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*Towards Higher
Inclusive Growth:
Role Of Higher
Education*

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ABSTRACT

The Constitution guarantees equality of opportunity in terms of access to education irrespective of caste, gender or race. It also provides for affirmative action in favour of disadvantaged sections of the society to achieve higher inclusive growth. Access to higher education on an equitable basis can be a powerful framework to achieve such objective. While significant increase in access to higher education has happened over the last decade there is serious asymmetry in terms of Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) for disadvantaged sections. The paper brings out the impact of initiatives particularly by the private sector in fostering higher education in technical subjects in India as also the bottlenecks in achieving equity. It flags the specific major policy initiatives that are required to facilitate the process of better access and higher excellence so that the employability of the students in the global space improves significantly and Human Development Index (HDI) increases significantly in India. A unique experiment in KISS Odisha shows remarkable convergence of equity with excellence. The paper avers that through vibrant public private partnership, increased allocation and an independent regulatory mechanism the objectives higher inclusive growth and excellence in higher education are eminently achievable.

Keywords: Gross Enrolment Ratio, Human Development Index, KISS Odisha

1. INTRODUCTION

India ranks 135th out of 187 countries in terms of Human Development Index (HDI) with a score of 0.582 as per the latest Human Development Report (HDR) 2014. In terms of Mean Years of Schooling (MYS) India has score of only 4.4 (2012) as against around 11 to 12 years for most of the developed countries and Emerging Market Economies like Korea. What is further disconcerting is that the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in Higher Education is around 17% as against 75% in Russia and around 95% in USA. This is despite the significant contribution made by the private sector for providing impetus to technical education since 2000; increasing GER from about 10% (2000) to around 16.7% now. The 12th plan aims at GER of 25% by 2017 while buttonholing Equity, Access and Excellence as the three leitmotifs for achieving Higher Inclusive Growth.

Objectives of the Study

- Evolution of policy so far & plan priorities for higher education
- Growth trends of colleges & universities, gross enrolment ratio and allocation trends
- Impact of various initiatives on access, equity and excellence
- Convergence of access and excellence in tribal education
- Major areas for policy re-orientation to bolster inclusive growth

2. EVOLUTION OF POLICY & PLAN INITIATIVES

The Kothari Commission (1966) and the National Education Policy (1986) and revised National Education Policy (1992) have delineated the policy thrust areas for the government in higher education. The following table sums-up the major recommendations-

Table 1: Summary of Recommendations for Higher Education

- | |
|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kothari Commission (1966): Improve productivity; Treat science as a basic component in education and Improve research in S&T • NPE (1986): Greater role in reinforcing integrative character of research, advanced study and international aspects of education and cultural development • NPE (1992): Facilitate inter regional mobility by providing equal access to every Indian. In R&D, S&T special measures will be taken to establish network arrangement between different institutions in the country to pool their resources. |
|---|

It is five decades since no new policy has been put in place for providing the requisite momentum to improve research, innovation, foster science and improve quality in higher education barring a clutch of elite institutions like the IISc, IITs & IIMs. It would be, therefore, be important to look at the Annual Report of the HRD Ministry during 2012-2013 and subsequent Framework Documents issued during 2013-2014 & 2014-2015 to make an assessment of the policy framework to achieve equity and excellence and to promote academic freedom & research in India.

During 2013-2014 & 2014-2015, however, the HRD Ministry came-up with the Results Framework Document (RFD) for 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 which has setup the following targets:

- Realize India's Human Resource Potential to its fullest with equity and excellence
- Greater opportunity for access to vulnerable sections
- Expand access by supporting existing institutions, establish new institutions, supporting state government and non-government organization to supplement public effort
- Encourage resource and innovation
- Promote quality by investing in infrastructure and faculty and promoting academic freedom.

3. GROWTH TRENDS OF COLLEGES & UNIVERSITIES, GROSS ENROLMENT RATIO AND ALLOCATION TRENDS

There are a total of 621 universities (as of now) across the country, with state public universities constituting the highest share (45.2%). The top five states with the highest number of universities include Tamil Nadu (599.5% of total in India), Uttar Pradesh (569.0%), Andhra Pradesh (467.4%), Maharashtra (447.1%), and Rajasthan (436.9%).

The break-up of the universities by type indicates variance between the top five states as follows: While Tamil Nadu is ranked first in India in terms of private deemed universities (28, 47.5% of total universities in the state), state public universities comprised the biggest share of universities in A.P (30, 65.2%), U.P. (23, 41.1%), and Maharashtra (18,40.9%). In Rajasthan, state private universities comprised the highest share of universities (17, 39.5%).

3.1 STUDENT ENROLMENT

Total enrolment of students in regular mode in higher education institutes in India is around 241.8 lakhs, with 55.7% male and 44.2% female enrolments. With a huge population base (highest share of 18-23 population in India, 16.9%), Uttar Pradesh ranked first in terms of enrolment (37.7 lakhs, 15.6%); followed by Maharashtra (32.2 lakhs, 13.4%), Andhra Pradesh (23.7 lakhs, 9.8%), Tamil Nadu (18 lakhs, 7.4%) and Karnataka (16.1 lakhs, 6.6%). The three southern states of Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka accounted for approximately one-third (33.8%) of the total enrolments across India.

3.1.1 BY STREAM

The total enrolment at under graduate level for the top ten streams (in terms of enrolment) is presented in the figure below. Arts/Humanities/Social Sciences tops the list with 40.3% enrolment, followed by Engineering & Technology (13.7%). It is interesting to note that female share of enrolment (48.0%, as a % of total female enrolment) in arts/humanities/social sciences is higher than the male share (34.8%, as a % of total male enrolment) while the male share of enrolment (16.6%) in engineering & technology is much higher than the female share of enrolment (9.5%). Marine Sciences/Oceanography courses had the least enrolment (77 seats). The GER for males (20.8) is higher than GER for females (17.9), resulting in the Gender Parity Index (GPI) of 0.86. In terms of overall GER, Chandigarh ranks first (41.4) with highest male (42.2) and female (40.4) GER as well.

The growth in the number of universities, professional colleges, technical institutes and technical programmes is summarized as under:

Table 2: Education Sector Macro Trends

| Parameters | 2010-2011 | 2011-2012 |
|------------------------------------|-----------|-----------|
| Number of Universities | 523 | 574 |
| Number of Professional Colleges | 33023 | 35539 |
| AICTE Approved Technical Institute | 11809 | 13587 |
| Enrollment in ODL (in Lakh) | 37.45 | 38.56 |
| Technical Programmes (in Lakh) | 26.15 | 30.15 |

Source: Annual Report Human Resource Development 2012-2013

3.2 TRENDS IN ALLOCATION

A disaggregation of allocation to General, Technical and Distance Education is as under:

Table 3: Allocation to Higher Education Trends in Rs. crore

| | 2012-13 (Actual) | 2013-14 | | % of Change | 2014-15 (BE) | % of Change |
|---------------------|---------------------|--------------------|---------------------|----------------|-----------------|----------------|
| | | Budget Estimate | Revised Estimate | | | |
| General Education | 11878 | 15693 | 14539 | +22.4 | 14637 | 0.6 |
| Technical Education | 8513 | 9390 | 8441 | -0.9 | 9463 | 12.1 |
| Distance Education | 354 | 448 | 186 | -48 | 593 | 318.8 |
| Total | 20423 | 26750 | 24885 | 21.8 | 27656 | +11.1 |

What is disconcerting to note from the above table that there is considerable under spend at the RE stage last year. This is particularly disturbing in case of distance education and ITC which can be a powerful source of knowledge multiplier without setting up infrastructure.

4. IMPACT ON EQUITY

It would be interesting to analyze how increase in access to higher education and GER has impacted different sections of the society & promoted our march towards an egalitarian society.

Table 4: Impact of Access to Education on Different Sections of Society

| Grouping | 1999-2000 | 2007-2008 | Population Share |
|------------------|-----------|-----------|------------------|
| SC | 5.1 | 11.6 | 16 |
| ST | 6.4 | 7.7 | 7 |
| MUSLIM | - | 9.6 | 13 |
| OBC | 7.1 | 14.8 | 27 |
| National Average | 10.1 | 17.2 | 100 |

It would thus be seen from the above that while there has been considerable improvement in access to education; the SC, ST & Muslims do not have access to higher education commensurate with their population share. The OBCs are likely to improve their share with 27% reservation for them; thanks to the Mandal Commission. However, the Muslims, seem to be significantly lagging behind in terms of their representation in higher education despite implementation of Maulana Azad Fellowship Scheme and increase of the MAEF corpus to Rs.910 Crore during 13-14 as a follow-up to the Sachhar Committee Report (2006).

4.1 QUALITY AND GLOBAL COMPETITIVENESS

The poor quality of Higher Education is a perennial lament. It is largely due shortage of well trained faculty, poor infrastructure, irrelevant curriculum, inadequate use of technology and research which is far below International standards. In order to meet the huge shortage of highly skilled workers globally, the 12th Plan reiterates the commitment of 11th plan for expansion, equity and excellence. To move up the ladder of quality India has to go beyond 3 R's viz. Reading, Writing and Arithmetic to 4 C's viz. Critical thinking, Communication, Collaboration and Creativity.

The share of services in India’s GDP has increased for 33% in (1950-51) to 56.5% (2012-2013). Innovation and quality play an important role in ensuring significant global imprint. However, India ranks 64th in Global Innovation Index. India’s capacity for innovation has been lower than that of other BRICS countries as scores in the following table would show:

Table 5: Trends of Research & Patents Globally

| Country | Quality of Research Institutions | Industry Collaboration | PCT Patents Granted/(Million) |
|-------------|----------------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------------|
| USA | 5.8 | 5.6 | 137.9 |
| Brazil | 4.1 | 4.1 | 2.8 |
| South Korea | 4.9 | 4.7 | 161.1 |
| China | 4.2 | 4.4 | 6.5 |
| India | 4.4 | 3.8 | 1.2 |

In particular, what’s disconcerting is the number of patents granted per million (1.2) in India against around 140/161 in USA and South Korea. While in terms of availability of no. of engineers and scientists India is well placed, the lack of quality in higher education and low percolation of research for commercial usage remains a major challenge.

One related issue is the policy approach of the government; whether to foster only the elite academic institutions like IITs, IIMs and IISC or to broad base allocation to state universities in a massive way. China and Russia have adopted the elitist route, i.e. to promote a few select universities to improve their position in the Global Pecking Order.

5. CONVERGENCE OF ACCESS AND EXCELLENCE IN TRIBAL EDUCATION

A unique experiment in social inclusion through education of tribals has been achieved in Kalinga Institute of Social Sciences (KISS) Odisha. It has fostered not only educational excellence but also extracurricular activities of the tribal students. Odisha has the largest number of tribes amongst all the states of India, constituting 24% of the total population of the state. Despite several initiatives of the Government of Odisha, the tribal population continues to be alienated from the mainstream society. The GER (Gross Enrolment Ratio) of STs in Higher Education in the State is 6% against as State’s GER of 16.1%. The position of STS in access to Higher Education in India and Odisha is as under.

Table 6: Gross Enrolment Ratio of Tribals: All India & Odisha

| Category | % of Population | GER |
|-----------|-----------------|------|
| All India | 7% | 4.4% |
| Odisha | 24% | 6% |

It would thus be seen that the scenario is quite dismal and the tribal belt has been the breeding ground for insurgency & communal violence. Realizing the problem behind the sluggish pace of transformation into mainstream society, Kalinga Institute of Social Sciences (KISS) was founded in the year 1993; with the

philosophy that empowerment through education is the only way for concrete emancipation of the tribal population of the state. What started as a fledgling institute with only 125 tribal students in 1993, KISS has grown in all dimensions to become World's only institution providing free education from Kindergarten to Post-Graduation to around 22000 students.

There are nearly 4657 students having the benefit of higher education with almost 50:50 participation of boys and girls. Some of the significant academic achievements have been 97% result in +2 Science, Arts and Commerce & 100% result in Post-Graduation. A B.Com. Graduate student of Kalinga Institute of Social Sciences (KISS) clears CAT and received call from 6 IIMs. Joins IIM Tiruchirappalli, thirteen Post Graduate students of KISS have qualified for the Rajiv Gandhi National Fellowship for 2012- 13. It would thus be seen that a uniquely innovative project for mainstreaming the tribal students through education is not only ensuring not only 100% success at 10+ level, but also ensuring that some of them compete successfully in converted jobs in Banks, Railway, IT sectors and Civil Services Examination, under the School of Leadership.

6. MAJOR AREAS FOR POLICY RE-ORIENTATION

FDI in Higher Education

The liberalization policy in FDI has witnessed significant investment in sectors like telecom, airports, national highways and the automotive sectors. However higher education institute in India have not been able to generate enough interest in view of the regulatory road blocks. Suhag and Rani (2013) have brought out that FDI in higher education will bring in quality programmes from foreign universities of repute and will improve market orientation. Given the fact FDI in higher education accounts for only 0.7% of total FDI inflow so far with 75% from Mauritius to Manipal University, there is a need to revisit the policy bottleneck and encourage inflow of FDI and setting up viable Joint Venture enterprises & MoU with reputed foreign universities.

Public Private Partnership (PPP)

Sectors like telecom, airports, national highways and power have witnessed significant progress through Public Private Partnership models and have brought in significant FDI inflow into the country. During the 12th plan an investment of one trillion dollar is proposed through a PPP route within the ratio of 50:50. While economic infrastructure is very high on government agenda the social infrastructure like education which is a vital complement to overall economic growth has been given a short shrift.

It would be worthwhile to draw experience of other countries like Sweden, Germany, Singapore & China where the PPP model has worked wonders. The key success factors have been agreement on shared objectives from the beginning of the partnership and political will for participation of the private sector, transparency and accountability within the PPP. Sweden has regarded higher education as a 'merit good' and has a long

tradition of substantial public spending. It has substantive relationship with the private sector which includes sharing of roles, responsibility, risks and rewards. In Germany, public commitment to take most risks has encouraged many small private enterprises to participate in the PPP model. Such models have important lessons for India.

Full Cost Recovery from Students

There has been an ongoing debate as to whether full cost recovery from students who are capable of paying should be introduced both in public and private universities. In US where most of the top grade universities are privately managed they are able to attract students from different parts of the world because of the quality and employability that they offer. For instance MIT charges around 57000\$ per year from university students while the average annual salary is around 65000\$. While such exorbitant charging of fees may not be advisable in the Indian context and the private sector should not be given a free hand in charging capitation fees and extorting students, it makes eminent sense to recover cost of running a quality education institutions substantially.

This debate has gone to the Supreme Court which has constantly castigated tendency to commercialize education. The famous case in this regard is Prof. Yashpal Vs. Government of Chhatisgarh (2002) when the Supreme Court had opined that controlling the quality of higher education is the legitimate responsibility of the UGC as per Item 66 of the Union list (7th Schedule) of Indian Constitution.

The 12th Plan, however, makes a strong pitch for revisiting “not for profit criteria” by the universities by amending Section 25 of Indian Company Act (1956). Sudhansu Bhusan (2013) in an article has brought out the dichotomy in judicial thinking and need for pragmatism in terms of charging of fees in colleges/universities to improve infrastructure and academic content. This issue needs to be revisited by a Committee of Experts.

Regulatory Mechanism

There is a near unanimity in view that existing regulatory control by UGC, created under Act of 1956 is not lending itself to quality improvement flexibility in charging fees, offering reasonable remuneration to teachers & finalization of curriculum of either public or private universities. UGC's primordial concern is with central and elite universities like DU, JNU etc. This has to be abdicated in favour of a regulatory mechanism which is academically less asphyxiating. Arvind Panagariya (2012) makes a powerful plea against such frustrating control mechanism of UGC and recommends privatization to bring quality improvement.

In this context it must be mentioned that there is a dissonance in the approach of the UGC and Knowledge Commission under Mr. Pitroda. While the UGC is pitching for greater inclusivity and improving GER in small places which name less than the national average, the Knowledge Commission is aiming at exclusivity,

augmenting framework for encouraging private players and foreign collaboration and maximal cost recovery through tuition fees. An independent regulatory body with the thrust to improve research and collaboration should be seriously looked at.

7. CONCLUSION

India has made tremendous strides in terms of enrollment in higher education since independence cutting across gender, caste and religion. The private sector has contributed handsomely to improved access to higher education. However in terms of equity and excellence India still has considerable distance to traverse. Though the Constitution guarantees equal access and even positive discrimination to disadvantaged section the ground reality stultify the process of equal access and academic excellence.

This is not unsurprising given the historic nature of such deprivation in respect of SC/ST & Women; alienation in respect of tribals, segregation in case of scheduled castes and ingrained bias towards women and the sub-optimal secular orientation towards the Muslims. A few concrete measures will go a long way to bridge such dissonance. Firstly the delivery mechanism by government agencies is leaky and often patently inept. It would be a good idea to outsource the delivery mechanism to responsible NGOs with a proper accountability structure in place. Secondly to foster increased access to deprived segments, financial aid and scholarships must be universalized and the overall allocation be substantially augmented. Thirdly India is caught up in a meaningful debate on Private vs. Public Education; and whether to treat higher education as merit or non-merit good. Even in US where most universities are private, their management is out of government control; though most of them receive significant government grants in different ways.

Global economy has shifted from 'manufacturing centric' to a knowledge driven one, prompting economist Clark Kerr to observe that "on a global scale wealth and prosperity have become more dependent on access to knowledge than access to natural resources". Therefore the challenge is not merely to increase Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) to 25% by 2017 but to rev-up the quality and rejig our major policy initiatives as brought above. The best entrepreneur energy have to be harnessed towards the cause of education. As *John Maynard Keynes* had rightly observed "the difficulty lies not in bringing new ideas but in replacing old ones". The new government should take a cue from this while formulating the new education policy as promised by the HRD Minister.

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