Governance of Higher Education: Addressing Educational Issues

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ABSTRACT:

Governance means the way the government conducts its operations in economic, financial, industrial, agricultural, political and social spheres that concern the citizen and the country. This word Governance id viewed from several perceptions, but in parlance of the institutions of Higher Education. It is more understood as a framework comprising of a series of concentric circles or as a set of overlapping circles. In either case, it is a set of people from amongst the stakeholders that exercise their influence on institutional policies for good and efficient governance. The recommendations report on quality assurance in higher education under the Golden Jubilee Seminar conducted by UGC, titled "Higher Education in India- issues, concerns and new directions" states that 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 countries, not only in their scholastic attainments, but also in terms of the value system and richness of their personality. Unless the quality and standard of Indian higher educational institutions is enhanced zealously and sustained at a high level though innovation, activity and regular monitoring. It seems to be difficult for the Indian academics / professionals to complete in the world sence. This calls for suitable assessment and accreditation mechanism to be available in the country to ensure the quality and standard of the academic / training programme at higher educational institutions. The assessment has to be transparent to gain the acceptance of the society at large.

KEYWORDS: governance, higher education system, regulating authorities, ICT.

INTRODUCTION:

The Concept of governance for higher education predominantly refers to the internal structure. organization and management of autonomous institutions. The organization of

internal governance is generally composed of a governing board/senate/executive council, the university Vice Chancellor as (executive head) with a team of administrative staff, faculty senates, academic deans, department chairs, and usually some form of organization for student representation. Whether college and university education adult education, technical and vocational education, the complexities of managing education in today's world proves true all levels of private and public education.

As universities have become increasingly interdependent with external forces, institutions are accountable to external organization relationships such as state government/federal government. The nature of the managing relationships characterize whether governance is corporate and business-oriented or defined more by a collegial shared form of governance. "Governance", in this sense as discussed by Kezar and Eckel (2004), is a multi-level concept including several different bodies and processes with different decision making function. In this way, governance is sometimes defined at difference to the internal management of institutions. Throughout the world, many federal, state and local governments have begun to establish coordinating and governing boards as both buffer and bridge to coordinate governance and institutional management.

What then is good governance? Good governance is supposed to exist if three objectives are achieved. The first is there should be quality of law and effective implementation of laws. Secondly, there should be opportunity for every individual to realise his full human potential and thirdly there should be effective productivity and no waste in every sector. Kautilya says in his Arthashastra: "In the happiness of his subject lies the king's happiness, in their welfare his welfare. He shall not consider as good only that which pleases him but treat as beneficial to him whatever pleases his subject".

Praja sukhe sukham rajyaha, prajanamcha hitehitam;

natma priyam hitam rajnaha, prajanam chahitam piryam.

According to Dr. M S swaminathan, by 2020 the 'divides' what we call the demographic divide, the digital divide, the genetic divide, and the nutritional divide will widen, unless we take strong steps to bridge the gap between the developed and the developing countries. The onus lies on our higher education institutions, the great centres of learning. It can easily be inferred that 'knowledge' occupies a prominent role in the development discourse and hardly there is any need to emphasize that the triangle of 'knowledge', 'information' and 'wisdom' shall become the drivers of tomorrow's economy. (Shah 2010)

There is a need for change in the perception and attitude of higher education institutions realizing that their field is wider, task is greater and goal is higher in building a strong and happy India. These institutions are not merely places of conferring degrees and distinctions. They, besides being places of learning are also centres of service, and wholesome development of human personality; of men and women, turning them into fine

human beings. The universities can't stand isolated; they should be active participants in development activities, which are benevolent and beneficial for people. It is unfortunate that the hopes, aspiration and expectations of students are not fulfilled to the extent expected. (Ibid p.4) Therefore, it is time to mend and amend the systems which have a negative effect on the society.

Higher Education in India: Present Profile

We may consider the major deficiencies of Higher Education System in India, compared with the prevailing trends in the modern world, as follows:

- Higher education all over the world is in the university campuses, while in India, it is predominantly in affiliated colleges, many of which are mall, under equipped and understaffed.
- India has nearly 25,000 colleges, 240 State Universities and 39 institutions of national importance and nearly 128 Deemed Universities. For a country of the size of India, with more than a billion populations, the number of universities is too low.
- The few universities that we have, many are loaded with administrative and routine unacademic work because of the affiliating system and the number of an affiliated colleges that come under them.
- Nearly ninety percent of the undergraduate students and sixty percent of the postgraduate students are in the affiliated colleges. Consequently, there is no appreciable research atmosphere. This situation is academically quite unacceptable.
- There are multiplicity of national institutions associated with the regulations of understates and colleges in the country with overlapping responsibilities leading to duplication and confusion. (Tandon 2008).
- The examination system is outdated and stereo typed, if gives more emphasis to cramming.
- The public-private partnership in the higher education is negligible.
- On almost all indications i.e. faculty standards library facilities, computer availabilities, student-teacher ratio, higher education is in crying need for up gradation.
- 90% of the colleges and 68% universities across the country are of middling or poor quality.
- The dropout rate among ST is maximum (61.09%).
- There is only one computer for 229 students.[5]

Actually, the major challenge before the Indian Higher Education is now to create new strategies, policies and programs of revolutionary nature that would lead to the direction of qualitative improvement, equality, inculcation of values and commitment, integration of socio-cultural nature and involvement of all people in the process of development.

Higher Education Governance: Indian Scenario

- **Multiple Regulating Authorities**–There are a number of regulating agencies for higher education in India like UGC, AICTE, MCI, VCI, CCIM (Central Council of Indian Medicine) etc. This leads to duplication of procedures causing immense loss of time and resources?

- **Long Funding Cycle** – In general, it takes a lot of time from request for funds to its disbursement due to manual verification and performance analysis in conventional way of the educational institutions being funded.

- **Longer Accreditation Process** – There are several national accreditation bodies like NAAC, NBA, ICAR, VCI, ICMR, etc. to maintain and improve the quality of education in a University/Institute. These constitutional bodies take approximately nine months time for the accreditation process to be completed even if everything is in order.

- **Fraudulent Practices** – There are many educational institutions and students involved in fraudulent activities, despite a great control of governing bodies in Higher Education which is a major concern for various Recruiters/educational institutions. It is also a negative indicator of Indian Higher Education System for various Multi National Companies (MNCs) who take message back to their countries that ultimately affect the name and fame of our country.

- **Declining Quality of Education** – The number of employable students emerging out of some of the renowned higher educational Institutions and Universities is very less. According to a study by NASSCOM, of the 3 million graduates and post graduates added to the work force in India every year, only 25% of technical and 10-15% of non- technical graduates are employable in different sector of economy including IT sector, On the other hand, there are some bright or employable students of lesser-known educational institutions who are deprived of opportunities of campus selection as the employers normally focus on elite institutions.

- **Obsolete Curriculum –** The course curriculum in most of the Higher Educational Institutions is outdated, irrelevant and not up to the requirements of the industry/employer. Today, the demand of employer is far from the learning that a student has gone through. Based on the criterion of little practical knowledge, may graduates are losing possible job opportunities in various National and MNCs inside and outside the country.

In Governance, managing structures themselves have become increasingly complex to establish a means of organizing and equally complicated system of intra-organizational, inter-organizational and governmental relationships. With changing roles in human resources and the external pressures for accountability affecting university relationships internally, partnership between faculty and administration is required. The faculty involvement in governance of higher education is critical. For providing educational support, the faculty should advise administration in developing curriculum, methods of instruction, evaluation and budgeting etc.

North Zone Vice Chancellor's Conference-2010

In her thematic address Prof Beena Shah, Secretary General, AIU delineated that expansion, access, equity and quality are the major challenges faced by the higher education in the country. In the emerging global scenario where knowledge society and knowledge economy are evolving as the major drivers of change, higher education has to play a multifaceted role. She highlighted that regional imbalances, unequal participation of different groups and the policies of affirmative action for inclusive growth with quality and standard, digital divide, continuous deterioration of social and moral values are some of the major concerns which need to be addressed on priority basis, Making a pointed reference to the recommendations of various commissions and committee established during the post independence period Prof Shah observed that quality of education in general and higher education in particular has become a major concern.

Citing statistics on growth of higher education system in the country Prof Shah remarked that though the expansion has been very impressive, absence of multidisciplinary approach, obsolete courses with inflexible structures and content, lack of infrastructural facilities, weak linkage between industry and academia, insufficient use of ICT, lack of cohesive policies to attract and retain qualified faculty, overlapping regulatory mechanisms and liberal personal promotion scheme for teachers are some of the grey areas which needs to be re-examined. She stressed that to address these challenges, higher education should be demand driven, enabling to retain its highly qualified manpower within the country.

Prof Shah asserted that India. as an emerging economic as well as knowledge power, has the potentials to counter these challenges. She suggested that academic restructuring, sharing of expertise, innovations and technology, knowledge management, training for capacity building, creating employability, entrepreneurship and media convergence are the strategies which the universities can adopt to improve the quality. Policies need to be formulated to bridge various gaps existing in the society, than only the increasing aspirations of the youth of the country can be fulfilled and their potentials can be utilized of taking the country to new heights. Mentioning the famous quotation of Swamy Vivekananda that we Want the education by which character is formed, strength of mind is increased. intellect is expanded, and by which one can stand on own feet, she pleaded that the universities should strive to inculcate social, moral and ethical values among the youth and make them self-sufficient, which is the fundamental objective and beauty of our indigenous education system.

Role of ICT in Governance of Higher Education:-

In the traditional type of teaching, the students have had no choice but to accept what and how learning has been imparted in the classrooms. The institutions have also been traditional and unexciting. ICT options have changed the perspectives now we have many options and choices having competitive edge over other some of them are anytime and anyplace learning furthermore, ICT has the potency of expending the cool of teachers and

students and reducing the cost of education. The Ministry of Human Resource Development has already launched the National Mission on education through ICT at a large scale. A number of higher education institutions are involved in developing contents, governance model and other related aspects to make the education a learner friendly by application of various tools of information and communication technology thus, the role of ICT is manifold in the delivery of good and competitive educational environment.

ICT can play a major role in reducing operational inefficiency and improving decision-making in many areas of governance. There is need of an integrated "Apex Higher Education Body" (AHEB) at the central level with its regional centres at state level to empower the governing bodies of the higher education system to administer the progress of the education plan in the whole country and serve various stakeholders in a much better manner through use of ICT. Through ICT all the Universities and Colleges may register themselves with the Apex Body and furnish report on periodic (quarterly/monthly) basis details of fund utilization, student's performance, progress of courses and HRD position similarly, all the governing bodies including UGC, AICTE, ICAR, MCI etc. may also register themselves with the apex body and furnish details of fund allocation, approval processes for the university / college along with required documents and list of necessary details required for accreditation. Governing bodies may empanel some of the organizations selected through a process or set up a separate competent body, to become key contributors in providing inputs regarding the latest trends in the industries/market, obsolete course contents and details of upcoming projects / employment. This would enable the governing bodies to keep the universities / colleges linked with the market needs to reorient their educational strategies.

Higher Education, despite its multi-dimensional and multi-fold expansion, still faces the problem of access and quality globally more specifically, in India. It also faces constraints w.r.t. availability of qualified and dedicated teachers, flexibility for students in terms of courses, time, examinations; good research environment, funding, cost of higher education especially technical courses, etc. Public universities be strengthened and at the same time, private investment be encouraged. Industries and big corporate houses be roped in lieu of their corporate social responsibility to fund education institutes, adopt poor students or to directly enter the field of education by opening college, universities, where merit should be the sole criterion of admission. Universities and colleges need to be allowed more autonomy, flexibility and independence in developing courses, selecting students and securing and appointing faculty. I feel there needs to be more interaction between the different universities for transparency about the courses, fees, appointments, evaluation, research ought to be in place Institutes of Higher Education should be places to create, generate and disseminate quality know-how, unhindered and unobstructed, should provide inclusive education to aspiring students, economic or other constraints notwithstanding university and colleges must thrive on their intellectual capital. I hope and with that the Accreditation Regulatory Authority Bill, The Foreign University Bill, The Unfair Practices Bill, The Educational

Tribunal Bill and the new Regulatory Body, i.e., NCHER, will be able to provide necessary impetus to Higher Education in India.

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