

“ROLE OF PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES IN HIGHER EDUCATION IN INDIA”

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Abstract

Higher education of a good quality is critical for a nation to become globally competitive. In these days of knowledge revolution, it is not factor endowment but good quality higher education which determines the growth of a nation. The problem in India is that, while there are a large number of unemployed graduates and postgraduates, there is a shortage of workers who can acquire new skills and innovate. Therefore, “quality of higher education” becomes extremely important. But quality does not come cheap. There should be constant efforts to innovate the curriculum by incorporating the needs of industry.

Introduction

Today, we talk about globalization in education. But it is not easy to understand its implications. We are launching private universities on government university models. We may produce many PhDs but to what effect? Can these doctorates withstand international scrutiny? The new brand of graduates and postgraduates from unknown universities has to be really good to be branded as the new products of globalization. If the market forces do not accept them, then much of the efforts will be wasted.

Private universities should ensure that they do not become mere machines for producing graduates and postgraduates like their government counterparts. The efforts and time of the students and the money of their parents should not go in vain. It has been experienced that the government universities can survive even if they do not meet the expectations of the students and the parents, but the same cannot be said about the private universities.

They must keep in mind that if their students are also destined to move from office to office in search of a job like a conventional common graduate, then these universities may not survive because the UGC and the respective state government will not come to their rescue. Private universities are more like business houses than educational centers. They run on the fee of the students. The expenditure of running the university is quite high-including high cost of building infrastructure, salaries of highly qualified teachers and other staff and day-to-day expenses and payment of electricity, telephone, water bills and taxes. It is, therefore, absolutely necessary for them to keep their courses so attractive that there is great lure among the students to seek admission in them.

Private universities are not only instrumental in providing important succor to the system of higher education but also bring about excellence in education and make the students on par with their foreign counterparts in knowledge skill and information-like the students of Universities of Harvard, Yale, Cambridge and Oxford-the model international universities. There is no doubt that in a country like India with a large population, there is a need to make education broad based. But the country also needs to develop exclusive professional manpower to acquire a cutting edge in global competitiveness.

Significance of the study:-

The basic purpose of this research paper highlights the importance of private universities, also helps to explain how we can maintain a high standard of education in private universities in India

Research Methodology:-

The study was based on secondary data's and the information had been collected from various Higher Education books, journals, research papers and various articles in leading newspapers and related websites, etc.

Objectives:-

The objectives of study were based on:

1. To help to understand why we need private universities in India.
2. To analyze the success of self-financing private universities in higher education in India.
3. To understand benefits of attending a private university.
4. To understand drawbacks of attending a private university.
5. To understand how to raise private universities standards.

Meaning & Definition of PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES:-

Private universities are universities not operated by governments, although many receive tax breaks, public student loans, and grants. Depending on their location, private universities may be subject to government regulation. This is in contrast to public universities and national universities.

In India, privately funded institutions have existed since independence. Many of these universities offer multidisciplinary professional courses similar to state funded universities.

As of 12 March 2012, there are 109 private universities in India. The oldest is Sikkim Manipal University of Health Medical & Technological Science, with Gazette Notification date of 11 October 1995. Where the latest one amongst of list of private universities in India is Himalayan University that has got recognition and authorized by University Grants Commission as per section of 2 f of UGC act 1956.

Why do we need private universities?

Higher education in India has largely been the preserve of the Government till recently in terms of both funding and provision of education. But for this to continue, the Government should continue to be in a position to pour in large sums of money to fund higher education. Today, the Government is unable to find the funds even to keep up its own commitment of spending 6% of GDP on education. There is also a clamor to spend more of what little funding the Government has allocated for education, on primary education than on higher education, and quite rightly so, given that many children don't even get a basic primary and secondary education today. Thus the Government spending on higher education as a percentage of overall government spending on education is only likely to decrease further in the coming years.

But the demand for higher education is continuing to increase with more and more students wanting a higher education today than ever before. How can we bridge the gap between increasing demand and decreasing government funding for higher education? The only option is to tap the private sector to participate in the funding and provision of higher education. The process of increasing private participation in higher education has already begun with a few states like Chhattisgarh and Uttaranchal having passed legislation to permit the setting up of private universities in their states. Indeed the private sector has been funding higher education in India for a long time, albeit on a very limited scale.

Benefits of attending a private university:-

- Private universities generally have smaller class sizes, and more prestige than does a public university.
- Students generally build stronger, more personal relationships with their professors and instructors, as there are special programs designed to increase communication and dialogue between the two. It is not uncommon for a university to arrange for professors to dine, correspond, and interact with students on a personal, friendly level.
- Private universities also have a significantly higher amount of extra-curricular activities and programs for students to participate in, which can develop a stronger sense of community.

Drawbacks of attending a private university:-

- The greatest drawback of attending a private university is the difficulty in being accepted for admission. The number of seats available for admission is very less in private universities. The admission process is therefore intensely competitive.
- One of the most significant differences between public and private universities are the costs. Tuition fees will be higher compared to public universities.

SUCCESS OF SELF-FINANCING PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES IN HIGHER EDUCATION IN INDIA:-

1. There will be a highly competition among several players, which is in the interest of the consumer, i.e., the students.
2. Innovations in the curriculum, which will benefit the student community.
3. The ratio of nonacademic to academic staff may be much less in private universities, as the emphasis is on results and not on procedures.

4. With adequate funds and facilities available, it may be possible for private universities to produce more research output and patents per rupee spent.
5. In private universities, there is a constant pressure on the part of teachers to publish and perform. There is a process of continuous evaluation of performance of teaching and non-teaching jobs. It reduces the role of bureaucracy and improves accountability. Teachers are accountable to the employer who could fire them. In government funded universities also, there is accountability, but it is more on paper than in practice.
6. There is a continuous effort to search for and hire competent faculty or make efforts to strengthen their existing faculty, and to build institutions to develop their own faculty.
7. It is easier to achieve the triangular partnership of academia, industry and government in private universities.

These are some factors favorable for the creation of private universities. But private universities are not a panacea for all the ills of higher education in India. Several measures have to be taken to overhaul the higher education system, including opening up of higher education for the entry of private sector.

How can we ensure private universities are held to high standards?

We can borrow the model from the corporate sector. Just as all companies are required by law to publish annual reports providing details of their assets, liabilities, profits and losses, the profiles of the board of directors and the management and various other financial information, every educational institution (whether public or private) should publish an annual report with details of the infrastructure and facilities available, profiles of the trustees and the administrators, the academic qualifications and experience of the staff, the courses offered, the number of students, the results of the examinations, the amount of funds available to the university and the sources of funding etc. In addition, every educational institution must get itself rated by an independent rating agency like CRISIL, ICRA or CARE and publicly announce its rating to prospective students to enable the students to choose the institution they want to enroll in.

At one stroke, this will bring in transparency and ensure that every educational institution, whether public or private, is accountable not only to those students who are studying in the institution, but to prospective students and the public at large as well. Public announcements of the financial and educational records of the institutions as well as their ratings by independent rating agencies will generate healthy competition between the various private institutions and will also put pressure on the Government funded institutions to work towards all-round improvement.

CONCLUSION:-

It is felt that the large educational demand can be met only with self-financing private universities which are not only multi- disciplinary but also the centers of excellence. They should, therefore, be permitted to offer courses on any discipline. The viability and sustainability of their products would depend upon their demand and market response. In this market-driven approach, each self-financing private university will decide on its own course and subjects to be offered. They will also have the discretion to introduce new programs and discard the old ones periodically without affecting the interest of the already enrolled students. The policies should be such as favor the genuinely interested private players to foray into higher education.

A country's socio-economic development is directly proportional to its education systems. In order to take our nation to dizzy heights, we need to spread education to its every corner. At the same time, the higher education should be modern in content and methodology.

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