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Quality Agenda in Higher Education: Causes for Concern

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ABSTRACT

Educators are expected to play many important roles in the university. As the excellence of education depends upon the quality of teachers, is one of the maxims' of Education Planning, we may therefore restate the noticeable fact that the teacher is the kingpin in an education system. In higher education, Research is a very important area of concern. Therefore quality control in Educational Research is an important and crucial need. Though everybody endorses the degradation in the quality of research, but no methodical attempt has been made to define the parameters that determine the quality of research. Present work attempts to discuss the parameters how to improve the quality of research in higher education.

Keywords: *Quality Education; Research; University; Higher Education.*

1.0 Introduction

Higher education is a major gadget for the development of a nation and it is considered as the peak stage of formal education. It includes greater specialization necessitated by rapid socio – economic and industrial development. Research is another major component of higher education in which the combined intellect of a group finds the solution to various social problems.

The university is the place where in down the corridor of time, right kind of leadership in all walks life and gifted youth in every field of excellence are identified and developed. Hence the universities have been originated which are committed to the pursuit for the propagation of knowledge. They have acted as agencies that disseminate cultural heritage, help to develop new thinking and to critically analyze the social life, ideals and values.

Kothari commission (1964 – 66) highlighted the need for a built – rigidity in the system of higher education and advocated for reaching reforms. Indian education needs a drastic modernization, almost a revolution. We need to introduce work experience as fundamental element of general education to improve quality of teachers at all level. Here apart from teaching, research and generation of information, the development and addition of the sphere of knowledge should also take place.

Universities help in preservation of our tradition and cultural heritage, refining it and

communicating to the new generation. It explores new knowledge and expands its frontiers. But now a day's universities have become a site of quantitative production rather than qualitative. Quality aspect is over – looked in our pre – occupation with quantitative expansion, while quantitative growth is vital from the angle of widening of access and remained important in its own right. The quality of any product can be quantified, measured and compared with other products. But it is difficult to measure the quality of education as it is a service.

Quality is a value; it is not a unitary concept. It is a manifold concept in higher education. It embraces the quality of inputs such as students, faculty members, the infrastructure and the process of education, covering learning events, extracurricular activities, community development events and the quality of the output, in terms of students and graduates. Therefore we must be conscious of the fact that improvement of the quality of educational system is directly related to the education development inter connection which requires the educational system to be able to respond efficiently to the needs of the productive apparatus.

It is a well-known concept of educational planning that the quality of education depends upon the quality of good educators. No matter, even if suitable facilities are available, the education of the students becomes useless unless there are educators who have the imagination and competence to get the children to use them properly. The Education Commission (1964–66) has rightly mentioned "of all the different factors that influence the quality of education and its contribution to national

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development the quality competence and character of teachers are undoubtedly the most significant”, we may therefore restate the obvious fact that the teacher is the king pin in an educational system.

The U.G.C. started Academic Staff Colleges (ASC) during the seventh plan period a exclusive experiment possibly notified in any other university system in the world. Today, 48 such colleges are operational. They offer a 4 week orientation program for newly appointed teachers and run 3 week refresher courses for more experienced faculty members for updating them in their different areas of specialization.

A large number of educators have received training through such institutions, but there is no proper follow – up for these courses. The campus critics think that these courses have not produced fruitful changes in the campus ethics as well as in the classroom climate of the concerned teachers.

The UGC has several schemes for upgrading the professional competence of educators e.g., national fellowships, visiting associate ship, visiting professors, career awards and minor research projects. But only a few teachers have been promoted by such schemes.

Research is another burning area in higher education, which has increased immensely in various disciplines during the past few decades. It has taken new directions and identified new areas for investigation and exploration. But at the same time the quality in research has also suffered a lot. UGC has taken several steps to improve the quality of research work in the organization of higher education. It includes of raising the amount of money available to research scholars and upgrading of supervision and evaluation.

Still there is an urgent need that the research agencies in the country to set up a common mechanism to ensure employment of all those receiving the research degree. Such incentives may attract the best brains in the research.

Further updating of books, journals, equipment and human resources are essential for the improvement and high quality research.

There has been an endless debate as to whether a university should focus on teaching or undertaken both teaching and research. In India universities are expected to do both. The research revealed that globally the teaching faculty is not interested in both teaching and research.

It has to be accepted that though the universities has two basic responsibilities those of discovery of knowledge (research) and dissemination of knowledge (teaching) both can't be completely discharged simultaneously.

Thus it can be concluded that higher education must have the following characteristics to make it productive and meaningful –

- Research should focus to create new knowledge, not only for doctorate degree.
- Self-appraisal, peer group, student etc., should be used as a technique for valuation of teachers.
- Autonomous colleges and divisions should be opened for the enhancement of higher education quality and redesign of courses.
- Educators serve as facilitators making their abilities and knowledge available to help students move towards their own learning goals.

Unless the quality aspect is not taken care of the ‘malady’ that exists now in higher education would never be eliminated.

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