A NEW PARADIGM IN MANAGEMENT OF HIGHER EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTES OF GOVERNMENT SECTOR, INDIA

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ABSTRACT

An overview of the Higher Educational Institutes of public sector in India shows that it is in a crisis plagued with unemployability, unwieldy expansion, excessive diversification and an archaic dysfunctional management. An amount of 115 billion rupees per year is spent on HE with disproportional quality products. It is pointed out that the cause of sickness lies in the lack of strategic management. A new paradigm with an enforcing authority of Vice-chancellor/director/Principal at the provincial level rising vertically towards a comprehensive National Commission for Higher Education and Research (NCHER) at the top of the ladder is proposed. Liberalism and too much divergence must be replaced by uniformity and thorough discipline.

OBJECTIVE

The aim of the study is to churn out the existing situation of the HE in India and identify the factors of contrivance to build a new paradigm, utilizing the principles of strategic management. The sources of data are published literature and reports from academic organizations.
INTRODUCTION

The mammoth exercise of development of Higher Education in India was taken up shortly after Independence in 1947. The nascent democracy, under the leadership of scholar-Prime Minister, Nehru, believed in idealistic goals of Universities as symbols of progress, humanism and tolerance. The federal structure and cultural plurality of India demanded physical expansion to cater to the needs of accessibility in the first phase (1950-80) and equity in the second phase (1980-2000). The demands of social inclusion based on gender, caste, religion and region (Chalam, 2011) further increased the pace of expansion. Universities, colleges, national institutes of learning and university-equivalent-centres were established all over the country over decades on war-footing. The total number of institutions stayed around 17900, more than four times those of USA and Europe put together. However, the Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) of India is far below China and USA (UNESCO Report-2005) as shown in fig.1.

![Fig.1. India’s place in GER among the world nations](image)

The journey of HE under the financial provision of State and Central Governments with the academic supervision of apex-bodies like University Grants Commission (UGC) for decades was like that of a superfast train with ‘failing’ brakes. Five out of the seven, avowed objectives of UGC, were followed thoroughly during the last half century: (a) access (b) equity (c) relevant education (d) quality and excellence (e) effective administration (f) faculty strength and (g) student facilities. Except in quality-excellence and good administration, considerable achievement could be seen in other factors. The percentage of GDP, spent on HE however was very minimal over years: 0.3% - 1981-82, 0.38%- 1991-92 and 0.41%- 2001-02(Chalam 2011)

The budget expenditure of the Central Government on HE in India over the last two decades shows an average rate of increase of 9.0 billion rupees/year. (fig.2)
Thus the country, with qualifications of population- second of the world, with lowest GER among the leading countries and having a third largest number of HE institutes in the world, is spending a staggering figure of 230 billion rupees per year on HE, which makes an interesting case history for study in the academic milieu.

EXPANSION OF HIGHER EDUCATION

As given in the UGC report on ‘Higher Education in India-2011’, data being represented in fig.3, the expansion of HE is astounding, which is carried out to satisfy the employment needs of the 1.25 billion population, with the national aspirations of a knowledge-based society, anxious to occupy its legitimate place in the world. Mere volume expansion might lead to ‘hollowness’ at the centre (Vamsikrishna and Pullarao, 2010), if one is satisfied with percentage increase in quantity.
The physical expansion is thoroughly convincing until the investments are tallied with the results of HE towards establishing quality assurance, achievement of excellence, research development and employability. The structural environment, based on infrastructure, teaching staff and academics, is expected to yield proportional products, the responsibility of which falling on academic governance. GER does not matter to anybody in the world unless equivalent results are forthcoming. With around 13,200 Ph.D degrees produced (2008) annually; very few attract the international attention for original research (Majumdar and Tapas, 1992)

Satyanarayana and Geethabali (2010) mentioned that only 32% of the 410 Universities (public) have been credited with ‘A’ by National Academic Accreditation Committee. Only 9% of the 4870, Government aided colleges, were eligible for ‘A’ from NAAC inspections. Further NAAC observed that 68% of the colleges are below average. It cuts a sorrowful figure to note that over-all pass percentage of graduates out of the total enrolment is

- 13.1% in 1991
- 14.2% in 2002
- 34% in 2006
The authors further noted that the above figures of pass percentage explain why Mckinsky institute remarked that 25% of Indian engineers, 15% of commerce graduates and 10% professional candidates are only suitable to work for multinational companies. About one-third of the 26,000 colleges and 61 of the 467 universities as on 2010 are private-unaided institutions in the country, which show a slightly better performance with a lesser financial capital. Satyanarayana and Geethabali observed that the hugeness of HE system under public investment in the country developed inflexibility, discouraged accountability, inhibited innovation and promoted mediocrity due to lack of ‘organized’ management. Surendra Singh (2005) and Mahendra Godha (2008) observed that “failure of traditional HE system in India is dragging its feet amidst rapidly growing other sectors of Indian Economy”. Kundewar and Smitha (2010) threw light on the above statement when they commented that ‘HE, instead of leading the economy has become a white elephant’ on the national resources.

FEATURES OF THE MANAGEMENT-CRISIS

In spite of the periodic reviews of HE (Education Commission Report - 1948-49; Education Commission Report – 1964-65; National Policy on education -1968; National Policy on education revised -1986; Ramamurthi Committee Report-1990; National Knowledge Commission-2006; Ambani and Birla Committee report on education -2009) the real cause for ‘sickness’ of the public HEIs could not be deciphered. Except Kothari Commission of 1964-65, which reported as part of their analysis that the “use of dynamic techniques of management organization suited to special functions and purposes of education” is very much essential, the other commissions covered mostly academic aspects, curricula change, expansion, technology coverage and social equity. Ambani-Birla Committee (2009), however, recommended for privatization of HEIs. World Bank obviously is a strong protagonist of privatization in HE as a panacea for developing Afro-Asian and Latin American countries. World Bank reports are frank and free in criticizing the public sector devastations in economics of education.

Fielden John (1991) and Majumdar Tapas (1992), among others, enlisted the features of public sector HEIs, responsible for the crisis in their W.B reports on developing countries. The main points brought out are:

i) quality and equity objectives need to be redefined,

ii) Government shall reduce the subsidy and make the public HEIs seek to improve their own resources ,

iii) Accountability and management performance to be insisted upon,

iv) HE managers are concentrating more on immediate operations than on long term goals,

v) In countries with fragile systems of governance, students, when subsidies are reduced, can pose a threat to political stability: hence the pampering by management systems.

Madeleine, G.F et al (1988) pointed out the lack of visionary leadership among the managerial system of Vice-Chancellors/Principals/Directors. Expansion without strategy
increases the burden on national exchequer, filled with people’s hard earnings. Education planners in Indian context are more anxious for self preservation through visible and immediate quantitative results than invisible and distant qualitative goals. One such example is the avaricious XI plan proposals (2007-12) shown in Tab.1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>No. of institutions proposed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a) Central Universities</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) Indian Institutes of Technology</td>
<td>08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) Indian Institutes of Management</td>
<td>07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d) National Institutes of Technology</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e) Indian Institutes of Information Technology</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f) Schools of Architecture</td>
<td>05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g) Model Colleges in districts</td>
<td>375</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>h) Polytechnics (mini engineering colleges)</td>
<td>1000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tab.1 Expansion without strategy – Data of XI plan proposals (UGC Report-2011)

Proposals for such a ‘miraculous’ expansion in XI plan are made with the laudable aim of increasing GER to 15%. The financial outlay for XI plan (2007-12) for the targeted ‘miraculous’ expansion is 46.45 billion rupees, while the preceding X plan (2001-06) had a grant of 3.29 billion rupees only, leading to a 14 times jump.

Sukhdeo Thorat (2011), the then Chairman of UGC, remarked in his report for XI plan that “there is no proper admission policy for M.Phil and Ph.D degrees in Universities”. Coming through the horse-mouth, it is expected to be correct. One glaring example from Andhra Pradesh of Southern India confirmed the lack of policy in managements and ‘arrogance’ of the management. Dravidian University of Andhra Pradesh State Government admitted 2000 M.Phil and 4000 Ph.D. candidates in 2009 with their own fanciful –‘fee’ structure. The issue got scandalized and the state government cancelled the admissions after two years in 2011. The junior officers were penalized, leaving the Vice-Chancellor, who has since retired.

Ambitious projects of expansion apart, the ambivalence in HE arose due to the divergent nomenclature of institutions and degrees, confounding the crisis. Central University, State University, Deemed University, Private University, Indian Institute of Technology, National Institute of Technology, Indian Institute of Information Technology and Polytechnics are all part of HE, whose degrees need to be judged for parity and equivalence with those of international institutes for higher education and employment,
the responsibility lying on governments of other countries, who when vexed with the jargon, will just ignore.

NEED FOR A NEW PARADIGM

An outright signal to privatization is not conducive to the developing needs of a country like India with a diverse federal structure, nor is it totally feasible to extract ‘national priorities’ from profit-seeking-private ownership, working with ‘market driven discipline’ (Chalam, 2011). An equivalent phrase for public sector is ‘irresponsible part time ownership’. There comes the need for transfer of the science of knowledge (Cummings and Worley, 2005) for HE managements to infuse a sense of ownership and to keep up healthy financial strength. Pretension and professional negligence on the part of individual academicians are going unchecked by public managements, which are nipped in the bud by vigilant managers of private institutions. Tenure appointments by private HEIs keep the academics on toes while once-for-life appointments of public HEIs in India hold the key for the crisis.

Jelinek and Litterer (1988) proposed three types of strategic management (a) empirical-rational, (b) normative-reeducative and (c) power-coercive, for better understanding of human relationships needed for HEIs. ‘a+b’ was in practice for a long time while ‘b+c’ needs to be enforced in the changed paradigm. World Bank (2005) report warns the Afro-Asian nations that HE systems will not deliver the promised goals, if diversification continues to be chaotic and unplanned. Pant (2003) insists on ‘control’ functions of management to adopt to environmental changes, both internal and external, to cope up with the organizational complexity and minimize the costs. Robbin & Coulter (1998) proposed the management action to take into account the internal and external environments.

- Internal: goals, policies, resources, students and teacher-unions and inclusive aspects
- External: political, legal, economic, socio-cultural and technological

Strategic management serves to understand the two environments through political and academic skills. With the knowledge of environmental skills on the regional scale, decisions of Vice-Chancellors/ Principals/Directors are expected to be mandatory for public institutes and recommendatory for private institutions under affiliation. On the national scale, the federal structure is leading towards a chaotic divergence where an absolute new ladder of power towards a pinnacle of enforcement is necessary. Power of authority and not the principle of philosophy, makes the concerned sections to understand the theme of HE in a country, where nearly 35% the population is illiterate or semi-literate (Ratnakara Rao and Krishnamurty, 2010). Adding fuel to the fire, some of the HEIs under the control of state governments have regional languages as ‘mediums’ of instruction as part of cultural identity, the results of which on the national scale are alienation and immiscibility. Hence the need for a new paradigm.
STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT OF HEIs:

Strategic management models in the past focused on four aspects: goal setting, strategy formulations, administration and control. Stoner et al (2002) considered the ‘Hofer and Schendel’ model of four stages and reduced it to two stages of ‘goals with strategies’ and ‘administration-control’. Robbins and Coults (1998) proposed a three phase SM as to extend beyond private sector to all government institutions; strategic planning, strategic implementation and strategic evaluation. Apparao (2009) in his book ‘The making of a world class university’ clarified that “SM should take note of market shifts and impacts on stake-holders which are as important to public sector as to private sector. The terminology should include policies, goals, tactics and actions”.

The nobel intellectual Amartya Sen (1970) explained the paradigm long back in a lucid manner. “The crisis in Indian education is more due to grave failures in policy making than administrative neglect and thoughtless actions”. Comparative analysis apart, ‘administrative neglect’ was an aspect in his analytical pursuit, which was only secondary, forty years back and what could have happened since his observation is very clear. Coming closer to the solution, National Knowledge Commission (2006) suggested an ‘independent regulatory authority of higher education’ (IRAHE), modified subsequently as National Commission for HE and Research (NCHER). The Chairman of the Commission shall be the top regulator, the virtual commander of forces over the divisional managers of University Grants Commission, All India Council for Technical Education, Medical Council of India, Indian Council for Medical Research, Council of Scientific Industrial Research, and Indian Council of Agricultural Research, Association of Indian Universities and other national bodies. These institutes, which are regulatory authorities of various major disciplines of science like technology, engineering, medicine and agriculture and general universities do not have any interaction or coordination among themselves, acting as water-tight compartments at present. The proposed NCHER single authority system is naturally against the interests of the present multiple management method and hence stalled by concerned power sections for fear of ‘experiment’. The single chieftain strategy eliminates the exclusive nature and infuses multi-disciplinary nature of pedagogy and research. The chieftain at the pinnacle shall be incharge of the philosophical segments of SM, in addition to authority and control. Ramsden (1998) and Shreshta (2009) opined that net working of ‘political activity and strategic management’ are necessary to answer the questions of autonomy and academic freedom in consonance with uniformity and quality-discipline. The important dimension of ‘complimentarity and competition’ found in USA between private HE and public institutions is to be modeled for Indian context (Chalam, 2011). Chalam however is skeptical about the USA model of HE management in its ability for social inclusion but supported for a unique regulatory authority and honest control over varied disciplines. While the lower quality institutions are a matter of concern for regional and federal administrators, who shall be miniature chieftains of the proposed paradigm, the national responsibility to insist on discipline, appointments, quality and accountability needed for leading public institutes of HE, shall rest with NCHER, under direct control of the central government.
CONCLUSION

Numerical expansion and unusual diversification of Higher Education Institutions have led to a stage of unmanageability. “Vice-chancellor/ Director/ Principal”, system of management has to be strengthened at the provincial level and has to work under the direct supervision of respective apex bodies at the national level. For strategic purposes, the apex bodies have to work under the single authority of National Commission for Higher Education and Research.
REFERENCES

3. Ambani and Birla Report on Education. 2009. online www.education.nic.in