

Planning and Management of Higher Education : A Macro-Perspective

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ABSTRACT

The organizational and management structures of higher education in India have some unique features. The major functions of institutions of higher education commonly designated as 'core functions' are teaching, research and extension through the acquisition, preservation and transmission of knowledge. The higher education system in the country has witnessed significant changes during the post-independence period. The paper aims to provide a quick overview of the development of higher education in the country during British rule and during the post-independence period, with special reference to planning and policy making. The major recommendations of the University Education Commission (1948-49) have been discussed to analyze the foundations on which the present-day university education has been developed. The features related to the organizational and management structures of the higher education system in India at the macro level have also been emphasized. The role of universities, UGC, and other agencies associated with the higher education system has been identified in a broad perspective. The issues relating to the examination system and on making of the overall system relevant to the present day needs have been discussed to give a perspective for the planning and management of the system. Though the University Grants Commission is the main instrument of federal government to coordinate and implement the programmes of Higher Education and Research yet there are quite a few structural and administrative limitations which hamper the effectiveness of the institutions. The role of the University Grants commission in relation to state governments has not been clearly defined.

Keywords: Higher Education, UGC, Planning and Management

Introduction

The term "Higher Education", in India, refers to post-secondary (post-plus two) of tertiary level education. All institutions imparting instruction leading to a university degree or and equivalent, may be termed as institutions of higher education. Although India has had a long tradition of institutions of higher learning, exemplified, amongst others, by the universities of Nalanda, Vikramshila, Vallabhi and Takshashila (now in Pakistan), the system of higher education in vogue

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today, essentially dates back to the middle of the nineteenth century. In a way the establishment of the three universities, in the three Presidency towns of Bombay, Calcutta and Madras, following the Wood's despatch of 1854, laid the foundation of the present-day university education in India.

It goes without saying that during the last four decades of development planning, higher education has witnessed significant changes. A quick perusal of developments in higher education indicates that, in spite of other various inadequacies and limitations, institutions of higher learning in India have helped in the accumulation of a stock of scientific and technical manpower which is the third largest in the world. The present system of higher education in India is perhaps the largest and the oldest in the world.

Retrospective & Overview of Higher Education

The major functions of institutions of higher education commonly designated as 'core functions' are teaching, research and extension through the acquisition, preservation and transmission of knowledge. An academic institution should inculcate in students the sense of nationhood and promote the basic human values. It should also promote a rational outlook and scientific temper, and a commitment to the pursuit of knowledge, it is necessary to have an overview of the higher education system in India.

1. Development during British Rule: The roots of higher education in India lie deep in antiquity. However, the modern system of higher education in India began with the legislation of Indian Universities Act of 1857. Although the East India Company made much noise about the modernizing role of higher education, these universities were set up essentially to provide legitimacy to the alien rule. Education was one of the potent instruments that was used to consolidate the British rule in India. As the alien rule stabilized, the role of universities and colleges became more specific, namely to:

- (i) Intellectually familiarize the students with European thought,
- (ii) transmit and propagate the cultural values and norms specific to Britain, &
- (iii) Produce a class of junior - level administrative staff required for various sectors of colonial administration.

The pattern of development of higher education in India, during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, amply shows that institutions of higher education were given a formal structure to achieve these objectives. It is unfortunate that no efforts were made to encourage the study of scientific and technical disciplines.

2. Post-Independence developments: The setting up of the University Education Commission (popularly known as the Radhakrishnan commission) in 1948 was major landmark for enunciating the goals and objectives of higher education in Independent India. The Commission made, after extensive deliberations, some very significant recommendations, many of which are pertinent even in the contemporary context. The recommendations included the following:

1. The aim of education must be to awaken and promote the innate ability of a person and to train him/her for development of self and democratic attitudes. Thus the purpose of education is to acquaint an individual with his/her cultural heritage and to impart to him/her professional and vocational training.

2. The over-crowding at universities and colleges should be prevented and the number of working days should be increased to a minimum of 180, exclusive of examination days.
3. The commission emphasized the role of post-graduate education, training and research for the advancement of knowledge. It suggested that Ph.D programmes should emphasise both the breadth and the width of knowledge. They should not lead to narrow specializations.
4. The Commission stressed the university's role in studying agriculture in an agrarian economy like India and suggested that special attention should be paid to the development of higher education in rural areas. It further suggested that on the basis of critical studies on the nature and type of manpower requirements, the scientific and technical base of the education system should be strengthened. Mere imitation of the existing institutional arrangement or those available abroad should be avoided.
5. Realizing the importance of the medium of instruction, the Commission recommended that English as a medium of instruction in higher education should be replaced as early as possible by an Indian language.
6. A university degree should not be required for government administrative services. Special State examination for recruitment to various State services should be organized.
7. Realising the deficiencies of the examination system and the magnitude of the wastage, the Commission recommended a thorough study of the scientific methods of educational testing and appraisal.

In subsequent years, several Commissions and Committees were also appointed by the government for educational restructure, and changes in the system of higher education in India. The important documents that have been published are:

- (a) Report of the Education Commission, 1964-66
- (b) National Policy on Education, 1968
- (c) Draft Policy on Education, 1978
- (d) National Commission on Teachers-II, 1983
- (e) Challenge of Education: A Policy Perspective, 1985
- (f) National Policy on Education, 1986
- (g) National Policy on Education: A Programme of Action, 1986
- (h) Towards an Enlightened and Human Society – A Perspective Paper on Education, 1960 and
- (i) National Policy on Education: A Programme of Action, 1992

In spite of the various recommendations and suggestions of the various Commissions and Committees, university education in India continues to suffer from a number of deficiencies. A variety of complex forces have affected the development of higher education in Independent India. The present day scenario of higher education, particularly, is the outcome of the following factors:

- (i) The need for import substitution in the field of intellect and building up a self reliant

academic structure.

- (ii) The demand for educated manpower requirement to meet the needs of planned economic development.
- (iii) The pressure from those who were denied higher education for centuries and, wrongly or rightly, regarded it as a passport for entry into organized a labour market and to acquire a comfortable white collar job.
- (iv) The push factors operating due to rapid expansion of school education, particularly, due to attempts towards the universalisation of elementary education and
- (v) The need to upgrade educational qualifications so as to provide an advantage in a situation of job-scarcity.

Status of the Planning & Management of Higher Education

The organizational and management structures of higher education in India have some unique features. The present system, under which colleges are affiliated to the universities was introduced in 1857 with the setting up of three universities in India on the pattern of the University of London, UK. Three different functions of the university that are related to affiliated colleges are as follows:-

First the university lays down the courses of study;
second it exercises some academic control; and
finally it conducts the examination at the end of each academic year and awards degrees to the successful candidates.

In terms of their structure and organization, the universities can be classified into three categories:

1. Unitary Universities : A unitary university is one wherein teaching work and research is organized on the campus and the bulk of the students reside in hostels or within the prescribed jurisdiction of the university. The Aligarh Muslim University; Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi; M.S. University, Baroda and Jawaharlal Nehru University, Delhi are examples of unitary Universities in India.

2. Federal University : A federal university is the one where teaching work is shared by the university with its constituent colleges. The University of Delhi has a federal character.

3. Affiliating University :

- (i) Besides its own postgraduate teaching and research departments, an affiliating university has a number of colleges affiliated to it. Many of these colleges also undertake post – graduate teaching and research. The universities of Mumbai, Utkal, Nagpur, Andhra, Madras, Mysore, Calcutta, and many others fall under this category.
- (ii) Universities in India are statutory organizations established under an act of the State legislature or by an Act of parliament. In addition, the Ministry of Human Resource Development, on the advice of University Grants Commission (UGC) has the authority to declare an institution as a deemed – to – be university or (more simply) deemed university.
- (iii) A number of professional bodies have been established which are responsible for the

development of professional education. Among these mention may be made of the All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE), the Medical Council of India (MCI) and the National Council for Technical Education (NCTE).

University Grants Commission

In the case of higher education, the responsibility for maintenance and coordination of standards rests with the Central Government. Among the large number of measures suggested by the University Education Commission (1948-49), to strengthen higher education and improve the standards of teaching and research, was the proposal to establish the University Grants Commission (UGC). The UGC, in its present form, was constituted in 1956 as a statutory organization through an Act of Parliament. The setting up of the UGC was a landmark in the development of higher education in India. Although, the UGC is designated as a grant-giving agency, its main function relates to the maintenance and coordination of standards. The UGC also advises State Governments on the setting up of new colleges, initiates programmes for raising standards, and provides special assistance for the spread of education among the women and scheduled case and scheduled tribes population. The UGC has now given high priority to the implementation of the programmes flowing from the National Policy on Education, 1986. Some of the major areas on which the UGC is now concentrating on:

- (i) setting up autonomous colleges;
- (ii) redesigning courses;
- (iii) setting up State Councils of Higher Education;
- (iv) developing/experimenting with alternative models of university management;
- (v) conducting national qualifying examination for the recruitment of teachers; and
- (vi) training/orientation of teachers by providing assistance for setting up academic staff colleges in the universities.

Financing of Higher Education

The finances for Higher Education come from a number of sources. Besides fees, the State governments and the Central government, through various agencies like the UGC, ICAR etc., and even directly provide funds for the development, maintenance and quality improvement of programmes of the universities. Over the years, universities have become over dependent on Central and State grants. In the following sub-sections we will discuss the mechanism that are being followed in generating grants in the context of higher education and certain general problems regarding funding system.

1. The mechanism for grants : The grants to universities and colleges normally come from the UGC and state governments. These can be broadly classified under two categories:

- (a) Maintenance grants :** Maintenance grants are basically meant for the day to day to functioning of institutions. The norms vary from State to State.
- (b) Development grants :** Development grants are usually given on a matching basis for various purposes to enable institutions to use the assistance from UGC, ICAR, etc. These grants can be for non-recurring expenditure such as buildings and equipment,

or for recurring items such as the salaries of staff. While the former are usually one-time grants, the latter can be given on a long-term recurring basis.

2. The problem of Funding: In spite of the fact that the UGC (and to some extent the AICTE) is the main instrument of federal government to coordinate and implement the programmes of higher education and research, there are quite a few structural and administrative limitations which hamper the effectiveness of the institutions. The role of the UGC in relation to State governments has not been clearly defined. The existing grant-in-aid rules do not allow for innovation and experimentation in university institutions. The procedures and policies of State assistance to institutions of higher education do not always encourage planned institutional development. In a large number of States, the institutions have to wait for a specific period before becoming eligible for government assistance.

The Examination System:

The management scenario in the context of higher education will not be complete if one does not focus on the examination system. During the last few years, the examination system has lost much of its credibility. In certain aspects the situation has deteriorated to such an extent that meritorious students find themselves to be at a serious disadvantage. In the recent past, many attempts have been made to reform the examination system. These relate to the introduction of continuous internal evaluation, within the semester system, and evaluation in terms of letter grade and final evaluation in terms of grade point average. In India the universities follow both the annual and the semester systems while most conventional, universities follow the annual pattern (at least at the undergraduate level) the professional universities (and professional faculties in conventional universities) have adopted the semester system. In case of universities, following the annual pattern, an end-of-year examination is held between March and May and the results are declared about two months later. The universities conduct most of the examinations. However, with a view to decentralize the examination system, as also to reduce the responsibility of the university-administration, some affiliating universities have reduced the number of university examinations for a degree, by handing over responsibility for the preliminary-stage examinations to the colleges.

A Perspective for Higher Education:

In the light of the issues facing the system and the challenges and uncertainties of future, it would be extremely difficult to prepare the perspective with a fair degree of precision. Nevertheless, taking note of the major technological changes and the critical role of human resources, both as producers as well as users of technological innovations for raising the quality of life, the National Policy on Education, 1986 has emphasized that investment in the overall development of human resources is non-negotiable. The NPE-1986 reiterates and suggests new initiatives in the areas of autonomy in universities and colleges, and decentralized planning and management. The Policy has also emphasized on the role of open learning systems in enlarging the opportunities for higher education. An important part of the policy statement is the emphasis on making the system work. If education is to meet the future challenge, then the assertion that

all teachers should teach and all students must learn becomes highly important. The strategy in this regard consists of:

- (i) better deal to teachers;
- (ii) provision of improved student services and insistence on observance of the accepted norms of behavior;
- (iii) provision of better facilities to the institutions; and
- (iv) creating a system of performance appraisal of institutions according to the standards and norms set up at the national level.

Achieving excellence in higher education involves the strengthening of infrastructure, modernization and changes in curricula, raising the quality and performance of teachers enhancing the motivation of students for learning. In spite of the significant progress that has been achieved so far, many reforms have been found to be proceeding at a snail' pace. Despite the various recommendations, many problems in higher education in India continue to persist due to populist pressures, and financial and organizational constraints. The All India Council of Technical Education (AICTE) was set up in 1945 as a national expert body to advise the central government and the state governments on the development of technical education. The UGC has established Academic Staff Colleges for the orientation of the newly appointed university and college teachers, and for providing refresher courses to existing teachers.

Summary and Conclusion

The higher education system in the country has witnessed significant changes during the post-independence period. And to understand this, we had a quick overview of the development of higher education in the country during British rule and during the post-independence period, with special reference to planning and policy making. While continuing our discussion, we listed the major recommendations of the university Education Commission (1948-49) and based on these we tried to analyse the foundations on which the present-day university education has been developed. We have also discussed in the article, the features related to the organizational and management structures of the higher education system in India at the macro level. While discussing this we have identified the role of universities, UGC, and other agencies associated with the higher education system, in a broad perspective. We have also touched upon certain points with regard to the mechanism followed in financing the higher education system in the country at present, and also some of the major problems faced by the system in this regard. To give a perspective for the planning and management of the system, we have discussed the issues relating to the examination system, and on making of the overall system relevant to the present day needs. When the issues described above are put together in the context of future challenges, one gets an idea about the diverse sources from which the development of education in general, and higher education in particular, is constrained. Hence, for the policy reforms to be successfully implemented, one would require a very decisive and strong leadership in the context.

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