

REFORMING THE HIGHER EDUCATION AFFILIATION SYSTEM OF INDIA

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ABSTRACT

India has 45 leading universities, 200 million students and 36, 000 degree colleges. Despite all this, 45% of our faculty still remains vacant. There is an urgent need for reinvention of the vision and mission of our higher education. The UGC and Bar council need to balance the efforts to stop dubious universities from seeking affiliation and at the same time not discourage new innovation and curb autonomy. Also, the efforts of providing education to all should not be an excuse for compromise on the quality of the same. There is a requirement to adopt an equitable development of central as well as state universities and insure that reforms regarding the same reach every institute of higher studies in the nation. Hence, a major shift is required in changing the purview of higher educations from only for-profit to visionary, experiential and research based.

KEYWORDS

Indian universities, challenges, reforms, accreditation

1. STATEMENT OF THE ISSUE

1.1 WHY IS THERE A CHANGE OF POLICY NEEDED?

India has about 40,000 accredited colleges all over the country. Affiliated colleges basically work under universities as the latter offers them with uniform codes, faculty systems, laws and standards. But the processes underway after attainment of the accreditation and affiliation remains complex. This is because all the affiliated colleges obtain their funds from the universities that they are affiliated to. Such affiliation result in long and tedious wait for any kinds of reforms. Eg-Delhi University. (Choudaha, 2013)

Historically, affiliation was initiated as it was easier to overlook few number of colleges. Over the years, the various acts, statues, ordinances and regulations have made it difficult to measure the development of individual colleges. These colleges look towards the parent university for approvals of any kind and this in the long run restricts their involvement and interaction towards other ventures. (George, n.d.)

Also, the rigid beaurucatic and domineering style of central universities prohibits novelty and innovation by mandating a standard course, instead of helping these colleges raise their quality of education by developing novel courses. (George, n.d.)

Hence, a change of policy is required.

1.2 HOW DOES THIS PROBLEM AFFECT THE SOCIETY?

India is the third largest country in terms of students enrolled in higher education. We have the advantage of English as a standardized language being our primary language of education and research..

Despite these facts, none of the Indian institutions even feature in the top 100-200 of the world rankings. While our East Asian counterparts are far ahead. We need to transform our policies in such a manner that we provide exceptional education in our nation. (Singh)

A well developed system of higher education increases wages and productivity that directly enrich individuals and society. Furthermore, then it also becomes easier for us to send our skill abroad and drive our country forward. (Singh)

We have about 16.97 million enrollments in undergraduate and graduate programs in our nation. (Choudaha, 2013). Affiliated colleges provide for most of the undergraduate education in our nation.. But it's increasingly becoming a burden on the state universities due to their growing number. Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh have the largest number of affiliated colleges.

2. WHAT IS THE SPECIFIC PROBLEM?

The main governing body of higher education is the University Grants Commission (Singh). Many of the state affiliated universities have been dramatically increasing and are requiring regulation under the 12th FYUP. Before 12th FYUP, higher education legislations prohibited profit making private institutions in this sector. (D. Dhanuraj and Rahul V. Kumar, 2015)

Now good universities with profit making as their agenda can also be considered for the same. Additionally, the pre-requisite of affiliation with an Indian counterpart has slowed down investments by interested private homegrown and foreign universities. As affiliation remains to be a long and tedious process due to the regulatory body being influenced by several federal governments. This is a major hurdle to the incoming FDI in education. (D. Dhanuraj and Rahul V. Kumar, 2015)

On the contrary, India is home to many private colleges without any recognition or affiliation which run with the sole reason of minting money. This then leads to unaware semi-urban and rural population falling prey to the same. Despite this, UGC has notified that we still require about 1500 more universities to compete in the global market. (Singh)

2.1 WHAT ARE THE MAJOR CAUSES OF THE PROBLEM?

Due to the growing population of students looking for colleges, and the new opening up of market for the private universities, now many more private providers are waiting for legislations that would allow them to enter the market (George, n.d.) Since, Private universities do not have affiliated colleges(D. Dhanuraj and Rahul V. Kumar, 2015), these universities require a central university to affiliate themselves with. But the affiliated college systems suffer from various drawbacks, such as a poor quality of teaching and learning. (George, n.d.)

In the long run, the demand for universities is ever growing and private investments is becoming an answer to these demands. But the regulatory legislation is ill-equipped to meet these growing demands. It was also seen that when these players could not match up to the regulations, they would hence retort to malpractices under the law. This then led to blacklisting and further removal of the students studying in them. Several of these restricted universities then started selling degrees in various inconspicuous forms. (D. Dhanuraj and Rahul V. Kumar, 2015)

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 WHAT ARE THE CURRENT POLICIES REGARDING THE ISSUE?

Some of the most essential policies concerning higher education in our nation include-

3.1.1 MHRD

The Ministry of Human Resource and Development (MHRD) coordinates and prescribes higher education in the country. (D. Dhanuraj and Rahul V. Kumar, 2015) According to it, accreditation of affiliated colleges is mandatory under institutions like NAAC and NBA. Accreditation insures that the college gets grants for 5 years duration under UGC. (D. Dhanuraj and Rahul V. Kumar, 2015)

3.1.2 THE 11th FYUP

The 11th five year plan requires more institutions to reach higher Gross Enrollment Report. (Singh) The main objective of the 11th plan was the expansion of enrollment in higher education with inclusiveness, quality and relevant reforms. The current policies and studies have been trying to analyze the problem of under-financing of educational institutions and group imbalance when it comes to access to education. The 11th plan objectives were to be carried on to the 12th plan. (Prakash, 2011)

3.2 THE 12th PLAN

The 12th plan is to be flexible to any new changes in between its implementation. (Prakash, 2011) The 12th plan wishes to bring in reforms and the minimization of disparities. It further plans reform by the following-

3.2.1 NATIONAL MISSION

By conducting a national mission for teachers and teaching to regulate the teaching standards of the colleges applying for affiliation.

3.2.2 GREATER AUTONOMY

Strengthening accreditation system and planning to provide more autonomy to state wise higher institutions and other institutions.

3.2.3 CREDIT BASED SYSTEM

Creating a shift to credit based and internationally recognized assessment system in order to make collaboration with international institutes easier.

3.2.4 INTERNATIONALIZATION

By supporting internationalization and bringing foreign faculty to Indian higher education institutions.

3.2.5 PROGRESSIVE INSTITUTIONS

Establishing 20 'innovation and research universities' and 50 centres of excellence, training and research in science, technology, social sciences and humanities (Understanding India: The future of higher education and opportunities for international cooperation, 2014)

3.3 MAIN SOLUTIONS FORMULATED BY CURRENT POLICIES

RUSA is a centrally sponsored theme which was launched in 2013 and which funds to eligible higher educational institutes of our country. Some of its objectives include ensuring conformity to NAAC accreditation as to guarantee mandatory quality assurance framework, to usher transformative reforms to promote autonomy in state universities and encourage use of newer technology for the same. Furthermore, it works on safeguarding reforms in affiliation, academic and examination systems of our institutions. (Rashtriya Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA), 2011)

3.4 WHO SUPPORTS THESE POLICIES?

The MHRD, Bar Council of India, UGC, Planning commission, are all involved in making these policies. (Rashtriya Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA), 2011)

3.5 HOW DO THEY PLAN TO BRING ABOUT A CHANGE ?

3.5.1 ACCREDITATION FOR COURSES

It is also suggested that instead of accreditation for universities, accreditation for courses should also be introduced. This is similar to how accreditation occurs in the West. It is preferred as then universities cannot cover up for the lack of quality in one course by another while pursuing a good rating. (Prakash, 2011)

3.5.2 GRANT AUTONOMY

In order to achieve the target of 500 additional Autonomous Colleges during the 12th FYP, it is necessary to award the current autonomous colleges since the past 10 years as 'degree-awarding' autonomous colleges, as per the norms followed by UGC. (Prakash, 2011)

3.5.2 NAVRATNA UNIVERSITIES

Establishment of new Navratna universities under the 12th FYP. According to this, some valued universities will enjoy total autonomy and international partnership. They shall be given additional grant of 50 crore for 5 years. (Prakash, 2011)

4. WHAT ARE THE FLAWS IN THESE POLICIES?

4.1.1 POOR OUTREACH

Even after the former already existing guidelines, the proper outreach and implementation of accreditation is poor in other states. This is highly detrimental as it makes it tough to keep pace with the growing educational institutes. (D. Dhanuraj and Rahul V. Kumar, 2015)

4.1.2 CORRUPTION

Claims of corruption on certain UGC and AICTE officials. (D. Dhanuraj and Rahul V. Kumar, 2015)

4.1.3 CONTENTION WITH FOR-PROFIT SECTOR

Some ambiguous regulations at federal level say that a for-profit sector involves more serious players while others believe that the role of former is detrimental. (D. Dhanuraj and Rahul V. Kumar, 2015)

4.1.4 LESS TRANSPARENCY

There is no clear transparent regulation in these policies for the private participants. Moreover, it is seen that many of the policies regarding them are formulated under different acts. Such heterogeneity makes it difficult for genuine investors to participate. (D. Dhanuraj and Rahul V. Kumar, 2015)

4.1.5 AUTONOMY ISSUES

Section 22 of UGC prevents universities in India to design and construct courses. This is detrimental to the autonomy of colleges which suffers as these decisions should be made at the college level(D. Dhanuraj and Rahul V. Kumar, 2015)

4.1.6 GOVERNMENT INTERVENTION

The mindless reaction of government in the form of judicial interventions without understanding the wholesome structure . (Singh, n.d)

4.1.7 LACK OF PROPER REGULATION

In some federal states, the question of regulation has been bypassed. Additionally, a direct relation had been found between the poor levels of primary education and support of more private universities in a number of states. (D. Dhanuraj and Rahul V. Kumar, 2015)

4.2 ANALYSIS OF THE POLICIES

In the most recent 12th five year plan, undergraduate education has become a top priority for the government. But, today many universities are burdened with a number of affiliated colleges and are continuing to grow in an unmanageable manner. (George, n.d.)

Historically, Kothari Commission had recommended college autonomy for the first time in India. Autonomy gives immense power to an institution to make decisions governing various aspects of the college and to implementing decisions that influence the country. After, accreditation became mandatory in 2013, UGC under the influence of Central Advisory Board of Education is planning to grant more autonomy to some institutions. (George, n.d.)

5. POLICY PRESCRIPTIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

5.1 WHAT ARE THE ALTERNATIVES TO THE CURRENT POLICY?

5.1.1 THE QUALITY OF TEACHING-LEARNING

The quality of teacher-learning in universities needs to be transformed. The College teaching trainers program in collaboration with Asia and the UK's Higher Education Academy and partnerships can help network with institutions and centres of teaching excellence in the UK. (Prakash, 2011)

5.1.2 STATE GOVERNMENT'S ROLE

State government should make rules for sectors and not individual applicants. This will prevent heterogeneity. There should be an equal method of assessing quality and standard of the private universities, in order to insure equity.

5.1.3 PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES

The legislation in private universities do not incentivize courses, so it is easier for them to charge a higher cost for some. This needs to be governed . (Singh, n.d)

5.1.4 FOSTER INNOVATION

There is a need for good funding of novel breakthrough attempts by all central, state as well as private universities. Only spending on one university or a brand of universities isn't enough. There is a need to foster innovation in students throughout the country. (Singh, n.d)

5.1.5 MAINTAIN AN INTERFACE

There should be an interface maintained between various universities having different accreditations and affiliations so that a network of shared resources, transparency and regular evaluation of benchmarks is created.

5.1.6 SWIFT AFFILIATION

Swifter methods for affiliation should be adopted by UGC as sometimes reaccredited colleges with a good CGPA also have to go through cumbersome processes for starting new courses and affiliations.(Singh, n.d)

5.1.7 GREATER AUTONOMY

All higher educational institutions in the country should be given more autonomy. Autonomy could be granted to institutions reaccredited with an 'A' certificate Autonomous institutions should then generate their own course materials and research. (George, n.d). Private institutions that wish to diversify and attract international recognition too prefer autonomous colleges to affiliated colleges.

5.2 WHY HAVE'NT THEY BEEN IMPLEMENTED YET?

5.2.1 LACKLUSTER IMPLEMENTATION

Many policy makers over the years have constructed policies and spoken about radical reconstruction, but what has been achieved over the years is only moderate reform. Today, even newer challenges face the UGC and AICTE in the awakening of globalization, IT transformation and industrialization. (Singh, n.d)

5.2.2 RESEARCH ENCOURAGEMENT

Teaching and research citations forms a huge base of a university's image, affiliated or otherwise. Hence more focus should be garnered on the research papers being produced by the faculty and the encouragement given to students regarding the same.

5.2.3 GREATER STUDENT EXCHANGE

Proportion of international students and faculty that it can lure in. This shows the international outlook of the same. (Bridgestock, 2015)

6. CONCLUSION

Currently, the prime weaknesses that lie as hurdles between the implementation of the former alternatives include No Clear delegation of authority, Lack of coordination between UGC and the State government higher education and the dependence at each stage that causes delay and interference.

The threshold of excellence of institutions should not just be marked by internal resources but also the long-term motive, purpose and goal. Our country will be able to match global quality standards only when the students are satisfied and duly employable.

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