

INNOVATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION IN INDIA – CURRENT SCENARIO, CHALLENGES AND SUGGESTIONS

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ABSTRACT

Education has become competitive and so too the educational institutions. In order to survive the competition, institutions have to improve the quality of their services. Changes in culture, aspiration and levels of skills required in securing employment for students, force higher education institutions today to rework on their educational models and add value to each and every aspect of their service. Innovations and best practices serve to enhance quality and add value. In this paper innovations, small and big, developed indigenously and feasible to be implemented both at institutional and individual level are discussed. Innovational practices introduced at the national level as a part of policy changes by the government are also highlighted. Challenges which may come in the way of implementing the innovational practices are pointed out.

Keywords: Innovations in Higher education in India – current scenario, challenges and suggestions

INTRODUCTION

Education is a very powerful instrument for social change and transformation and innovative teaching practice is the only way to enhance the quality of our education. The problems which society faces are essentially the problems of educational institutions which are required to be innovative as they teach new skills and develop new insights and approaches towards the solving of social problems which the nation faces. Students must be empowered to be able to withstand the global challenges of the 21st century. The Oxford Dictionary defines innovation as "the introduction of novelties, the alteration of what is established methods". A key performance indicator of any education institution is the education quality especially in teaching and learning areas. Meaningful learning only takes place once an individual is engaged in social activities. These include developing the capability of students to use ideas and information, testing of ideas and evidence, generation of

new ideas and evidence, facilitation of personal development and development of a student's capacity to plan and manage their learning experience. Critical faculties are thus developed so that students begin to ask important questions rather than simply answer questions.

Lecturing is a communication between two or more persons who influence each other by their ideas and learn something in the process of their interaction with one another. Lecturing is thus a complex, exciting, challenging and interactive skill whose main aim is to create a learning situation in which knowledge is imparted and in which understanding and skills are developed. There are a number of traits required of the innovative lecturer which include humility, courage, impartiality, open-mindedness, empathy, enthusiasm, judgment and imagination. It is these lecturers who will infuse deeper learning in their students. It is clear that traditional methodologies of 'talk and chalk' which are teacher centered are not adequate for current students and that effective teaching and learning is not taking place at the desired level. Hence the focus must shift from 'talk and chalk' to how students learn and lecturers need to instill a deep approach to learning by giving students varied innovative stimulating learning environments in order to create a deeper learning. Learning should be the result of lecturer motivation and facilitation and the students' learning-focused activities in which they are engaged and for which they assume ownership. This is why it is imperative that all lecturers should seriously engage in reflective practice and experiment with innovative methods wherever required.

Objectives of the study

1. To understand the current situation of Higher Education in India with respect to innovative practices.
2. To identify certain challenges in adopting innovative practices.
3. To come out with suggestions pertaining to feasible innovative practices.

METHODOLOGY

The study is based on Secondary data. The published Research Articles, Reports, Journals and News Papers are referred for the study. The paper is simplified with just a analytical study.

Innovation in Higher education in India

“The higher education is that which does not merely give us information, but makes life in harmony with all existence”. Rabindranath Tagore.

Education in India has always been valued more than as a means towards earning a good living. India made concerted efforts to improve access to higher education and the system grew rapidly after independence. No doubt Indian higher education is one of the largest, other one being China and the United States. Up till 1980, the higher education was largely confined to arts, science and commerce. Over a period of time, the growing demand for higher education and its relevance in business and industry was felt by people. Quality-wise they had maintained standards and resources were limited. The reforms in early 90s saw the middle class population larger, younger, richer and the country supported entrepreneurship. Thus, education was seen not only as a status symbol but also as a means to get ahead of others. Need for competitive efficiency, growth in population and Technological developments, competition all over the world had led to Privatization and globalisation of higher education 1991. The purpose of globalization and global education was to develop a ‘global perspective’ and sensitize the youth for understanding the multicultural world. The youth has to be aware of the global happenings and issues and the interdependence of people around the world. Therefore, the main challenges in education in 1990s was qualitative improvement in content and processes of education; to make them more responsive to learning needs of individuals and consolidation and newer orientation wherever required in different areas of education through innovative programmes and changed role of educational personnel.

Current scenario in India

A new framework for development of basic education in the country has emerged which has a holistic view of basic education with greater linkages and integration between pre-school, primary education, non-formal education and higher education. Emphasis is being laid on not just increasing the number of higher education institutes but centres of excellence. Great stress is being laid on good infrastructure and facilities. Evaluating the need for a functional and reliable system of School-Based Evaluation, CBSE introduced the CCE Scheme (Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation) for doing a holistic assessment of a learner which also includes

co-scholastic area of Life Skills, Attitudes and Values, Sports and Games as well as Co-Curricular activities. The CCE scheme aims at addressing this in a holistic manner. Finding new and innovative methods of teaching is a crucial skill for higher education. It has been witnessed that certain methods and approaches can truly enhance the learning process for students. Applying innovative learning and attention management techniques to classes is a win-win for both students and teachers. Teaching students in ways that keep them engaged and interested in the material can sometimes be a challenge. This proves especially true when it comes to higher education.

Realizing that Innovation is the lifeblood of an economy and nothing can be greater testimony to Indian context than the fact that, in 2009, the President of India declared 2010-20 as the 'Decade of Innovation' and the Prime Minister approved the setting up of a National Innovation Council (NInC) under the Chairmanship of Mr. Sam Pitroda, Adviser to the PM to discuss, analyse and help implement strategies for inclusive innovation in India and prepare a Roadmap for Innovation 2010-2020. National Innovation Council is engaged in a series of initiatives to encourage innovations in existing educational institutions – universities, colleges and schools, as well as promoting new educational models and innovative platforms for knowledge creation, dissemination and application. Some of the key proposals of the NInC in this domain include:

- Creation of a National Innovation Promotion Service to replace/add to National Service Scheme in Colleges to use college students to identify local innovations.
- Setting up a Meta University, as a new model for a 21st Century University where a network of institutions riding on the National Knowledge Network come together to offer students a collaborative and multidisciplinary learning experience.
- Setting up University Innovation Clusters :NInC proposes to identify and facilitate the development of 20 University Innovation Clusters across the country where innovation would be seeded through Cluster Innovation Centres. The CIC will provide a platform for the university and its partners to forge linkages between various stakeholders from industry and academia, initiate and assist innovation activities, encourage innovations in curricula and act as a catalyst and facilitator. It will also work

closely with other industry clusters in its region. An initial pilot with University of Delhi has commenced and received overwhelming response from the student community.

- Mapping of Local History, Ecology and Cultural Heritage by each High School in the country to create critical thinking on their local environment.
- Setting up an Innovation Centre in each DIET (District Institute of Education and Training) to enhance teacher training and enable them to become facilitators of creativity and innovative thinking.

UGC, a premier institution for promoting and coordinating university education and also responsible for determining and maintaining standards of teaching, examination and research in universities is implementing the Scheme of Innovative Programmes which has been named as “Teaching and Research in Interdisciplinary and Emerging Areas” to support (i) full-time specialised courses at Undergraduate and Post-graduate levels including one year PG Diploma after Post-graduation in Interdisciplinary and Emerging Areas and (ii) accommodate brilliant ideas and innovative proposals to influence teaching, research, academic excellence, societal growth and relevant activities in various disciplines which meet educational, national and global priorities and to promote group / departmental research work in universities and colleges.

As a leading Indian university, Delhi University has come up with several inventions. For years, the pattern of higher education in India has remained unchanged. Revamping it to make it contemporary, robust, inclusive, and broad-based is a necessity. In a wide-ranging effort to enable students to combine field work with research, Delhi University’s interdisciplinary innovation projects, have been the first of its kind in the history of the University. For the first time, students were encouraged both through generous funding from the University, and structural support provided by the college, to conduct research outside of the classroom.

The concept of studio lectures and four-year undergraduate programme (FYUP) is an innovative step taken by Delhi University. Making students learn different subjects at the foundation level is like nurturing a tree with a big trunk. Also it is an attempt for broadening the knowledge base, and making it encompass enough to benefit society as a whole. The programme also offers “flexibility” and “options” for students. If they wish, they can leave at the end of two years with a Diploma or at the end of the three years with a Bachelors Degree (without honours). On the completion of four years, they will have a Bachelors Degree with honours.

Institute of Lifelong Learning (ILL) is a unique and innovative initiative of the University to provide Open Educational Resources (OER) to the teaching and learning community. The CICs at the University of Delhi encompasses the following components:

- ***Degree Programme on Innovation:*** University of Delhi is offering a 4 year B.Tech/B.S programme with the primary objective of enabling students to realise their true potential in terms of innovation for real world applications that shall be largely driven by the engine of mathematics and IT. The programme shall also relate to innovation and technology management, entrepreneurship, business, and communications.
- ***Establish linkages between industry and the University for innovation aimed for practical ends:*** This will ensure a fruitful exchange of ideas and programmes that will connect meaningfully with teaching and research Journey of Higher Education in India. 5 programmes of the University, as well to bring benefit to society through input from the CIC where students of the degree programmes as well as other UG/PG/Research students shall take part along with faculty and members from the world of industry as well as from the corporate world.
- ***Innovation Schemes for Undergraduate Students and College Teachers:*** Recognising undergraduate education as being fundamental for the welfare of our university education system, University of Delhi will institute Innovation Schemes for undergraduate students in the form of scholarships and challenges.
- ***Linkage with a village and/or an urban slum/low income area:*** University of Delhi proposes to work closely with villages and/or slum clusters/low income neighbourhoods so as to focus on solving local problems.

Challenges in adopting Innovative practices in Higher education in India.

- Heterogeneous education system
- Interference of political factors
- Economic constraints.
- Shortage of faculty and high student-faculty ratio
- Inadequate infrastructure and facilities
- Very less collaboration of higher educational institutions with industries.
- Lack of quality research work
- Poor quality of curriculum
- Low digital fluency among faculty
- Relative lack of rewards for innovative teaching

Suggestive Innovative Practices

At Institution Level

1) Curricular Aspects

- ✓ Offering dual specialization
- ✓ Separate department libraries
- ✓ Value added chapters in all subjects
- ✓ Website facility to extract information
- ✓ Information on additional online courses
- ✓ Book bank facility
- ✓ Availability of books on competitive exams

1) Teaching, Learning and Evaluation

- ✓ Open book examination
- ✓ Compulsory assignments chapter wise
- ✓ Weightage to attendance in evaluation
- ✓ Virtual learning and training
- ✓ Student exchange programme

- ✓ Guest Lecturers by national and foreign experts
- ✓ Regular faculty development programmes

2) Research, Consultancy and Extension

- ✓ Web links to online journals
- ✓ Social service programmes
- ✓ Student group projects
- ✓ Regular blood donation camps
- ✓ Literacy and awareness programmes to the society
- ✓ Institutional consultancy services

3) Infrastructure and Learning Resources

- ✓ Display of inspirational quotes
- ✓ LCD equipped classrooms
- ✓ Access to high speed internet, locker facility, ramp facility
- ✓ Barcode identification of books in library

4) Student support and Progression

- ✓ Youth empowerment programmes
- ✓ Counselling services, job fairs and campus drives
- ✓ Paid internship at NGOs
- ✓ Celebrations of cultural and traditional days
- ✓ MOU with banks to promote loan facility
- ✓ Banking services within campus
- ✓ Sending all important messages to parents through SMS/e-mail

5) Governance, Leadership and Management

- ✓ Bio-metric attendance system
- ✓ Medical insurance to students and staff
- ✓ Single window system and open door policy
- ✓ Environmental friendly campus

At Individual level

- ✓ Practice of silent prayer and meditation
- ✓ Contextualisation of curriculum
- ✓ Oral story telling
- ✓ Z to A approach
- ✓ Team building exercises
- ✓ Teach the teacher
- ✓ Idea tracking enablement method
- ✓ Group study
- ✓ Virtual study
- ✓ Each one teach one
- ✓ Divide and learn method
- ✓ Open book exams
- ✓ Counselling and case study analysis
- ✓ Hands on investigation and analysis
- ✓ Summarisation and clarification

Conclusion

New inventions, modern technologies, growing economy and competition is the order of the day Indian higher education needs to innovate and reinvent itself if it's going to survive, thrive, and recapture its earlier glory. The evolution of Indian higher education is predominantly taking place within this programmatic realm. Leaders of colleges and universities are working on strategic initiatives that engage and invest in our students. We are looking for new ways to nurture and encourage young minds so they can succeed throughout their lives in an increasingly competitive world In spite of this progress, the questions remain: Are we making changes that are meaningful enough? Higher education improvement needs to be more of a widespread movement than an ad hoc effort. Universities are typically change resistant, but change is imperative to ensure that a college education remains relevant and desirable. Let's shed old constraints and step outside our comfort zones.

Today's students are creative and inventive, and the colleges and universities they attend must be creative and inventive, too. We have to try new things. Our students are justifiably demanding more accountability. We need to generate new ways to realize these ideas. By doing so, we can ensure that a college education yields the great return on investment that it should.

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