Original Research Paper

ENHANCING EXCELLENCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Education

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ABSTRACT   Academic institutions globally have long recognized as a major contributing factor to the society by improving the quality of human life. The current wisdom is that 21st century students wish to have global exposure to different facets of life. There is an unquenchable appetite for quality education in India and abroad. Indian higher education sector is therefore expected to be able to produce global citizens to enhance global employability while keeping them firmly rooted in Indian traditions and culture. Global universities must be permitted to open educational institutions of research and higher diplomas.

INTRODUCTION

According to a saying "if you plan for a year, plant crops; if you plan for ten years, plant trees; and if you plan for hundred years, educate the people ". .Knowledge is power. Initiatives taken to make the citizens of a country more knowledgeable is the simplest way to empower every citizen to become self-reliant, and self-sufficient that leads to self-sustainability. The twentieth century had experienced an atomic explosion and the 21st century is experiencing a knowledge explosion. The use of internet has shrunk the globe to a village and the citizens are open world knowledge. The real wisdom lies in equipping every individual to handle this information wisely. Academic institutions all over the world are contributing significantly to social development and refinement of individual perception. Their role has been a vital source of industrial development and creating wealth. The academic inputs, therefore, must be significant to satisfy the competitive urge for excellence in the world.

Information technology in higher education

Information technology can provide a medium for teaching and learning and contribute flexibility to ensure provision. The valid uses of Information Technology are
1.Distance learning via electronic networks
2.Open learning through student controlled learning pathways
3.he process if changing teaching and learning styles by using a narrow range of information technology-based facilities

All the above fill a particular need for a particular topic within a particular course. Now the question is whether the student would be ready for such pedagogy at the level of higher education and whether the increased hardware and networking facilities would make the manipulation of relevant information at a level that not only can contribute to flexibility in teaching and learning but also enhances the quality of the student's experiences.

In higher education the computers in Teaching initiative CT was established in 1986 to encourage the development of computer-assisted teaching and learning to 'evaluate the educational potential of information technology and to promote an awareness of the potential of information technology among lectures and students in all disciplines'.

Information technology benefits both the students as well as the teachers. Both get to know each other to enable the rapport normally associated with good teaching. In the electronic mail system students can query the answer remotely through modems. So much of the communications between students and tutor can be maintained and enhanced without impinging on more tutor time when staff-student ratio deteriorates.

Some faculty use e-mail and discussion lists to cover basic issues so that classroom time can be devoted to discussion and highly contentious issues. In satellite classroom, learning is expected to occur off campus in other social settings. It is extremely useful in 'service learning'.

Ambitions for higher education

Global influences also affect higher education. Today virtually every country has three higher education ambitions. First is a demand for greater levels of access, and in every part of the world access to higher education is rising rapidly. In the late 1060s, there was no nation in Western Europe where the proportion of the age group is higher education was greater than 8 percent, today there is no nation in Western Europe when the proportion is lower than 35 percent. Worldwide enrollment is growing between 10 and 15 percent per year, Including in middle and low- income countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America.

The second ambition in every country is to improve the quality of higher education. Over the last decade there has been a revolution in the criteria that help define higher education quality. High-qualify higher education now requires electronic and modernity in classrooms, dorms libraries, science laboratories, study halls. Students are often older, work part time, and live far away from the campus. High-quality syllabi are no longer based on textbooks but on the most up-to-date information from print and electronic sources. Information for students is scanned and available online. Students have access to curricular information wherever they live or travel.

What's more, classroom instruction has changed. Class time is no longer devoted to providing information for students, instead it is devoted to the analysis of information absorbed prior to class. The internet and other forms of electronic information have changed the academic library and enhanced its quality. There is less need for faculty or students to visit the physical place. A high-quality academic library used to be defined by the quantity of the holdings. Today it is defined by the quantity of its access to information.

Awakenings call in enhance excellence

Education which has always been considered a 'social good' in India is now being increasingly regarded as a 'tradable commodity'. Significant factors like increasing competition, widespread educational activities, global character and enhancement of technology are creating a great impact on higher education that provides highly talented human resources for economic development, brain power enhancement and research in several areas. Students who are the main stakeholders in the process of education must be given right to choose the nature university from which they would like to acquire education.

Foreign universities are expected to provide the much needed capacity and new ideas on higher education, management, curriculum, teaching methods and research. Top-class foreign universities are anticipated to add prestige to India's post-secondary system. It will help a higher education institution rise to the standards of its foreign partner. Either way, for foreign universities it's a win – win situation. Therefore, entry of foreign universities into India, like foreign universities should be allowed freely, placing restrictions only on universities and institutions based on religious affiliations. In fact, we should welcome foreign universities to set up campuses. This would make our Indian universities and colleges more conscious of the current global best practices and more

competitiveness from the demand point of view.

Enhancing quality in higher education

Quality in higher education has been much discussed in the recent past. Higher education is expected to be accountable for spending public money and for effectiveness and efficiency by which it delivers education. Higher education as many claim must be transparent in its activities in order to satisfy the taxpayer, the educational planners, students, parents, employees and professional organizations.

Quality in higher education is a matter of integrity of the entire institution. It can't be applied only in the teaching components disregarding research at administration or community service.

Green describes the following concept of quality in higher education.
• Traditional: Something of outstanding status.
• Conformance to specifications or students
• Fitness for purpose
• Effectiveness in achieving institutional goals.
• Satisfying customers' needs
• Curriculum design and review.
• Teaching – learning environment
• Student support
• Staff resources
• Learning resources
• Assessment and monitoring
• Input-output quality control.

Challenges in enhancing higher education

The challenges such as urge for excellence, up-gradation of skills, providing mass education, IT revolution , resource crunch, teacher empowerment, student support servicing etc. have to be faced effectively. Universities shall be helped to be equipped with adopting a mindset to meet the challenges of the 21st century and strive to survive as institutions of excellence.

Suggestions

1.Educational institutions have to build credibility for themselves and make their operations simple, efficient and meaningful.
2.Enhance efficiency by imparting professional training to the existing universities.
3.Availability of equipments, research and teaching facilities of the highest order must become the priority of all universities, in order to benefit a large section of our population.
4.Establishment of a regulatory mechanism that ensures students welfare is not compromised and quality standards are maintained.

Conclusion

In this day and age of globalization and privatization with increased competition and to meet the new challenges of the 21st Century higher education should be radically transformed. Quality development should be more emphasized to make higher education relevant to the present day. It is necessary to set up a chain of educational institutions which are accredited, globally acceptable, highly competitive, foolproof, transparent, accountable, dependable and first rate. We should also keep in mind that quality teachers and quality infrastructure, under quality leadership.

Reference
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