

HIGHER EDUCATION IN TELANGANA STATE—EXISTING STATUS AND THE PROPOSED STRATEGIES FOR QUALITY IMPROVEMENT

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ABSTRACT

As is a known fact, the higher education is vital in disseminating knowledge and imparting skills, thus producing qualitative human resources for any nation. It is criticized that India is not able to produce employable graduates, in spite of enjoying demographic edge. Almost all states in India are lagging behind in creating the employable workforce required by the industry. This study is aimed at reviewing the existing status of higher education in the state of Telangana and proposes some strategies for quality improvement in the colleges and universities. This study is based on the observation method of data collection and some books and web resources are also consulted for the required data.

KEY WORDS:

Graduate producing factories-- Collaborative learning—Employability skills—Entrepreneurial skills-- Research culture—Digital library.

INTRODUCTION

Higher education is the backbone of any society. Higher education includes college and university teaching-learning towards which students' progress to attain higher educational qualification. It is where in-depth knowledge and understanding is imparted to the students so as to advance to new frontiers of knowledge in different walks of life. It is about knowing more and more about less and less. Very importantly, it develops the student's ability to question and seek truth and makes him/her competent to critique on contemporary issues thereby broadening the intellectual powers of the individual within a narrow specialization, and also gives him/her a wider perspective of the world around (NAAC, 2006).

The higher education in India especially in Telangana state is at cross roads. No, doubt, adequate resources are pumped in and utilized, but the quality of education is being deteriorated day by day. The universities and the affiliated undergraduate and post graduate colleges in Telangana state have just remained graduate producing Kharkhanas(Factories) resulting in huge

number of qualified unemployed youth roaming on the roads creating hue and cry over petty issues. Every year lakhs of graduates and post graduates in various disciplines, thousands of Business Management graduates and lakhs of Engineering graduates are coming out of the universities with marks, ranks and certificates but without the employability skills and other quality aspects. Many studies in India have shown that the employable graduates are just 18% , employable M.B.As are just 15% and the employable Engineering graduates are just 20%, in India. So is the story with Telangana state.

It is very much unfortunate to have noted that the Business Management (M.B.A) students do not have business orientation, despite having M.B.A degree with 70% or even 80% marks in management course. The entrepreneurial zeal of the business students is dismal. The entrepreneurial ecosystem is poorly developed in the state of Telangana.

The students with various professional degrees such as—M.C.A, M.S.W., B. Pharmacy, B. Tech, M. Tech, Nursing etc are lacking in basic subject skills in their respective specializations, leading to enhanced unemployed youth in the state of Telangana.

The future of higher education in Telangana state with the existing status in terms of quality, teaching-learning processes, industry linkage and job creation etc, seems to be very much bleak. It is high time the government of Telangana took an initiative to review the practical status of higher education in order to formulate a robust strategy to set the higher education back on tracks.

Against this backdrop, the author would like to discuss the existing status of the higher education in Telangana state using a dozen themes of higher education and thus would like to offer certain suggestions to each theme, in order to contribute in the process of quality improvement in higher education in the state of Telangana.

THEMES SELECTED FOR DISCUSSION

Global trends in higher education

According to British Council, A combination of demographic and economic drivers, bilateral trade patterns, and shifts in inbound and outbound student flows linked to growing global competition and rapid expansion of tertiary education capacity, will re-shape the global higher education landscape by 2020(British Council Study, 2012). According to a report of University of Oxford, Participation in higher education in India has expanded enormously in the past decade, doubling from 14 million in 2007 to 28 million in 2013, and India is forecast to have the largest student-aged population in the world by 2025, of around 119 million.16 Quality control in the Indian higher education sector has lagged behind institutional expansion however, with a British Council report highlighting overemphasis placed on rote learning, a shortage of qualified faculty, and outdated curricula, leading to students graduating unprepared for employment, and institutions which fail to be internationally ranked.

One in three students globally is enrolled in private higher education institutions, according to research that reveals the huge growth and wide reach of private providers.

According to Telugu newspaper SAAKSHI dated 27-09-2013; the advent of globalization has altered the scope and practice for Social Sciences and Humanities. Fast growing markets, mushrooming media houses and increased importance for higher education and research have brought the Social Sciences and Humanities which were once thought as secondary disciplines to the front. The raising professions of marketing, media, entertainment, research and administration are laying red carpet for students of these disciplines.

An approach to **teaching** that focuses on the learners and their development rather than on the transmission of content; it addresses the balance of power in **teaching** and learning, moves toward learners actively constructing their own knowledge, and puts the responsibility for learning on the learners(IGI-GLOBAL). There has been increasing emphasis in recent years on moving away from traditional teaching toward student-centered learning. This paradigm shift has encouraged moving power from the instructor to the learner, treating the learner as a co-creator in the teaching and learning process (Barr & Tagg, 1995). Instructors who deliver student-centered instruction include the learner in decisions about how and what they learn and how that learning is assessed, and they respect and accommodate individual differences in learners' backgrounds, interests, abilities, and experiences (McCombs & Whistler, 1997). The role of the instructor in student-centered classrooms is to encourage learners to do more discovery learning and to learn from each other; the instructor focuses on constructing authentic, real-life tasks that motivate learner involvement and participation (Weimer, 2002).

EXISTING STATUS IN TELANGANA

The awareness about all the above trends among the students and the teachers in H.E in Telangana is low. This may be because of non exposure or sheer negligence of the students and the teachers in Higher education. Women participation in higher education has grown tremendously throughout the world. In Telangana state a total of 19,413 more women than men got enrolled in higher education in 2018. (Indian Express, 2019). Telangana state has given permission to 5 private universities, which will function from 2020, to boost higher education in the state. It is very much unfortunate to have observed that in Telangana, the teacher – centered methodology is in practice.

Education System And Employability

Employability is a set of skills, knowledge and personal attributes that make an individual more employable. Institutions of higher education are examining the methods they use to enhance student employability and are exercising various measures to grow and strengthen this. Employers are demanding skills from graduates which are outside the subject area of study in Higher Education. Indeed, some employers have placed less importance on graduates' actual degree discipline in favor of the more generic skills which they have acquired(www.qs.com).

It has been observed that the education system in Telangana is still rote –learning based, even in higher education, which is supposed to produce creative and research oriented minds. Rote learning is the dominant paradigm or model of education in India and this is a big problem (www.educationworld.com). The marks and ranks achieved by the students have become criteria for further evaluation of the talent of the student. The procurement of certificates is the order of

the day. The seriousness of the students towards higher education is remotely seen in the colleges. The students are stuffed with the non-creative theories of various subjects which result in unproductive and unemployable graduates

Curriculum And Pedagogy

The curriculum and pedagogy in higher education in Telangana state has been futile for the last many years. The research integration in the curriculum is dismal. The curriculum is not being designed in consultation with the industry experts. The curriculum has become obsolete and repetitive process. The application –oriented teaching is seriously missing. The project works and the internships are just ridiculous. The pedagogy is not directed towards developing the skills of the students. There have been no efforts by the universities to inculcate entrepreneurial culture among the U.G and P.G students.

Infrastructure

The availability of required infrastructure with at least 40 % of the colleges is not satisfactory to cater the needs of the students. The laboratories of all the subjects are not maintained properly. Laboratory activity has been reduced to outsourcing type in many colleges. The libraries have become outdated. No latest versions of the books and the journals are in stock in the libraries. The libraries are unable to attract the students. The students are not fully aware of the library resources available in the college. The digital libraries are yet to be developed by majority of the colleges. The students are not interested and not even encouraged to visit libraries often. No rooms are available for conducting activities such as—Group discussion, micro presentations, role playing decision games etc.

English Lab And Communication Skills

The universities are not serious about the employability skills of the students. The communication skills, particularly in rural students are very poor. English labs in the universities and the colleges have become a big joke. The communication skills of the students of both U.G and P.G are worse. Neither the students nor the teachers are concerned about communication skills in English. The English language and spoken English classes have become pure theory classes. No language practice is provided in many colleges to the students. This attitude of the universities towards the skills of the students is hampering the career development of the students.

Research & Innovation

The universities are seriously lacking the innovation and research policy. The national and international conferences have become ridiculous activities for acquiring the participation certificates by the faculty. No solid out come in terms of deliberations, discussions and reports is seen in the so-called seminars. Research awareness and inclination to undertake research among the college teachers is dismal. The copy-paste type of research is rampant in the colleges and the universities. The universities and the colleges are poorly collaborated with the research institutions. The universities are working in silos without any direction in terms of research and innovation. There is no close linkage between the universities, colleges and the research centers. The students are not aware of the latest innovations and developments in their respective fields.

The research institutions are not willing to seriously collaborate with the universities and the college.

PROPOSED STRATEGIES

Having seen the deteriorating condition of higher education in Telangana state, the author would like suggest the following steps in order to produce the employable and globally competitive graduates in the country.

The students should be encouraged and motivated to involve themselves in collaborative and practical learning. Collaborative approach actively engages learners to process and synthesize information and concepts, rather than using rote memorization of facts and figures. Learners work with each other on projects, where they must collaborate as a group to understand the concepts being presented to them (www.valamis.com). There should be a serious and aggressive campaign to motivate the students to improve their employability skills such as—Problem identification and solving skills, Analytical skills, Resource management skills, Decision making skills, Numerical skills, Communication. All academic wings of the universities and colleges should work towards producing employable graduates. University graduates need to be quick-thinking, adaptable and innovative workers who possess the skills to navigate an increasingly competitive and constantly evolving workforce (Hagel et al. 2014).

The curriculum should be designed in consultation with industry experts, combining theory with high level of creative and practical content. There is no doubt that employers rely on higher education providers to deliver qualified and skilled employees and universities rely on industry to provide work placements for their students and to employ their graduates. In addition to providing workplace experience and enhancing graduate employment prospects, other instances of association include industry site visits for students on certain courses, guest presentations or lectures by industry personnel and the inclusion of students in industry-supported competitions (University World News, 2016). There is a desperate need for the curriculum that enhances the analytical skills of the students. The pedagogy needs to be developed giving importance to involvement of the students and development of the skills. Each and every concept and the lesson should be a research-oriented. The project works and the internships should be made very strict.

Since modern and adequate infrastructure is needed to impart sound education, it is mandatory to improve the conditions of the colleges and the universities. The students must be encouraged to visit libraries and read books to acquire knowledge. The libraries must update with latest national and international books and journals on various topics. The report of Kothari Commission stated that “nothing can be more damaging than to ignore its library and to give it a low priority. No new college, university or department should be opened unless adequate numbers of books in the library are provided”.

Today’s education system is far too focused on the theoretical, rather than developing real problem-solving skills. The focus is on writing papers and making grades, not maximising employability and experience. Many of our top graduates arrive in their first jobs with reams of theoretical knowledge, but no real-life skills, taking an average of 9-12 months to start adding value to the company they work for (<https://blog.fullfabric.com/>). In order to improve the employability and entrepreneurial skills among the U.G and PG students the universities should

establish Employability Cells through which various programmes are to be conducted to motivate the students to enhance their skills. The rural students should be encouraged to devote time to improve their employability skills. The communicative English is to be introduced as a major subject in the first year course in the undergraduate level.

A culture of research is largely missing in our institutions. Collegiality and a singularity of purpose among faculty members are important requirements to build that, where members need to be bonded by shared, research-related values and practices towards building a safe home for testing new ideas. In India, publications happen due to individual initiatives — often driven by survival or promotional needs rather than being drawn out of purposeful collective effort. The difference, thus, is ‘want to’ versus ‘have to’, propeller being ‘individual need’ rather than ‘common zeal’ (Subrata Chakraborty, 2017). There is an urgent need to nurture the research culture in the colleges and the universities in Telangana state. The faculty and the students should be encouraged to carry out micro research to suggest solutions for societal problems. The research intentions among the faculty need to be boosted among the faculty and the conferences are to be conducted with an aim and purpose. The journals need to be revitalized in order to attract genuine research and publications. The rural students and the faculty should be educated and encouraged to do research and publish the results.

CONCLUSION

The higher education in Telangana state has been worse for the last 10 to 15 years. Almost all the elements of education are being neglected by all the stakeholders such as—the governments, faculty, students, the parents and the society at large, resulting in unemployable graduates and post graduates roaming on the streets claiming to be unemployed youth. The colleges and the universities in the state are taking a lenient view towards the quality education. The infrastructure is not being maintained adequately. The curriculum and the pedagogy are not oriented towards the students. The laboratories have become defunct. The English communicative skills of the U.G and P.G students are very poor. The research culture among the faculty and the students is very much dismal. At this juncture, a total revamp of the higher education system is desperately needed and the strategies should be formulated in that direction to enjoy the demographic dividend of the country.

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