



IMPACT OF DISTANCE EDUCATION AND PRIVATISATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION

Education

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims to analyze impact of Distance Education and privatisation of higher education in the Indian society. The government of India introduced new economic policies namely globalisation, privatisation and liberalization to increase employment output and income opportunities and achieve economic development at international level by the impact of distance education. Privatisation has brought about rapid change in the educational scenario of India. It is seen that privatisation encourages the individuals and religious organisations to establish colleges in higher education level. Consequently, higher educational institutions are found throughout the country. It creates the gap between the demand and supply of higher education. It not only increases the cost but also decreases the quality of education. Thus privatisation has positive and negative impact on education and society.

KEYWORDS

Distance Education, Privatisation, Economic Policy

INTRODUCTION:

The changes of privatisation have been blowing strongly over the economic scene of the country. Of late, higher education in the country is slowly coming under the grip of privatisation. The country at the threshold of 21st century has provided challenges facing higher education. The challenges are arising from unplanned growth also changing economic scenario. This scenario is based on two grounds. Firstly, the state exchequer can no longer bear the burden of public enterprises. Secondly, the operation of public sector enterprises left much to be desired, they turned out to be failures in competitive efficiency. The reasons for higher education coming under the grip of privatisation manifest these two grounds. The increasing strains on public resources had made funding of subsidized higher education increasingly difficult.

IMPORTANCE OF PRIVATISATION:

Since the dawn of the planning era in India, higher education has been heavily subsidised by the state and it is only with the New Education Policy (1986) that debate for privatisation of higher education really started. It has rightly pointed out following reasons for higher education being driven to privatisation :-

1. A sage has now come when the state is finding it very difficult to meet the democratic aspirations of the people for further expansion due to paucity of resources. It is therefore, felt that the private sector to be inducted in education, so that it can share the burden of state in funding education.
2. Education being a factor in the process of development is to longer view as a social service. Rather, it is considered as a necessary economic input and such investment in Education is treated as contributory factor to human resource development.
3. Privatisation can respond to market signals or market demand for labour in a more efficient which finds it very difficult to introduce flexibility in its operations of HRD.
4. The public sector has failed to generate resources from the recipients of education. Education has become more or less a free good. This has devalued education in the eyes of recipients.
5. Privatisation by generating more resources from student fees will help reduce fiscal burden of the government.

THE EVIL EFFECT OF PRIVATISATION:

Privatisation of higher education has its evil effect particularly in the form of denial of equal educational opportunities to the people. High level of fees, extraction of hefty donations and such other methods of mobilising private finances are inequitable in nature and undesirable in a nation, which is committed to the attainment of socio-economic justice for its people as a constitutional mandate.

The government could hardly regulate the functioning, including the financing aspects of the private institutes. Largely catering to the well-to-do sections of society only, the fact that privatisation of higher education may provide relief to the government is found to be only a myth. Privatisation is the force which generally works against financial, educational and other social considerations of a welfare state.

STATE FUNDING OF HIGHER EDUCATION:

The Article 41 hints that "the state shall, within the limits of its economic capacity and development make effective provision for securing the right to work, to education and to public assistance in cases of unemployment, old age, sickness and disablement and in other cases of undeserved want. Accordingly, it is obligatory on the part of the state to allocate more resources to education with a view to (a) providing free and compulsory elementary education to all children up to 14yrs (b) providing secondary education and higher education to more and more of its citizens so that they can exercise their right to live with dignity.

But unfortunately, the state is still a long way from this constitutional goal. Higher education is not receiving the desirable resources allocations. The state is finding it hard to mobilise resources to meet the growing educational needs of the people. The institution of higher learning gave up self-reliance and became dependent on the government for salaries and other expenses. Further, most of these institutions provide general and conventional courses in Arts, Science and Commerce, which have neither relevance nor quality. Higher education system as it obtains today suffers from several lacunae such as (1) proliferation of sub-standard institutions (2) failure to maintain academic calendars (3) outdated curriculum (4) disparities in the quality of education (5) Lack of adequate support for research (6) Lack of funds.

THE REMEDY - DISTANCE EDUCATION:

Development and expansion of distance education is worldwide phenomena and its popularity is due to its openness, flexibility, wider access, multi media teaching and the wide range of course openings relevant to the social needs. Distance education has not only ushered in an era of globalisation, but is emerging as an effective tool to overcome the evil of privatisation and in providing wider access to higher education.

The higher education system needs to be made more vibrant, flexible, modern and relevance should be built into it. In this context, distance education assumes greater significance in view of its cost efficiency, flexibility in operation and diversity in academic content not bound by time and space. Promising in both quality and cost-efficiency, the distance education system, is undoubtedly a step further in the realm of higher education.

Distance Education is a potent weapon, against the ongoing privatisation of higher education in more ways than one-The significance of distance education as an alternative to privatisation can be better substantiated by the following arguments:-

1. The traditional system has neither the capacity nor the resources to meet the growing needs of higher education because of the mounting economic constraints-the Distance Education system can meet the new higher education needs in a more realistic way at much lower cost.
2. Privatisation of Higher Education leads to inequitable education opportunities and deprives the poor section of access to higher

Education. On the other hand Distance Education system well supported by the state provides equal opportunities to all section of society.

3. Privatisation of Higher Education will make it difficult for the state to monitor the system and there is not much scope for the accountability of private institutes engage in imparting Higher Education. The Distance Education as state sponsored institutions can function under the control & guidance of the states and thus give it more scope for accountability and direct state control.
4. The traditional system education, as pursued by the private institution in Higher Education, Provides Education, within the time frame and is not flexible enough to adopt itself to the changing social necessity and demands.

These are but a few arguments which point out the need for strengthening Distance Education System in India, as an alternative to privatisation.

CONCLUSION:

Education being an investment in the future, the state & the society can't be permitted to abdicate their two-fold responsibility of ensuring fast, that nobody spreads and permits fundamentalism, intolerance, ideological functionalism and such other vices in the name of privatisation of Higher Education and second, that merit and not money, caste or creed is the sole criterion of selection to any institution. Democratic values, social equity are too precious to be scarified for economic pragmatism. In this backdrop Distance Education system is undoubtedly, effective alternative system given socio economic conditions prevalent in the country.

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