

## Issues and Challenges of Privatisation of Higher Education in India

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### Abstract

Privatisation is one of the hottest issue currently being debated in the educational sector and is considered as the pragmatic alternative to the limited resources and other priorities of governmental regulations. No doubt, the growing deterioration in the quality of public schooling/ institutions has resulted in the increased private institutions, but it is argued that Privatisation of higher education distorts and subverts the core mission of colleges and universities to seek transmit and generate knowledge. Due to privatisation, the self financing higher educational institutions have become a place, where money power replaced the merit of the students. As privatisation and commercialisation are the two sides of the same coin, so profit making has become a part of private educational institutions. The emphasis is more on profit and it runs on the principle of market and commerce. This privatisation has become a threat against the constitutional obligations of providing equal opportunities to all. Only that section, which possesses better access to resources and more capital to bear risk, is able to derive benefits from educational opportunities generated by the market forces. All this accentuates inequality and enhance the gulf between the rich and the poor masses. It is feared that universities will act like industries and higher education will turn out to be a luxury good and it will be the monopoly of the rich. Furthermore professional and market-oriented courses are given more emphasis, while disadvantaging liberal arts, social sciences and humanities programme. Keeping this in view, an attempt has been made through this paper to highlight the issues and challenges of privatisation of higher education in India.

**KEYWORD:** Privatisation, Deterioration, Commercialisation, Inequality, Luxury.

### Introduction.

#### Higher Education In India: An Overview.

India is a land of great vastness, diversity and history dating back to several millennia. With a land spanning 3,287,263 square kilometres occupying 2.4% area of the world makes it the seventh largest country. India has placed great emphasis on education, right from ancient times. With more than a billion residents, India has the second largest educational system in the world. In the past, highly advanced institutions such as Nalanda, Taxila and Vikramshila flourished here, which imparted education on a vast range of subjects and were sites for open, dialogistic communication. Towards the medieval times, education continued to be rooted in religion and the system of teaching continued with minor variations across the region. Under the British rule, education was elitist, catering to only the socially advantaged sections of society. However, the colonial rule also saw the beginning of the establishment of the university system in India, with institutions of higher learning systematically growing in number, so that by 1923, there were 23 universities across India. After independence in 1947, the Government of India laid the foundations of a sustained programme of higher education with the setting up of the University Grants

Commission in 1953. In 1986, a National Policy on Education was drafted to prepare Indian education for the new century with a Programme of Action in 1992. India's planners and administrators have placed great stress on higher education, as reflected in India's 1986 National Policy on Education, revised in 1992: "Higher education provides people with an opportunity to reflect on the critical social, economic, cultural, moral and spiritual issues facing humanity. It contributes to national development through dissemination of specialized knowledge and skills. It is therefore, a crucial factor for survival. (Government of India 1992, p. 24). According to the UGC report, the total number of universities in the country as on 11.02.2013 are 620, among them 298 are state universities, 130 deemed to be universities, 44 central universities and 148 private universities.

### **Need For Privatisation of Higher Education.**

Globalization, compulsion and paradigm shift in education are the main concepts in the system of education in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Money rather than merit are the measure of availing educational opportunity. Education under globalization is no more a social consumption; rather it is a private product for private consumption. Privatization is a widespread use in economic reforms. It is a process of transferring the ownership of an organization or enterprise from the public sector to the private sector. Privatization of education stands for lesser control and regulations of government. It refers to the expansion of private sector and education of public sector in education. It reduces the role of government and increases the role of private, co-operative and local government. The aspects of role shift are decision and responsibility of money, administration and curriculum development.

With the growing population, the need of resources has tremendously increased since the 80s of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This had lead to rising unemployment and widespread insecurity in the entire world and it has become a globalized concern. Globalization is characterised by an ongoing change and this change tended education as a marketable commodity and in return the educational system has not remained a public or government enterprise any more, as these bodies are not able to cope up with the growing demand of money and material. Though the state has the responsibility to fund education and to meet the challenges of rise in demand in education. Government taking sole onus for financing of higher education is not adequate to meet the emerging needs of higher education today. In the context of a glaring gap between demand and supply, it is natural that there is a realization that the task needs to get distributed among private and joint enterprise.

### **Positive Effects of Privatisation.**

Privatisation will have a number of positive contributions. As regards the teaching community, the teachers will feel intrinsically compelled to perform their duty seriously as their salary will be paid out of the fees collected from the students. A teacher's continuity in the job, promotion, salary or his dismissal will solely be contingent upon his everyday performance. This would eliminate the presence of teacher politicians, casual, non-serious, salary-minded teaching employees from the campus. Another benefit of the growing influence of private investments in the education sector is likely to be the bridging of the large gap dividing the resourceful private sector from the resource hungry education sector. As it stands today, education-focused organizations are largely cut-off from the talent, the innovation and the leadership that characterize for-profit companies in India.

Privatisation will also lead to:

- Improvement in the quality of higher education due to competition;

- Use of IT and communication technology for spread/exchange of educational packages;
- Greater access by students to a wide range of opportunities at home and abroad;
- Increased access to education and reduction in knowledge gap in developing countries, and
- Easier access to higher education in developing countries.
- Enrichment of process of teaching and learning by sharing different experience throughout countries.
- Alternative source of education for the aspiring youths.
- Migration to other countries for economic gain, security and self recognition.

### **Issues And Challenges.**

It has been argued that privatisation of education distorts and subverts the core mission of college/ university, which is to seek, transmit and generate knowledge, undisturbed by commercial motive. It accentuates inequality and enhances the gulf between the elite and the poor masses. The emphasis is more on profit and it runs on the principles of market and commerce. It appears, sceptics have reasons to frown upon the seemingly magnificent project of privatisation. It is feared that universities will act like industry for grabbing profits. They will be at liberty to raise the course fees in any way they wish including tuition fees, capitation fees and donations. It is also argued that complete marketisation of higher education would go against the constitutional obligation of providing equal opportunities of education to all. Only the more advanced sections of population who have better information, better access to resources and more capital to bear risk, will be able to derive the benefits from educational opportunities generated by the market forces. Privatisation and commercialisation are the two sides of the same coin. No private individual or group will come forward to set up educational institution unless some economic interests are involved. So profit-making has to be a part of private educational initiatives. But the government has to see that commercialisation of education does not undermine our efforts to provide quality education and create excellence.

This commercialization has caused concerns, some of which are the following:

#### **1). Marketability :**

Today higher education is looked as a tradable commodity and this approach has its own consequences. It is globalisation which has triggered a churning process in higher education the world over. The developing and emerging nations are struggling to adjust themselves with the phenomenon of trade in higher education. As a result, it has become a thing of worry for the developing country like India.

#### **2). Threats to Indian Culture :**

Globalization and privatization has lead to threats of borrowed culture as is seen case of our country with a rich heritage and culture is becoming diluted due to gradual entry of borrowed culture and students run abroad as these private institutions are allowing foreigners to study here. It is leading towards endangering our indigenous tradition and culture.

**3). Undue Advantage To Specific Focus Groups :** A large proportion of new universities and colleges are financially independent. This constitutes private sector in India overall trend towards larger share of financing for higher education coming from non-government sources. This has made higher education in India increasing expensive, within the reach of relatively well-off students. Only students of rich parents get access to highly subsidised and more reputed public institutions of higher education. It means that they are only for those who can pay for education.

4). **No Access To Socially Marginalised Groups** : Students from poor households are put to further disadvantage since they are not academically prepared to crack highly competitive entrance examinations. The poor are left to the mercy of the private providers. In this way, Ensuring equitable access to poor students coming from poor families is now a major challenge.

5).**Lack of Quality Education** :

A significant number of private institutions are run as private enterprises, many among them owned by influential families. There are also private training centres that are legally for profit entities. There is also the issue of the over-commercialization of education where profit-mongers ignore quality improvement and work on amassing more money. Finally, how easy is it for regulators to keep private institutes in check, ensure quality control and enforce policies?

6). **Commercialization** :

With private growth, there have been obvious concerns about equity, quality and exploitation. Standards of these private educational institutions are continue to fall and some private institutions indulge in malpractices. The emphasis is on profit and it runs on the principles of market and profit economy. It is argued that the private sector has little knowledge on the intricacies of the education sector as most private investors are neither trained in education management or non-profit work. Can such investors really improve the quality of education in India?

7). **Claiming Exorbitant Fee From Students** :

Since tuitions fee for entire professional education is almost very high and most people find only professional education useful. Many private institutions charge exorbitant fee (beyond prescribed norms) in the form of various kinds of levis and are unable to provide even minimum competent faculty strength. The non-affordability of the programmes of such institutions to a vast majority of eligible students is a matter of public concern. Once again, useful and productive higher education is out of the reach of the poor. It accentuates inequality and enhances the gulf between the elite and the poor masses. Thus once again depriving the poor in getting education that may be helpful in maintaining better socio-economic status in the society.

8). **Low Criteria For Admission** : With the coming up of privatization, a lot of colleges and universities particularly professional courses, students with low percentage or scores are getting admissions. Here in some institutions, the admission criteria are not high and students with a very low I.Q are also getting admissions which create an oversupply of low calibre products in the market. These universities/ institutions are just working like a factory, taking more and more substandard students and producing more degrees of poor quality.

9).**Poor Quality Research** :

The performance of private institutes at research is quite pathetic. These are not helping in that. Ironically, about half (43% of the institutions don't have a research policy and a good number (14%0 of people have no idea about it. Lack of management, support, lack of research culture and lack of faculty motivation are the reasons for lack of quality research in B-schools in India.

10).**Lack of Good Infrastructural Facilities** : Some leading institutes in private sector provide better infrastructure than the government ones, but rest of the private institutes' infrastructure is worse than the government sector.

11). **Less Weightage To Arts And Social Sciences** : More attention is given to the subjects like information technology, engineering and other subjects and

disadvantaging those subjects that do not have an immediate profitability such as the social sciences and humanities.

**Suggestions.**

- 1). There is a need of well considered, integrated, transparent and precise policy that would monitor the co-existence of public-private bodies in the sphere of higher education.
- 2). Privately run institutions and universities should be given recognition by the concerned regulatory bodies such as UGC, AICTE, NCTE and the like strictly on the basis of norms laid down by these bodies to ensure the quality and standard of education
- 3). The fee structure should be such that, the cost of education be recovered from those, who can pay for it (The Elites).It should be laid down without encouraging commercialization and profit making.
- 4). certain number of seats should be kept for open admission of meritorious students who are unable to pay.
- 5). There should be arrangement for financial incentives like free education and subsidization of private cost on education for socially and economically poor students.
- 6). The state authorities need to ensure that they do not function as mere factories to produce degrees and diplomas. It has to be verified from time to time that, such private institutions function in accordance with the national policy objectives.
- 7). Merit should be the only consideration for admission in these institutions and not money.
- 8). Their standards should be controlled by the government through the policy of accreditation.
- 9). Recruitment of teaching staff should be left entirely to university institutions.
- 10). Private organizations must therefore strive hard to keep up their monetary demands to a set level and at the same time maintain good standards of imparting education. New methods of teaching and learning should be adopted keeping in view the human and child rights.
- 11). The private bodies should have a meticulous plan for funding the different courses and for improving the physical facilities, laboratories, human resources and research work.

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