

PRIVATIZATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN INDIA

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Abstract:

Privatization of Higher education is a popular concept of present century. With the rapid changes of time we frequently observe privatization everywhere. Privation of higher education implies the transfer of power, activities, assets etc. from govt. sector to private sector. In case of privatization of education several changes are arise. In this research paper a descriptive study is made on the situation, issues, and problems of higher education after privatization.

Keywords: Privatization, Higher education, private sector etc.

I. Introduction

Education in general and higher education in particular plays a key role in the realization of India's extraordinary potential and aspiration for economic and technological development. People always expect a best higher education system in terms of quality, employment etc. whether it is private education system or government educational system. Unfortunately, our prevalent system of higher education is beset with a number of problems and inadequacies. A possible way out from this situation is privatization of the higher education system which is predominantly public at present. As per WTO Agreement also, the privatization of education is coming closure. Privatization may be of three forms:

- i. Mild privatization on education and by gradually increasing recovery cost of education by way of fees to 50 % level, the remaining cost being subsidized by the government.
- ii. Intensive privatization by insisting that at least 75% cost be covered by students fees and employers' contribution.
- iii. Total privatization with total freedom to private sector to establish educational institutions or even charge cost plus pricing and generate profit from investment in education.

India has a long tradition of private efforts in higher education. Maharishi Karve, Madan Mohan Malavya, Sir Syed Ahmed Khan, DAV Trusts, Sanathan Dharam Sabha, Khalsa Dewan, Jamia Milia Islamia and many other charitable trusts started educational institutions to widen educational opportunity in the society. The Banaras Hindu University and the Aligarh Muslim University came up with the efforts of certain dedicated individuals and financial support of the community at large. But modern educational entrepreneurs are not guided by philanthropic motives of the earlier reformers. They intend to invest in educational institutions to realize higher rates of return on their investment because the demand for professional education is very high. Over the last few decades, a great number of private higher institutions have entered the scene and attempted to respond to the massive demand for education at post secondary level. This is particularly true in the fields of engineering medicine and management and much less in the broader level of university education. The institutional variants of privatization range from small technical colleges to internationally recognized institutes like Indian Business School in Hyderabad, Management Development Institute in Gurgaon, S.P. Jain Management Institute in

Mumbai, Indian Institute of Information Technology and Symbiosis in Pune. A few private institutions of higher education have been given virtual university by being recognized as Deemed University. A few universities like Guru Govind Singh Indraprastha University in Delhi have been created consisting of only affiliated private self-financing colleges. In the southern states of Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu there has been a general trend towards liberalization and opening of educational sector by private initiative. Today, the private higher education system constitutes more than 50% of the higher education system.

II. Arguments in favor of and against Privatization of Higher Education:

The very phenomenon of privatization of higher education appears as a mixed basket full of possibilities and problems. There are views for and against privatization of higher education in India. While some have started criticizing the concept, others consider it very useful and indeed inevitable.

A) Arguments in favor:

The supporters have the following points in their support:

- i) It is alleged that the present policies followed in India have placed excessive responsibility for expansion and development of education on the government. Consequently at the level of college and university, public sector has played a dominant role in the development of higher education system. But now a stage has come when the government is finding it very difficult to meet the democratic aspirations of the people for further expansion of education system due to paucity of resources. With the alarming rise in country's population with its corresponding effect on mushrooming of colleges and universities, it is increasingly being difficult for the govt. to support /fund every institution adequately. As a result most of the higher education institutions all over the country are facing acute financial crisis. India's expenditure on higher education is only 1 of GDP while it is 3.1% in USA, 1.3% in UK and 1.5% in China. It is therefore felt that private sector be inducted in education so that it can share the burdens of the govt. in funding education.

- ii) As on 31st March, 2021, there were 54 central universities, 416 State Universities, 125 deemed universities, 361 Private Universities, 159 institutes of national importance, and 31,324 degree and post graduate colleges. But the proportion of the university and college going student population in the relevant age group of 16-23 is dismal 6%. This is quite low even when compared with other countries of the world. Thus, though higher education in India has expanded generally, inadequate access continues to cause concern. To increase this access to higher education, privatization has been thought as an alternative way.

- iii) The Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in India for higher education is very less as compared to USA, UK and China. For urban population of India, this GER is around 20% but for rural areas it is only around 6%. Also GER for SC/ST/OBC varies between 6-8%. This shows rural sector and backward communities

require a lot of improvement to increase the overall GER in higher education in India. Thus government's initiative is not sufficient to increase the GER in higher education, which necessitates private initiative.

- iv) The quality and environment for higher education in the government institutions are not at all satisfactory. It is deteriorating day-by-day. National knowledge Commission's "Report to the Nation 2006-2009" concludes that" there is a quiet crisis in higher education in India that runs deep. The universities and colleges are facing a severe shortage of skilled human resources. A study conducted by UGC in 2008 revealed that 53% posts of lecturer in universities and 41% in colleges are vacant. This has lead to very high student teacher ratio.
- v) Another problem with the present Indian higher education system is that though it is delivering a huge quantity of output in the name of educated populace, the employment is not the same tune. According to a report by NASSCOM, 75% of technical graduates are unemployable in India. It goes without saying that most of the course being offered in universities is very weak in terms of their employability. This has contributed to the rising unemployment, resulting in frustration among the qualified ones. Most of the government higher institutions do not have necessary infrastructure or initiatives like Placement cell etc. while private higher institutions are not lacking in this initiative. Hence private higher institutions are expected to play better role in this regard in some extend.
- vi) The system of subsidization of higher education has created an overall atmosphere of indifference among its beneficiaries. The teachers do not teach, the students do not learn and the parents are not concerned about education. The parents are not anxiously concerned because they do not have to pay much and the nominal amount of fee they pay is insignificant as compared to their earnings. Those who are benefited by the subsidy in higher education do not demand better quality because they are not paying for it. When a beneficiary of a service has to pay, he expresses concern about its quality. Hence it is felt that privatization be introduced in educationso that it can awake the teachers, parents and students for education in true sense. It has been seen that private institutions are thriving faster than the government run institutions.
- vii) The expansion of the horizons of knowledge is taking place at a rapid space all over the world. The underdeveloped economies must keep pace with this explosion of knowledge. Education is no longer viewed as a social service. It is considered a necessary economic input and as such investment in education is treated as a factor contributory to human resources development.

In this effort towards human resource development, the private sector is also expected to play its part since it is a major beneficiary of the knowledge industry.

B) Argument Against:

Scepticshave reasons to frown upon the seemingly magnificent project of privatization. According to them-

- a) Privatization will distort and subvert the core mission of college/university, which is to seek, transmit and generate knowledge undisturbed by commercial motivate.
- b) It will accentuate inequality and enhances gulf between the elite and the poor masses.
- c) The emphasis will be more on profit. Private universities and colleges will run on principles of market and commerce. They will be at liberty to raise the course fees in any way they wish including tuition fees, capitation fees and donations.
- d) The complete commercialization of higher education would go against the Constitutional obligation of providing equal opportunities of education to all.The United Nations International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights of 1966 declares, in Article 13, that "Higher education shall be made equally accessible to all on the basis of capacity, by appropriate means, and in particular by the progressive introduction of free education”.
- e) It will be a monopoly of the rich. Only the more advanced sections of Population who have better information, better access to resources and more capital will be able to derive the benefits from educational opportunities generated by the market forces.
- f) It is feared that private forces may misuse higher education to exploit the gullible and indulge in selling certificates of degree and diplomas. Some of the universities exist only on paper and some are reported to have many campuses in other states.
- g) There will be no importance on merit based admission. The suffererswill be the meritorious and talented students particularly those who belongto the low socioeconomic background.
- h) Creativity, originality, innovativeness and therein the promotion ofculture will take a back seat.
- i) It is feared that in the long run due to complete privatization there may be complete disappearance of social science, humanities, literature and philosophy and an aggressive upsurge of technical and vocational specialists.
- j) Service conditions of teacher will not be secure. Their services are liable to removal at the will of the private management.
- k) It is also a misconception that all higher private institutions will give quality education. In the capital, where Indraprastha University was started to develop professional colleges, some of them had to be closed down due to lack of infrastructure. Even the majority of institutes that are running do not have a permanent faculty. Some of the private colleges in many states run from small rooms or abandoned sheds of factories with facilities wanting or absent.

Table 1: Comparison in Higher Education System:

Sl No	Heads	Higher Education	
		Government	Private
1	Mission	To serve as a public mission as determined by the govt.	To serve private interest of students, clients and owners.
2	Control	Highly govt. control	Almost less control by the govt.
3	Motive	Service	Profit
4	Main Concern	Knowledge	Skills
5	Approach	Welfare	Market
6	Sources of Revenue	Public/tax payers	All private, mainly tuition.
7	Norms of Management	Academic norms, shared governance, anti authoritarianism	Operated like business, norms from business management.
8	Fee	Low levels of fee	High level of fee.
9	Area of Interests	Generic	Specific
10	Team Effort	Rarely	Always
11	Admission	Strictly merit basis	Not always strictly merit basis.
12	Time schedule and discipline	Not rigid	Rigid
13	Opportunity to Education	Equal	Not likely to be equal.
14	Fund Problem	Exists	More
15	Reservation against SC/ST/OBC	Yes	Does not exist.
16	Service condition	Secure	Not secure.

IV. Conclusion

Sceptics have found a serious problem with the policy of privatization, but that does not mean we shall say “No” to privatization. It is known to all that, today, private higher education system constitutes more than 40 % of the higher education system. Hence, what is required is not restriction but more growth so that with competition quality will automatically improve and reduce the knowledge gap in developing countries. In fact, very soon India is supposed to open up its higher education to private and foreign participation as a part of its commitment to the WTO. Again, though the supporters are exceedingly optimistic about the functional aspects of privatization, this does not mean that we should go for complete privatization. We must see what type of privatization can be mould that would suitable to Indian societal context or that could be stretched to the vantage point of all Indians-the rich and the poor. Government must have control on the fee of private colleges. Though there is no reservation against SC/ST/OBC, government must make it mandatory to hire 25% of poor or economically backward students in the private institutions. Government agencies like MCI and AICTE should become more strict in approving the private institutions and should keep a continuous check on quality of education and other requirements in such institutions. Thus, if the government and

government agencies like MCI and AICTE keep control, the privatization of higher education will surely fulfill the dream of millions of Indians for higher education.

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