in India is complex. Education is fundamental to every constituent of the society irrespective of gender, physical, economic, geographical, cultural, or linguistic differences. Education is a Nation's Strength. The involvement of private sector in higher education has been drastic changes in the field. Today over 60% of higher education institutions in India are promoted by the private sector. Due to globalization, liberalization and privatization lots of changes are taking place in the country and outside the country which are affecting the very basics of the higher education in the India.

The Corporate Sector discovered a huge and ever-growing services industry in education. In this industry with huge global market students, teachers, and non-teaching employees constitute resources for profit-making. Here, the students are consumers, teachers are service providers and expert speakers, and the institutions or companies catering to education services are organizers, and the teaching-learning process is no longer for the building of a nation but a business for profit-making. The first decade of the twenty-first century witnessed world over large-scale and bitter protest from the students, teachers and people at large against the privatization and commercialization of higher education and bringing higher education sector under General Agreements on Trade in Services (GATS) and World Trade Organization (WTO) by their governments. The idea behind WTO-GATS has been the creation of an open, global market-place where services, like education, can be traded to the highest bidder^[1].

This paper attempts to find out the impact of commercialization of education in India, to understand the

nature of Privatization in higher education in India and to examine the efficiency and quality concerns of Indian Higher Education.

Privatization of Higher Education

The transfer of ownership, property or business from the government to the private sector is termed as privatization. The process in which a publicly-traded company is taken over by a few people is also called privatization. The thrust on privatization in higher education started in the early 90's. One of the important developments due to entry of private sector is foreign collaborations with academic institutions^[2]. In recent 10 years, the quality of education in Government schools has degraded as a result people are opting for private schools. Due to government policy of preferring quantity over quality, private schools and colleges are growing daily. Privatization has emerged as an important aspect in 21st century.

Private Sector

The government of India has been actively promoting the participation of the private sector in promoting the reach of higher education. Over the past few decades it has actually been the private sector that has been driving capacity-creation in Indian Higher Education. Through institutes running general courses in Arts, Science have been traditionally in higher numbers, the last 10 to 15 years have seen a surge in the private sector in streams such as engineering, IT and communication technology, management education and vocational training. The volume of private institutes in pharmacy and engineering is nearly around 90%. This figures demonstrate that private education is the norm rather than an

exception and higher education through private players is now an irreversible trend in India.

The overwhelming participation of the private sector in higher education has given a fillip to the under-represented communities who now have better access to education. While the role of the private sector in Indian higher education is undeniable, it is also a painful trend with more and more venturing into the stream with the sole intention of profiteering by disregarding stipulate norms and severely compromising on quality on several fronts. This has adversely affected the delivery and sustenance of quality with the end result that most students are no better after their higher education than they were before.

Structure of Higher Education in India

In the Indian system, higher education includes the education imparted after the 10+2 stage-ten years of primary and secondary education followed by two years of Higher Secondary Education. The first degree, the Bachelor's degree, is obtained after three years study in the case of liberal arts, and four years in the case of most professional degrees. The post graduate degree program involves two years of study after first degree. The research degrees (M.Phil. and Ph.D.) take variable time depending upon the individual student. The highest degrees are D.Litt. and D.Sc. are awarded after the Ph.D. degree for original contribution of the highest order.

Ministries and Agencies in Higher Education

1. Ministry of Human Resource Development.
2. Ministry of Agriculture.
3. Ministry of Health.
4. Ministry of Law.
5. Specialized agencies for promotion of research- Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR), Indian Council of Historical Research (ICHR), Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO).

Need of Privatization in Higher Education

As per UGC Annual Report 2014-2015, as on 31st March, 2015, the number of universities had gone upto 711 (46 Central, 329 State, 205 State-Private, 128 deemed to be Universities, 3 institutions established under State Legislation) and 40760 Colleges in the Higher Education Sector. The Indian higher education has already entered a stage of massification and Gross Enrolment Ratio in higher education in 2015-2016 is 24.5%, which is 3.45Crore in absolute numbers. The current target is to increase GER to 25.2% in 2017-18 and further to 30% in 2020-2021^[3].

The need to privatize higher education is because of following reasons:-

1. To increase competitive efficiency of public sector.
2. To meet the growing demand of higher education with rapid growth in population.
3. To reduce financial burden on government and for decentralization of educational institutions.
4. For imparting quality education and training and shaping of the curriculum according to global, national and local needs.
5. To fulfill the need for skilled manpower and to fulfill the need of the country in liberalization, privatization, and

globalization.

6. To facilitate technological development and innovation based economic development^[4].

Effects of Privatization on Higher Education

Positive effects of Privatization on Education

1. Modernization of Education.
2. Qualitative reforms.
3. Wider area for research and inventions.
4. Bring new areas of employment.
5. Increase in Vocational courses.
6. Helpful in expansion of education.

Negative effects of Privatization on Education

Private initiative does help but it has remained to confined to a handful of popular and market driven courses such as management, engineering and medicine. Across the country more and more private unaided courses are flourishing and government has been supporting this agenda vigourously. Education is going out of reach for the economically weaker section of the society^[5]. The negative effects are:-

1. Expensive education.
2. Qualitative education not sure.
3. No job security.
4. More importance to money rather than intelligence.
5. Exploitation of teachers.
6. Extra burden on children.

Commercialization of Higher Education

Commercialization of Education may be liberally defined as "a process of private ownership and management of educational institutions whereby investments are made with the motive of earning profit. Education today has only become an option to make money than providing quality education to students. There is strong need to change the basics Education system^[6]. As commercialization affects all areas of life, including education, it gradually shifts society's view of education. Education is increasingly seen as a consumable commodity that increases one's chances of successfully competing in the global economy and achieving higher earnings.

Commercialization of Higher Education - Good or Bad?

In times gone by, education and money were distant entities. But with rapid globalization, universities started facing stiff competition from their peers to provide a far better quality of higher education. Like any quality service in the market costs more money, so does better quality education. However the federal and state governments are often faced with budgetary constraints and are unable to provide enough funds to all the universities for the purpose of higher education. This has resulted in commercialization of higher education. We need to have a look now into the pros and cons of commercialization of higher education.

Commercialization of Higher Education - The good in it for us:

Commercialization of higher education generally results in state-of-the-art facilities for all students as money is no longer a constraint. The students also get the opportunity to get trained in corporate firms and get valuable industry exposure

because of a Memorandum of Understanding that is in place between the university and the organization.

Commercialization of Higher Education - The Bad in it for us: The main drawback is the high tuition fees associated with it. Most parents belonging to the lower middle class with more than one child to educate usually find it impossible to afford such a luxury. Privatized institutions are being symbolized by the rich and elite sections of our society^[7].

Suggestions for improving the system of Higher Education

- a) There is a need to implement innovative and transformation approach from primary to higher education level to make Indian Educational System globally more relevant and competitive.
- b) In higher educational institutes Industrial Co-operation must be there for the development of curriculum, organizing expert lectures, internships, live-projects and placements.
- c) Higher educational institutes need to improve quality, reputation and establish credibility through student exchange, faculty exchange programs and other collaborations with high-quality national and international higher educational institutes.
- d) There is need to focus on the graduate students by providing them such courses in which they can achieve excellence, gain deeper knowledge of subject so that they will get jobs after recruitment in the companies which would reduce unnecessary rush to the higher education^[8].

Conclusion

An improvement in the standards of education could be achieved through a balanced relationship between public and private sector. In this paper we have presented situation of India in higher education sector. It is evident that the higher education system seeks contribution both by government as well as the private sector. There is a need for careful planning, enhanced financing and evolving an enabling policy framework to make higher education accessible, equitable and qualitative. It is necessary to encourage research, vocational courses and provide high-quality education.

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