

# Quality Enhancement in Higher Education, Achievements and Failures: A Case Study of Self-Financing Institutions in AP state

Dr.N.Prasanna Lakshmi, Assistant Professor, Department of English GITAM Deemed University, Hyderabad Campus.

## ABSTRACT

Quality enhancement and improvement in standards of higher education is an ongoing process. India is regarded as having the third largest reservoir of scientific and technical manpower in the world of nations with an estimated stock of about seven million. India has made significant achievements in the development of education. During the last sixty years after independence, higher education has expanded in India somewhat remarkably. The number of universities and colleges has increased, there is an explosion in student numbers, the enrolments in higher education. Today we have a number of technology, management, medical science institutions, besides a large number of engineering colleges and agricultural colleges. The Indian education system was thrown open after independence to all at all levels rich, poor, middle income classes, men and women, rural and urban population, backward and non backward segments of the population. There has been the development of institutions of excellence, producing highly specialized human capital. The best practices are those which improve the entire operations of the institutions and decide the standard of quality. However, the most important problem that the higher education system in India is the inequalities in the quality of the institutions in rural and urban areas.

The institutions of higher education located in rural and socioeconomic backward areas are lacking in the implementation of best practices in higher education and quality. There are a number of colleges located in a remote, rural, backward and hilly areas, striving to achieve excellence. The emerging open learning systems, distance education significantly contributed to massification' of higher education. But the fact is that there is a higher degree of inequality in the quality of higher education between the institutions of higher education in the rural areas and the institutions of higher education in the urban areas. To reduce the inequalities of the quality of higher education and the implementation of best practices in higher education in the rural and urban areas equally is a challenging task. This paper discusses in detail how Quality Enhancement strategies, achievement, and obstacles involved in self financing institutions of higher learning in AP state.

## 1. Introduction

The quality of higher education is a multi-dimensional concept. It lies in effectiveness of transmitting knowledge and skill, the authenticity, content, coverage and depth of information, availability of reading/teaching materials, help in removing obstacles to learning; applicability of knowledge in solving the real life problems, fruitfulness of knowledge in personal and social domains, and different sections of the people, cost-effectiveness and administrative efficiency. Information technology has progressed very fast in the last three decades. It has produced equipments at affordable cost and it has now made their wider application feasible. This technology has made a search, gathering, dissemination, storing, retrieval, transmission and reception of knowledge easier, cheaper and faster. The higher education system in India has grown in a remarkable way, particularly in the post-independence period, to become one of the largest system of its kind in the world. These issues are important for the country, as it is now engaged in the use of higher education as a powerful tool to build a knowledge-based information society of the 21st Century. Recognizing the above and the basic fact, that the Universities have to perform multiple roles, like creating new knowledge, acquiring new capabilities and producing an intelligent human resource pool, through challenging teaching, research and extension activities so as to balance both the need and the demand.

The Indian higher education system has undergone massive expansion in post-independent India with a national resolve to establish several Universities, Technical Institutes, Research Institutions and Professional / Non professional Colleges all over the country to generate and disseminate knowledge coupled with the noble intention of providing easy access to higher education to the common Indian. Most of the Universities were Public institutions with powers to regulate academic activities on their campuses as well as their areas of jurisdiction through the affiliating system. It is the primary responsibility of the State to provide the eligible with good quality higher education at reasonable cost. Industries may be encouraged to be partners with educational institutions directly for the development of human resources dedicated to their interests. Strong quality control measures to assure performance above an acceptable benchmark is essential for the institutions. It is important to realize that we live in a fast changing world, dictated by the developments in technology. Access to higher education needs to be widened in the country, both within the formal system and through other effective innovative measures, such as a truly *open* system and networking of Universities. It is now imperative on the part of Indian Universities to generate their own resources to a large extent. This could be done through several methods, like raising tuition fee and collecting capitation fee, both of which having severe limitations, and others like, launching courses for foreign students, obtaining donations from philanthropists. In the globalised World, the State-protected educational system cannot withstand the pressure without making it competitive.

## 1.1 Evaluation and Assessment Systems

A high quality education system is essential to the successful development and functioning of an open and democratic civil society. Higher education is expected to provide the social norms of communication and interaction such as philosophical thinking and reasoning to promote the sovereignty of its individuals, and to eliminate all kinds of social-class ethnic conflicts and gender or religious biases. A quality providing institution of higher education is a model for creating a modern civil society. During the last 60 years, higher education in India has made great strides leading to the Indian higher education system becoming one of the largest systems in the World. Unfortunately, it is the Indian experience that this expansion in quantity has overshadowed the quality of higher education. It is well known that one of the important components of higher education is the manner in which students' academic performance is evaluated. A great degree of diversity has been observed in terms of assessment and grading of the students in the University system at present. The Semester System should be preferred to the annual system in teaching and evaluation of the Indian Universities. Continuous Internal Assessment should be given the attention it merits in the students' academic programmes at the Universities.. The Grading System with a linear 10-point scale and its equivalence in terms of percentage of marks should be followed uniformly across Universities and disciplines. However, the evaluation methodology may vary across disciplines / Pre-and Post-processes of examinations should be made transparent.

## 2. Parameters of Quality in Higher Education:

- i). Richness in Knowledge and Skill: Perhaps the most important parameter of quality in higher education relates to absorption of knowledge and generates of skill among the students.
- ii). Relevance: The second most important parameter of quality is the appropriateness and relevance of the information, knowledge and skill imparted by education to the current and the foreseeable techno-economic and social needs and priorities of the nation (as well as the region) that supports the educational system.
- iii). Creativity: The two parameters of quality (in education) mentioned above often join with the characteristics of students and under favourable conditions lead them to gain the courage of facing challenges and conquering the adversities.
- iv). Sublime Values: Nevertheless, there is some sort of conflict between the first two parameters deliberated above. The personal priorities of a college or university graduate of very high quality judged on the first criterion may not be conformal to the priorities of the nation or the regions that imparted excellent
- v) Quality in higher education also requires effective governance. Unless governance is apt, alert, vigilant, concerned and result-oriented, infrastructural development and availability of reading materials, etc. will continue to be sub-optimally utilized.
- vi) Information technology for improving quality in education. There is no systematic program to sensitize teachers and students to use the modern methods of information seeking and information using.

Quality assurance refers to a range of review procedures designed to safeguard academic standards and promote learning opportunities for students of acceptable quality in an environment of global competitiveness. It is important that Indian products of the higher education institutions are as competent as graduates of any other country. Unless the quality and standard of Indian higher education institutions are enhanced zealously and sustained at a high level through innovation, creativity and regular monitoring, it seems to be difficult for the Indian academics/professionals to compete in the World scene. The assessment has to be continuous and the process has to be transparent to gain the acceptance of the society at large. It is an instrument designed to add value to higher education by encouraging high quality. An efficient and effective high quality higher education system which is internationally recognized and a well established national Quality Culture are vital for economic growth in developing countries like Pakistan. A sustainable quality assurance programme enhances employment opportunities, improves the education and training of future employees, harnesses future leaders, facilitates an enabling learning environment, and enriches the academic and intellectual landscape.

## 2.1 Sustaining Quality

Quality has both absolute and relative connotations. The concept of absoluteness in quality props up the morale of the higher education system at the delivery end, i.e. institutional, and at the receiving end i.e. students. Quality dimensions seem to have two implications, i.e., functionality of the output and meeting the basic standards. Hence, the quality of a higher education system may be seen from the point of view of norms and standards, which may evolve depending on the need of the hour. In the 21st century, it is crucial to identify the relative norms for different components of a higher education system. The alternative dynamics for teacher preparation and the sustaining quality in teacher input, like: Curriculum design and development; Curricular practices vis-à-vis emerging principles of pedagogy, Evaluation of learners' performance and progress vis-à-vis curriculum evaluation; and, Quality management practices become crucial. Of late, various developments have been witnessed relating to quality assurance mainly through the intervention of information and communications technologies (ICT) in education, like networking of the open learning system with traditional Universities, interdisciplinary interactions at intra-institutional and inter-institutional levels, networking of institutions globally, data based management of higher education, changing the orientation of institutions by incorporating self financing in their financial management, assessment and accreditation of higher education institutions and creation of different statutory and regulatory bodies at the national level.

## 2.2 Assessment and Accreditation

The fact of the matter is that the Indian elite and middle classes have not cared for making education, what to say about higher education, access to the other sections of society. It is ironic that the beneficiaries of privileged access to institutions of higher learning are ever ready to persuade others to believe that the Indian

education system has expanded beyond reasonable limits. The fact of the matter is that the system needs to be expanded to a much greater scale to serve the needs of the Indian youth. Many institutions of higher education in the country are excellent in the sense that their infrastructure, resources, faculty, programmes of teaching and research are almost as good as the best in the advanced countries. But, the same cannot be said of the average institutions of higher education in the country. They do not come anywhere near the level of average institutions of higher education in the advanced countries. This vast gap in standards and facilities has been a cause of constant anxiety and concern to the policy planners of higher education in India. The issue of accessibility to quality higher education needs to be addressed in the light of the vast economic and social disparities, cultural and linguistic diversities, and extremely uneven opportunities of learning at the school level together with the aspirations and capacities of the potential students. Therefore, the question of access to higher education needs to be addressed at the local, regional, national and international levels from transdisciplinary, interdisciplinary and discipline-specific perspectives.

### 3. Self financing institutions in India

The standard and quality of technical education has deteriorated sharply in the recent years. One of the major factors responsible for this is the mushroom growth of institutes of technical education. The total number of technical institutes in India are as shown in Table 1. and table 2. Out of total number of engineering institutions 68% are from self-financing sector and remaining (32%) are from Government sector. There are approximately over 4500 engineering institutions, over 2500, MBA institutions, 900 pharmacy institutions in India. More than 50% engineering, Pharmacy and MBA graduates in self financing institutions are unemployable. There is unequal distribution of professional colleges in India. Four states such as Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Tamilnadu and Maharashtra shares almost 68% of Engineering, MBA and Pharmacy institutions. The total number of intake for engineering in 2005-06, was over 5,00,000 number of students as on 2011-12, intake has increased over 14,00,000 number of students. The total number of engineering programs were 1,475 in 2005-06, for 2011-12, the number of programmes increased by 3241. There are approximately 500 universities in India including Government and private sector. More than 65% of self financing institutions in Engineering, MBA and Pharmacy are not attracted by top companies for placement due to lack of infrastructure, faculty and other several factors.

### Conclusion

As per the table 1, for Andhra Pradesh state nearly 34 % Engineering technology colleges, 27% of MBA Colleges, 28% pharmacy colleges are available in AP state. Most of the institutions lack infrastructure, quality faculty, standards are not maintained as per the criteria prescribed by the professional bodies. Many of the institutions are having very few Ph.D faculty and many are involved in recruiting fresh graduates as teaching faculty. Many of the students are more interested in getting placements in IT companies rather than core

engineering. Many of the institutions have not started core engineering programs from the last one decade, from the last 3 years due to market trend college management have forced to introduce core engineering branches. More than 67% of self financing institutions are not attracted for placement by top companies. Hence resource generation and optimum resource management are the key factors affecting the economic conditions of these institutes. The active role and keen interest from the management of these institutes will play a major role in development of these institutes to meet the global demands of the future. The changing scenario of technical education demands the active involvement of management, institutes, faculty members, students, industries, universities, new and advanced teaching learning methods and active research and development activities from the faculties.

**Table 1: Andhra Pradesh State**

Region	Engg	Pharmacy	MBA	Poly techniques
JNTU Hyderabad	463	101	92	
JNTU, Kakinada	230	48	204	
JNTU, Anathapur	117	49	56	
Osmania	20	18	49	
Andhra	70	94	229	
Total	900	310	630	177

**Table 2: Other Region**

Region	Engg	Pharmacy	MBA	Poly techniques
Maharashtra & Goa	739 11	307 19	448 04	599
Tamilnadu & Pondichery	925 21	42 01	430 08	462
Karnataka	400	76	228	252
Kerla	115	30	70	16
North west	1029	215	605	86
Eastern	422	104	186	108
Total	3662	794	1980	1523

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