



# CHALLENGES IN UNDERGRADUATE EDUCATION: STRATEGIES TO OVERCOME THESE CHALLENGES AND TO PROMOTE PERSONALITY DEVELOPMENT AND DECISION MAKING OF STUDENTS THROUGH QUALITY EDUCATION

*Jyoti Nath*

PhD Scholar, Dept. of Education,  
Shri Lal Bahadur Shastri National Sanskrit University

## *Abstract*

*Higher education specifically undergraduate level is extremely important for a county as it creates different types of specialised persons in different fields. As India gears towards becoming a knowledge society, higher education would be one of the main propellers of this transformation. Higher education is a critical input of human development since it has a direct correlation with infrastructure and GDP. In an increasingly knowledge- centric society, institutions of higher education need to constantly adapt, evolve and innovate. Higher education is changing in terms of its content and context. We are moving from teacher centred to learner centred systems. The vastly significant role that higher education plays is not just for the lives of individuals but also towards the process of national development which is now being accepted and acknowledged. At the same time, through this paper the focus in the entire gamut of higher education is also being centred on quality, which is of overriding concern in the contemporary times, has been highlighted.*

**Keywords:** Higher Education, Undergraduate level, Challenges, Quality Education

## **Introduction**

Higher education specifically undergraduate level imparts in-depth knowledge and understanding so as to advance the students to new frontiers of knowledge in different walks of life. It broadens the intellectual power of the individual within the narrow specialisation, but also gives him/her a wider perspective of the world around. According to Ronald Barnett (1992), there are four predominant concepts of higher education. Firstly, Higher education as the production of qualified human

resources, secondly, Higher education as training for research career, thirdly higher education as the efficient management of teaching provision, fourthly, higher education as a matter of extending life chances. All these concepts are integrated and give an overall picture of what higher education is in the higher education. Higher education specifically undergraduate level determines not only the economic condition of a country but also its' intellectual and social conscience and shows the present and future path of development of the nation. Higher education is generally understood to cover teaching, research and extension. If we critically analyse the different concepts of higher education, we can list the various roles higher education plays in the society.

### **Present Scenario in Higher Education and undergraduate level**

Presently, at the global level of education, the west is much more advanced and thus there is hegemony of the universities and institutes of America, England and other western countries in the world. Undoubtedly, India is the third largest in the world in terms of the system of education and it ranks after America and China. However, the other Asian countries are slightly behind in the education scenario, although Singapore, South Korea, Japan and China are trying hard to move ahead with stability. Presently, the GER for India is only around 20% while for nations like Australia it stands at a phenomenal 110%. If India wants to emerge as the academic leader at the global level, there is great need for positive administrative reforms in order to elevate the level of higher education in the country. In the present context along with the expansion of education its quality is gradually declining. Apart from a few, the rest of the institute of higher education only distribute degrees. At present only 12.4% of the students in the age group 18 to 24 years take admission in universities. This percentage is much less than the percentage taking admission in universities in developed countries, which is nearly 40%. To improve this number, India needs at least 800 new universities and 35,000 more colleges. Presently, only six percent students are able to obtain higher education and the students who are unable to get admission in good institutions go abroad for higher studies.

### **Contemporary Issues & Challenges in Undergraduate level and Higher Education**

In the present context the number of universities and colleges in India are inadequate but apart from a few exceptions the quality of education offered by them is very low. The situation is especially dismal in the state universities and colleges. In both colleges and universities the traditional courses are still running and the employment opportunities after completing these courses are very poor. For obtaining employment the students will have to undergo further training after completing these courses. Thus the fact is that the degrees are only used as a means for rejecting students or for fulfilling the necessary qualification for the students and functions like a passport. The chief reason for this is the lack of practical knowledge in these courses as the kind of skilled personnel necessary in today's society are not produced by these courses. A craze for degree, diplomas and negligence of skills and knowledge,

as well as the diminution in the motivation of the students and teachers are some of the causes of deterioration of standards in higher education.

Appointment of faculty in higher education is very important issue. Majority of the appointments are suffering from legal issues. Due to this most of the vacancies are left un recruited for the appointments of the faculties in different higher education institution. Faculty shortages and the inability of the State Educational system to attract and retain well qualified teachers due to contractual appointments have been posing challenges to quality education. Lack of good teachers is a major issue. It is often observed that individuals enter into teaching profession due to sheer economic compulsions or family pressure. Though the salaries have now increased but we still lack a well planned policy and a healthy academic atmosphere to attract talent to the teaching profession.

India has the third largest higher education system in the world. We have around 652 universities and more than 33,000 colleges and institutes. According to some estimates, 27.5 million students are enrolled in these institutions across the country, which is much below the world average. Wide disparities still exist in enrolment percentages among the states and between urban and rural areas. Disadvantaged sections of society, including SCs, STs, Minorities and women, have significantly lower enrolments than the national average.

There are various dimensions of quality in education including content, mode of delivery, infrastructure and facilities, employability etc. Ensuring quality in higher education is amongst the foremost challenges being faced in India today. Quality of teaching affects the quality of entire higher education system and therefore it is considered as a fundamental source of quality of higher education. The country needs uniformity and standardization in the process and methods of teaching, irrespective of any other variable differentiating the one institution from the other. We confront multiple crises that relate to the input, the process and the output. What is the purpose, and comprehension level, of those who enter institutions of higher education? Does the teaching process enhance these levels meaningfully? Does the outcome contribute to the requisite 21<sup>st</sup> century skills on the one hand and on the other to the research and innovation requirements?

A key concern cited by higher education Public Sector institutes is lack of autonomy with respect to framing course curriculum resulting in a course structure that is often outdated. The curriculum is often not oriented to encourage entrepreneurship and innovation among students. Our system turns out nearly seven lakhs science and engineering graduates every year. On the other hand, industry surveys show that only 25% of these are employable without further training.

Our present system of examination and evaluation are old and worn out. These are making our students and teachers examination and degree oriented and not knowledge oriented. Malpractices in the examination, bribes to examiners, and corruption everywhere in the examination process have caused setbacks to the validity, accountability and trust in the examination and evaluation system. An alternative examination system must be evolved to evaluate objectively the skills of productivity and creativity, as well as the abilities and potential of the students and the teacher alike.

The quality of infrastructure cannot be ignored either. Lack of physical facilities and academic inputs also affect the overall quality of academic atmosphere. Higher education institutes run by the public sector suffer from poor physical facilities and infrastructure. There are courses in which the demand is in excess of the available number of seats. Compared to the institutions of higher education in the west, our institutions suffer a great deal in terms of facilities available in the laboratory and the library both of which need to be strengthened in many ways.

Shortage of teachers, vacant faculty positions and failures to fill in time, has added another challenge to higher education. In many universities, particularly those funded by state governments, budgetary shortfalls lead to faculty positions deliberately being kept vacant. The use of technology in higher education remains limited and standards of research and teaching in our universities are below international standards with no Indian university finds a place in the rankings of top 200 institutions globally.

The public sector institutes are aligned to the skill and manpower needs of the market. They are not focusing on skill based courses to cater the needs of the industry and for enhancing the employability skill of the students. In most of the universities there is no such mechanism for faculty monitoring and evaluation. It cannot be denied that faculty evaluation help the teachers to develop self and improvement in teaching and quality education.

There is lack of focus on research with only 1% of the enrolled students pursuing research in various areas. According to data for 2009, India stood eleventh in terms of number of papers published, seventeenth in terms of the number of citations, and thirty fourth in terms of number of citations per paper. Our research output as global share of scientific publications was a mere 3.5% compared to 21% of china. The picture is no better in social sciences and humanities. In social sciences, India is 12<sup>th</sup> in ranking with 1.18 percent of global publication share compared to china's third rank and 5.14% share.

Higher education and research are complementary. However, in India only four percent of research expenditure is made through universities. In the United States the corresponding figure is 17 percent

and in Germany it is 23 percent. Moreover, India's higher education institutions are poorly connected to research centres. China's investment in research manpower, estimated at 708 researchers per one million people, is six times more compared to India.

In 21<sup>st</sup> century Government of India is setting NCHER institution for set up world standard research and services in higher education institution, but those achievements are no longer good enough. India's needs are growing and other nations are approaching or surpassing our performance. The National Commission on Accountability in Higher Education believes improved accountability for better results is imperative, but how to improve accountability is no so obvious.

Today challenges for teacher preparation are numerous, such as bridging the gaps between expected and practiced teacher competencies, development of techno-pedagogic skills, integration of life skills, gaps between teaching styles and learning styles , preparation for inclusive education. The latest Teacher Education Curriculum framework (2009) expects Humane and Professional Teachers. There has been a veritable explosion of knowledge in diverse fields and our courses cannot afford to remain stagnant. Higher education has been finding it difficult to meet the challenges of knowledge explosion; burgeoning educated unemployment, unplanned expansion, uneven growth, financial crisis, student unrest, teacher burnout and a number of other collateral problems. A consequence of the failure to meet these challenges is deterioration in standards, which is a serious threat to a developing country like ours.

### **Strategies to overcome challenges in Undergraduate level and to promote personality development and decision making of students through quality education**

Quality is a continuous journey. Quality means doing the right things rightly. Doing things right is efficiency and doing right things is effectiveness. The word quality refers to customer's satisfaction. Quality in higher education means the education system that ensures students to achieve their goals and thereby satisfy the needs of society and helps in national development. It has been observed that over the period of time, quality assurance organisations contributed substantially in improving the overall capability of the education systems in India and helped in sustaining the competitive advantage. Quality higher education is the key of development for any nation.

Academic reforms are necessary for imparting best quality of education that is oriented towards creativity, employability and innovation. Conversion of outputs of higher education into skilled workforce or human resource is possible by making higher education more socially relevant and need based. The four core factors that are crucial to any institution of higher learning and which should form inescapable elements in reviewing the performance of any institution are;



- Quality of teaching
- Quality of courses
- Quality of examination process
- Quality of staff development for increased teaching effectiveness (Ronald Barnett).The quality of education also depends on its content. It should be such that it fulfils the standards of excellence and proves relevant to the concerned society. In view of rapid developments taking place in various fields, change in academic aspects of higher education is highly essential.

The quality of research and innovation in higher education is crucial indicator of overall quality of various components of higher education system. The purpose of higher education is to pave the way for students to move from known to unknown by application of knowledge, through innovative and creative practices. For ensuring better quality research and innovation in accordance with the national and international expectations, it is necessary to establish new research centres (in form of Research University, Research Parks, R & D laboratories, Specialization Oriented Inter- University Centres(IUCs), Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) Cells, Data Bank, Centres of Excellence, University innovation Clusters etc.). Universities should be well equipped with advanced technology, suitable infrastructure and committed staff, specific allocation for research, foreign collaboration through liberal policies to receive the grants for research, research incentives for students and teachers in form of scholarships and performance based competitive remuneration. Academia industry interaction and partnership must be encouraged in order to ensure social relevance of research works and social responsibility of industrial sector.

### **Role of value orientation, skill development and improvement in teacher's competency to promote personality development and decision making of undergraduate students**

#### **□ Value Orientation**

Due concern and considerations have been attributed towards the value orientation of the total education system. The Oxford English Dictionary defines the word 'values' as principles or standards of behaviour: one's judgement of what is important in life. Through value one can distinguish between right and wrong. It is very popular term today and has been an integral part of our philosophical, social, and intellectual tradition for thousands of years. The significance of values in our individual and collective lives cannot be underestimated. Values are guiding principles of life that contribute to the all round development of an individual. Value adds quality to life. Value system is the backbone of society. Value based education not only provides us profession but also a purpose in life. The purpose of life is to know one self and others. Value education gives this knowledge that helps individual to make his life better, purposeful and further promotes personality development and decision making of

students. Value-based education is therefore is the need of the hour. Study of human values should be given importance in college and university level education.

#### □ **Importance on skill Development**

The major Skill shortage in Indian economy today is largely due to neglect of skill Training and Vocational education. Nations development is primarily depends upon the skills of the youth with innovation and creativity. Universities should give importance on the skill and manpower needs of the market. It further promotes personality development and decision making of students. Higher education institutions should focus on skill based courses to cater the needs of the industry and for enhancing the employability skill of the students. For this there should be direct relation between universities and industry to utilise the human resource in organised way.

#### □ **Improvement in Teacher's Competency**

The importance of the role of the teacher as a catalyst of change has become more critical today than ever before. Teacher should be a good academician and be a man of good personality. In the context of rapid changing global economy, it is imperative that the teachers should update their knowledge and skills and make use of new technologies and tools in the classroom situation. They can serve as constructively critical advocates for high quality education with deep understanding of students issues specifically w.r.t. personality development and decision making of students.. In the digital age teacher should be techno-pedagogue. He should be proficient in applying the principles of Techno-pedagogy, such as, Media Message Compatibility, Proximity of Message Forms, Integration of Message, Media and Modes, Media Language Proficiency, Message Authenticity etc. The teacher ought to be fully skilled on info-savvy skills (5As), such as Asking, Accessing, Analyzing, Applying and Assessing. Every teacher in this information age ought to be educational technologists. The technology is evolving very fast. The teacher ought to renew every moment. We teachers should learn the latest technology, should keep interest in technology & have favourable attitude towards technology.

#### **Conclusion**

The higher education especially undergraduate level plays a crucial role in strengthening the development of a nation. It will be difficult to establish an ideal Indian society unless we do not resolve the contemporary issues in higher education. The Indian higher education system is facing a number of challenges on various social, economic and technological grounds. It is not easy to overcome these challenges as there is a multiplicity of problems ailing these institutions. Good academic infrastructure, keeping technologically upgraded and a sound human resource and knowledge management will bring improvement in the educational institutions. The government should pay attention for increasing the quality of education in universities and alongside should also

invite foreign universities to set up their campuses here. If India is seriously interested in establishing itself strongly among the other developed countries then it has to empower itself in the field of higher education. For this purpose along with science and technology it must increase studies and research on basic knowledge, social science and other humanities subject from a practical viewpoint. The government should also try to develop and maintain a creative balance between the private and government sector so that the private universities are also under government control. Government should also provide autonomy to the universities and implement the reforms within a stipulated period of time. Three pillars of higher education are Access, Quality and Relevance need to be perfectly worked out and the objectives of reform and change in our higher education system must be expansion, excellence and inclusion. However, sincere efforts should be made at all levels to bring excellence in Indian higher education system.

### References

- Barnett,Ronald. (1994). *Academic community: Discourse or Discord?* Bristol:Jessica Kingsley Publishers Ltd.
- Gibbons, M.(1998). *Higher Education: Relevance in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. Paper presented at The World Bank Human Development Week) Virginia: Alexandria.
- GOI. (2013). Science, Technology and Innovation Policy.
- Higher Education in India: Issues, Concerns and New Directions (2003), UGC Recommendations, New Delhi.
- Kaul,S. (2006).*Higher Education in India: seizing the Opportunity*, Working Paper No. 179, New Delhi, Indian Council for Research on International Economic Relation.
- MHRD. (2013). Special Issue on Rastriya Uchchatar Sihiksha Abhiyan (RUSA): National Higher Education Mission.*University News*, 51(28), 13-140.
- NCTE. (2009). National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education: Towards Preparing Professional and Humane Teacher, NCTE, New Delhi.
- Phillip, G. Altbach. (2009). 'The Giants Awake: Higher Education System in China and India', *Economic and Political Weekly*, June 6, XLIV (23).
- Report on Higher Education (2014). Department of Higher Education. Ministry of Human Resource Development, www.planning commission.nic.in, Accessed on dt 22-08-2014.
- UGC. (2012).12<sup>th</sup> Plan Profile of Higher Education in India, New Delhi: UGC Publication.