

Indian Higher Education, Private Sector and the National Policy of Education

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Abstract:

This paper is about to analysis the increasing role of the private sector in Indian higher education. What are the tools that private sector is employing to have bigger share of the market in higher education? How the demand of economy, quality, ranking etc are providing bigger role for the private sector in higher education? How the inability of public sector to fulfill the constitutional obligations and social responsibilities with qualitative education are enlarging opportunities to promote the interest of the private sector? How in the name of nationalism, the people of India have been depriving from the better quality of education by not allowing the world better educational institutions to operate in the higher education of the country?

Numerous suggestions also have been put forwarded for the balance development of the higher education by assigning the role to the Private and Public sectors .So ,Indian education system could be advanced in the post-economic liberalized era to meet the demand of the people, industry, nation and the world.

Key words: Literacy rate, Public-Private Partnership, Census Survey, Ranking, Quality Education, Higher Education

Introduction:

Indian education system is one of the largest systems of the world. There are various factors making it as one of the largest

system. Among the various factors the growing population is one of the main concerns for the point of view of delivering education to all. The large population has made the public sector unable to deliver the qualitative education. According to the Census Survey (2011) the total population of the country is 1210.2 million.¹ In which as per the Census Survey (2011) there are 623.7 million male (51.74 percent) and 586.5 million of female (48.26 percent) ²The large number of the children providing huge potential for growing of the education sector at every level in the country. As per data of Census Survey (2011) there are 158.8 million children in the age group of 0-06 years³ which account 13.1 percent of the total population. The children between age group of 06-14 are 23.35 crore.⁴ While on the basis of the estimate of National Commission On Population (2006) "The youth population in the age- group 15-24 years is expected to increase from 195 million in 2001 to 240 million in 2011 and then continue to decrease to 224 million in 2026. Its proportion to total population is expected to fall from 19 percent in 2001 to 16 percent in 2026."⁵ So, for the point of view of the future higher education private sector in India has huge potential to grow on faster rate.

The responsibility to educate Indian has been assigned by the constitution to the government which has been fulfilling by the government through various programmes and policies. But due to lack of resources and large growing population, the government has not delivered the required quality of education. In spite of the sixty seven years of effort, the illiteracy is still about 26 percent in the country. As per the Census Survey (2011) the literacy rate of India is 74.04 ⁶. According to the Census Survey (2011) the male and female literacy rates are 82.14 and 65.46 respectively ⁷. In regard to GER in higher education, FICCI (2012) reports that it has increased from 5percent in 1980 to 13.8 percent in 2010 with West India witnessing the highest increase over the last five years. ⁸

The major problems of Indian education are the ‘Out of School children’ and ‘Drop Out from the schools’ are still out of control from the hands of the government system of education which also a cause of low Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) at Higher education level. According to UNESCO (2014) “For India, rates of non-participation in schooling for pre-school age children is 12.4 per cent and for primary school-age children, 6.4 per cent. The rate of exclusion for lower secondary school-age children is 5.7 per cent. Given its large population size, India has the highest number of OOSC among the four countries with 11.9 million children not in school (ages 6 to 13)”.⁹The school drop rate as per data of SAARC Development Goals (2013) “for a primary class (I-V) was 27.0% during 2010-11. It was 40.6% for elementary classes (I-VIII) during the same year”.¹⁰ If these twin problems would have been solved then Indian higher education could go ahead further in the term of expansion and quality. The private sector could play an important role in tackling of these two problems. Indian education sector is heading towards the world leading education sector and providing better scope for the private sector to play crucial role. The failure of the government to provide qualitative education in the country is one of the reasons for increasing role of the private sector. Many studies have shown that number of the enrolment and infrastructures have been increasing in the private sector than the public sector.

The Child labour is another problem of Indian education which has been checking the progress of the education. Instead of going to school, a large number of the children are working in numerous sectors of Indian economy which is keeping the percentage of children out of school and drop rate marginal. According to the report of NSSO (66th round of Survey) on child labour in major Indian States, 2009-10 in the age group of 5-14, the total number of the cases of child labour in India was 49,83,871.¹¹In this case if the children have been given

opportunity for education, there would be vast scope of expansion for education from which the private sector could get benefits. The cost of education these child labours is very high. India Tribune reports that “It would cost \$760 billion over a 20-year period to end child labor. The estimated benefit in terms of better education and health is about six times that — over \$4 trillion in economies where child laborers are found”.¹² The cost of education for the children is very high which is not easy for the government to arrange and invest in the education. Here the private sector could increase its share by investing hugely in education at various levels.

In recent times due to effort of the governments, NGOs and awareness among the people the enrolment percentage is on rise which is an important sign of the development in education. Private sector is also have own share in rising number of enrolment. According to MHRD Annual Report (2012-13) “At the beginning of Academic year 2011-12, the total number of students enrolled, in the formal system, in the Universities and Colleges has been reported to be 203.27 lakh. Similarly, there has also been growth in different programmes in Technical Education as such, during 2011-12 about 13507 Programmes/Inst. are running and for the year 2011-12, the intake has been 30.14 lakhs”¹³.

The capacity to enroll the students in higher education and infrastructure built up, has increased manifold which has enhanced the graph of the education in the country in long run. It has created bigger role for the private sector in education. According to 12 Five year plan (2012-17) “There were only 20 universities and 500 colleges with 0.1 million students at the time India attained independence. This has increased to 611 universities and university-level institutions and 31,324 colleges as on August 2011”¹⁴. In this increase, for the last few years, the private sector role is crucial in establishing colleges and universities in the country. This has also increased the intake capacity of private and the government educational

institutions. According to AICT report for 2013-14, the total intake in Technical institutions in year 2012-13 was 2236743 in which 1761976 was enrolled in Engineering, 385008 in Management, 100700 in MCA, 121652 in Pharma, 5996 in Arch, and 8401 in HMCT. In the same year 2012-13, 190132 were added in the total.¹⁵ The total intake in graduate programs and polytechnics in the year 2012-13 in UG/PG was 2236743. In polytechnics it was 1212612. The total intake in both was 3449355 with increase in take of 724801 for the year 2011-12.¹⁶ The total growth of polytechnics (Diploma/Post Diploma) in the country in the year 2012-13 was 3524 in which 96 institutions were added in the same year.¹⁷

These huge built up and increasing enrolment in the technical and professional courses has given private sector immense role for development. This has also given huge market for increasing profit to them by large intake in the various professional courses.

In spite of poverty of quarter population of the country, the cost of education is not a matter of concern for the Indian students. They are ready to pay for education both inside and outside of the country. According to the report of Indian Express (2014) that “Back home, too, students don’t mind paying dollar rates for colleges that offer twin programmes or study abroad opportunities”.¹⁸ Yet the question of access to higher education is a matter of concern for millions of Indian students. In spite of all efforts from independence, the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) has still not reached to above 25 percent. According to FICCI Higher Education Summit (2012) on ‘Higher Education in India: Twelfth Five Year Plan (2012-2017) and beyond’ “The Government intends to achieve enrollment of 35.9 million students in higher education institutions, with a GER of 25.2%, through these initiatives by the end of the Plan period.”¹⁹ There are many reasons for hurdle in access of education. These reasons may be the lack of educational institutions, lack of quality and policy of the government, lack

of the ability to pay the cost of education etc. In this condition the private education could play a leading role in development of higher education in India by investing hugely at every levels of the education.

India is one of the fastest growing economies of the world. Her economy has been placed under 10 richest economies of the world. According to the report of City Group (2011) that predicted that “India to become the largest economy in the world by 2050, overtaking China and the US in the process.”²⁰ India would be in need of huge well trained man power to sustain the huge economy in the long run. The Economic Times (2011) reports on the basis of World Economic League Table report released by Centre For Economics and Business Research (CEBR) that “India, the world's 10th biggest economy in 2011, would become the fifth largest by 2020”.²¹ .In such condition the private sector could play crucial role in education as it has been playing in economy. The private sector has to lead the nation at both fronts.

India could get well trained human resources through promoting her education particularly higher education of both technical and non-technical. As per the study by Sardana (2013) “India needs to train 500 million skilled laborers by 2022 to meet its requirement and also for attaining the status of world-wide sourcing hub, government of India has mobilized private industries to address the issue and has sought to embark upon for the country lucrative business opportunity estimated at more than \$20bn.”²² In the same study by Sardana (2013) states that to meet the future requirement “the Prime Minister Council called for “creation of a pool of 500 million skilled people by 2022.”²³ against the current 40 million people. Again the private sector has been assigned a responsibility to create and train the men power.

What about the quality of the trained men power? The quality of available men power is not up to the expected standard. According to the report of Hindustan Times (2011)

that “India may be the biggest producer of engineering graduates across the world, but about half the number can't match Class 7 students of the Central Board for Secondary Education (CBSE) when it comes to English grammar skills.”²⁴In another study as reported by the Wall Street Journal (2012) the “Aspiring Minds based its conclusions on a so-called “employability test” it conducted on 32,000 MBA graduates from 220 business schools across India. The test, which quizzed graduates on topics ranging from grammar to quantitative analysis, found that only 10% of those tested had skills that recruiters typically look for while hiring management graduates.”²⁵.

Question and the purpose of study:

In the light of the above discussion about the various aspects of the economy, population and national education, certain questions have been raised to understand the changing policies of national education and increasing role of the private sector in Indian higher education. How the various tools that private sector is employing to increase share in education market at higher level. In term of national educational policy, how the priority area of the nation has been changing from constitutional obligation to the demand of the market? How the private sector in the name of the demand of the economy, quality, ranking etc. strengthening its hold over national education and promoting own interest in education market? How the private sector is trying to dominate the education market by using the concept of nationalism to put out the foreign institutions from Indian educational market?

The purpose of the present study is to explore the possible answers of the above mentioned questions in the light of the study of the educational policy and available data related to it. With the available data on various problems it has been tried to find out the extent of the increasing role of the private

sector. It has been further tried to suggest numerous steps for the betterment of the education. So, the role of private sector could be assessed in higher education of India and the areas where due to failure of public sector have expanded the scope for private sector.

Changing national policy of education:

At the time of Independence, the country was suffering from mass illiteracy, unemployment, balance of payment, communal strife and health crisis. The education was considered the remedy of all the problems faced by the nation at the time of independence. It was assumed that by educating the masses there would be improvement in all the spheres. Even the quality of education was assumed as a byproduct of the mass education.

The condition of education of the country in present after 65 years of independence could be understood from the data provided by ASHE (2013) that “Higher education in India has witnessed an impressive growth over the years. The number of higher educational institutions (HEIs) has increased from about 30 universities and 695 colleges in 1950-51 to about 700 universities (as of 2012-13) and 35,000 colleges (as of 2011-12) as per a recent UGC report. With an annual enrolment of above 25 million (including enrolment under Open and Distance Learning system), India is today ranked as the third largest higher education system in the world after US and China”.²⁶ Certainly this is an impressive growth of education of the country.

At the time of independence the responsibility to educate the people was vested to the government. The mantra of mass education was declared as ultimate aim of the education policy of the nation. The Article 45 of the constitution states that “The State shall endeavour to provide, within a period of ten years from the commencement of this Constitution, for free and

compulsory education for all children until they complete the age of fourteen years.”²⁷

The government led the foundation of education by establishing numerous institutions of both technical and non-technical. The Educational infrastructure was initiated at various levels. The government established educational institutes of national importance. The University Grants Commission (UGC) was founded in 1956. This commission was entrusted with the responsibility to develop higher education in India. The University Grants Commission Act(1956)states that “It shall be the general duty of the Commission to take, in consultation with the Universities or other bodies concerned, all such steps as it may think fit for the promotion and co-ordination of University education and for the determination and maintenance of standards of teaching, examination and research in universities”.²⁸ Numerous state Boards including ICSE and CBSE boards were established to strengthen the secondary and higher secondary education in the country. The government also established numerous national institutions of importance to strengthen the quality of education in the nation. As per the list of Ministry of Human Resource Development (2014), there are forty institutes of national importance.²⁹ which serving as model institutions for other institutions in the nation.

The government of India took many steps from time to time for the mass education, after Independence. First the country made constitutional provision for mass education and later launched series of programmes to achieve the mass education. The Encyclopedia Britannica writes that “from the 1950s to the '80s, the number of educational institutions in India tripled. The primary schools, especially, experienced rapid growth because the states gave highest priority to the universalization of elementary education in order to fulfill the constitutional directive of providing universal, free, and compulsory education for all children up to the age of 14.”³⁰

The trend of institutional building and mass education successfully ushered India into an era of liberal economic policy in 1991. The liberalization of economy created the market for well-trained manpower which brought the changes in the educational programmes and policies of the nation. The role of the private educational institutions increased in the post-liberalized era. The demand of qualitative education rose from the policy maker to educational institutions and from the private sector to the government to meet the need of the economy. The quality of education which was producing men power could be judged from the study of Anand (2011) which states that “75% of technical graduates and more than 85% of general graduates are unemployable by India's high-growth global industries, including information technology and call centers, according to results from assessment tests administered by the group.”³¹

The mantra of quality education became the buzz word for the Indian education to meet the demand of the economy which made the changes in the programmes and policies of the education. More and more emphasis was given on enhancing the quality of education particularly in technical education. It was assumed that growing demand of well trained men power through quality education could not be met by the public sector alone. So, private sector were allowed to enter into Indian education market. The big business houses and industrialists established schools, colleges and Universities to produce more and more man power required by the economy. The report of ASHE (2013) confirmed the increasing involvement of the private sector in post liberalized era of educational expansion when it reports that “The public expenditure in higher education remained close to 1% of the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) over the years, which has been quite low in proportion to the burgeoning requirements of this sector. This has led to an exponential growth of private sector institutions. The number of private HEIs has increased by more than 60%

during the five year period between 2007 and 2012... As a result, the share of private sector in terms of total HEIs has increased to about 64% in 2012".³².

The quality at primary level was also considered. The other problems of primary and secondary levels like 'out of school' and 'drop out from the school' were tried to solve at priority basis. The problem of 'drop out' was one of the main hurdles in achieving the goal of mass and quality education. According to the data of UNESCO (2011) "the dropout rate of the country was 1674 million".³³

To encourage the participation of private sector many new ideas were floated in policy matter of Indian educational system in post liberalized era. These were:

- A. To allow more and more private institution in the education sector of the nation.
- B. The Concept of Public(government)and Private partnership in education(after successful venture in economy in post-liberalized era, when well protected and successful public sectors were handed over to the Private companies through disinvest in the name of quality management etc).
- C. To allow the foreign educational institutions to produce the required qualitative manpower.

To ensure the demand of the economy and strengthening the position of private sector the two important concepts –the quality of education and ranking of the educational institutions were advanced in the policy making of the nation. The quality of education could not ensure but the ranking system strengthening the position of private sector in higher education. There are differences in aims and objectives of the Public and private education institutions in India. The aims of the Public sector are to fulfill the social and constitutional obligation by providing education to the citizen of the country in minimum cost. The aim of the private institutions is to maximize the

profit by providing the qualitative education to meet the demand of the economy. This can be seen in the cost structure of the various courses of the public institutions. The cost structure of private institutions proves that private sector treats education as an industry.

Three Broad National Policies in Higher Education in Post-Liberalized Era:

In the post-liberalized era, the Indian education system has been characterized by the three broad policies to strengthen the national education system and meet the demand of the people and economy. These policies are:

The policy of Quality education: The failure of public institutions on the front of qualitative education provided an opportunity to private sector to enter and consolidate its position in Indian education sector. Among the numerous challenges, the most three important challenges as the FICCI Higher Education Summit (2011) declares are: Access, Equity, and Quality”³⁴.

The concept of quality education has been assumed a tool to check the mushrooming of the sub-standard educational institutions in the country. But it has been found that it is promoting the cause of the private sector in education. The increasing numbers of the private institutions in the education to deliver the education is an example. According to FICCI Higher Education Summit (2011) the State Private Universities (SPUs) has increased from 6 in 2005-06 to 94 in 2011, out of 130 Deemed Universities 73 are in private sectors and affiliated colleges from 5748 in 1990-91 to 31,324 in 2010-11.³⁶

The policy of quality education has also been implemented at primary level to get regular supply of well developed men power in large quantity at higher level. The two most important programmes-‘Sarva Sikshha Abhiyan’ and

'Right to Education Act' were launched for universalization and qualitative education at primary level. Yet the quality at lower level is a matter of concern to justify the massive investment by the government.

In the name of quality of education the private sector has been promoting in Indian education. If the quality of education is so important, then the foreign higher educational institutions should be allowed to operate in the country. The pending of The Foreign Educational Institutions (Regulation of Entry and Operations) Bill, 2010 in the parliament should be cleared as soon as possible.

The Policy of Public-Private partnership (PPP): The Public –Private partnership is a policy of collective responsibility to impart the education to the people in the country. The PPP model is based on the experience of the successful integration of Public-Private partnership in economy after liberalization. The policy of Public-Private Partnership has been advanced by the private sector of the country to promote the quality education, building required infrastructure, produce the well trained men power and to meet the need of growing population of the country.

There is huge educational market in India. The value of Indian education market is about \$ 40 billion Dollars. The report of CLSA (2008) states that "We estimate the Kindergarten to Grade 12 (K-12) segment at US\$20bn, private professional colleges at US\$7bn and tutoring at US\$5bn. These are the largest segments of the total private education market that we estimate to be worth some US\$40bn. Other meaningful and fast-growing areas include vocational training at US\$1.4bn, test preparation at US\$1.7bn and preschools at US\$1bn. Our proprietary work indicates a growing shift towards private schooling. India's 75,000 private schools account for 7% of total institutions, but enroll 40% of the

country's 219 million students – even as some 142 million children are not in the school system”.³⁵

The other objective of PPP is to use the talents of the public sector for the advancement of private sector .The products of premier Indian technical institutions and others are leading the education of private sector. The huge profitable education market is behind the proposal of public-private partnership model. The ASSOCHAM (2013) advocates the PPP policy in these words “Due to capacity constraints of quality higher education, nearly eight lakh Indian students spend over Rs. 10,000 crore in the year of 2012-13 on studies abroad underscoring the need for completely deregulating the education sector and going in a big way for public private partnerships (PPP)”.³⁶

The Policy of Ranking: The policy of ranking is another policy advanced by the private educational sector to control the market of billion dollars. This policy helps the government to check the performance and finance to non-performed educational institutions. This policy has become so important that University Grant Commission has made provision for assessment and accreditation of higher educational institution by NAAC for grants and other benefits .This policy of ranking is also benefitting the private sector to attract the students (consumer for them).The better would be the ranking of an institution the better would be the chance to attract the students. In India, India Today introduced (India Today-Nielsen Survey) ranking of the colleges and the Universities in 1996.which helped the private sector to create own space in the education market of India.

The institution whose awarding of ranking is accepted worldwide is the Times Higher Education Ranking .which helps in the comparative analysis of the educational institutions worldwide.

The another aim of this ranking system is to give upper hand to the private educational institutions against the public educational institutions to attract the large number of the students .while the relevance of any educational institution can be seen in its aims and objectives. How the public and private educational institutions could be equal in ranking when they have different aims and objectives of their establishment? .The government institution operates on the principle of positive discrimination for social justice on the directives of the constitution of the country and private educational institutions on the principle of f earning profit.

There may other purpose of ranking is to outclass the public institutions in performance and force the government to adopt the policy of PPP to provide an opportunity to the private sector to increase its share in higher education.

There is no doubt that the public higher educational institutions are playing important role in the advancement of Indian education and economy. There is need to further improvement in their quality of education. But in the name of quality and ranking they could not be sacrificed to advance the interest of the private institutions. Both sectors have to improve their performance and could be judged on the basis of their aims and objectives for which they were founded. If ranking is determinant of quality then no educational institution of India is in the list of 200 best ranked institution of the world. If privatization is remedy of the education in term of quality and ranking then the citizen of the country deserve to be served by the better ranking higher institutions of the world.

Need to reconsider the course of action: There is needed to re-examine the education policies in the various perspectives of the nation. The programmes, Policies and plans should be reconsidered in the light of the needs of the nation. It would be better if the country achieves hundred percent literacy rates. The policies should be used to promote the social equality by

providing the people same chance of educating themselves. The UN International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1996) made the governments of world to provide higher education to their citizen .It declares (Article 13(2) c) that “Higher education shall be made equally accessible to all, on the basis of capacity, by every appropriate means, and in particular by the progressive introduction of free education” .³⁷ It should be used for development of economy by providing the best human resources. It should be a mean to integrate the nation with the education and economy of the world.

There should not be any particular approach to allow the private sector to earn huge profit on the cost of the people, community and nation. There should not be politics of ranking for determining the quality of education of the educational institutions. There should be consideration of the aims and objectives for which they were founded. All those educational institutions should be allowed to function which serve the interest of the people and nation better.

In the light of the analysis of policies of the nation the following points should be considered in finalization of educational policy for the betterment of the education of the country.

1. The policy of the education should be the pro-people, community, society and nation. The responsibilities that have been assigned to the government by the constitution should be given priority.
2. The education should be seen in the term of all round development of the nation, not only in the term of market and economy. There is need to see the education as a tool for social reconstruction and strengthening of political system by promoting the democratic principles in educational policy.
3. The performance of educational institutions should be evaluated on the basis of aims and objective for which

- they were founded, not on the basis of particular parameter to meet the interest of a particular section.
4. The quality of education should be ensured not only for the demand of the market but also for the points of views of the society and nation. The society and nation could also get quality people for their betterment. The philosophy of well being of all should be considered the progress of the nation not the progress of industrialist and businessmen alone.
 5. There is need to restructure the educational sector to promote the quality in education. Both the public and private sector should work together from primary to higher education to benefit the nation. There is no need to allow the function of the private institutions in lucrative area of higher education and the government to work only in that area where there is no return on investment.
 6. The ranking of the private and public educational institution should be done separately. This would be injustice to evaluate the two separate entity founded for different causes evaluated equally and on the same parameter.
 7. There is need to check the growth of the monetization of education for the purpose of meeting constitutional obligation and social justice. The government should allow only those business men and industrialists to open schools and colleges on non-profit model as Foreign University Bill demands from foreign educational institutions. The government should not allow the profit seeker to earn double profit in the name of serving the society.
 8. There is need to grant autonomy to the educational institutions for better qualitative education. There is need to fix the accountability towards the people, society

and, nation .The private sector should not be allowed to earn huge profit without accountability.

9. There is need of balance development of all the sectors of the education. There should be concern for quality of every sector. This is not justice to implement the policy of ranking at higher level but leave the primary and secondary levels without any parameter to check the quality.
10. The Foreign Educational Institutions (FEIs) should be allowed to operate in the country for providing better quality of education to the people in minimum cost. The large number of the students who use to go foreign countries for education should be allowed to get that qualitative education in the country. The ICEF Monitor(2012) reports about a study conducted by Indian Institute of Management-Bangalore titled “Indian student mobility to selected European countries: An overview” that “The number of Indian students going overseas to study rose a stunning 256% – from 53,266 to 189,629 – in just nine years (2000–2009)”.³⁸ According to UNESCO Institutes of International Education (2012) the percentage of Indian students to total students moving abroad in 2011-12 was 13.1”³⁹ S. Raveesh (2013) states that “The UNDP estimates that Indian students going abroad for their higher studies costs India a foreign exchange outflow of \$10 billion annually.”⁴⁰.

Conclusion:

India is one of the fast developing countries of the world. There are numerous communities residing in the country. There are numerous obligations of the nation in matter of education ranging from the constitutional to social obligations, from the demand of the market to educate the citizen of the country. The

growing economy needs well trained human resources .The growing population needs education at reasonable price. The qualitative education is one such factor to produce well developed human resources at higher level. The system of ranking is advocated to ensure the qualitative education. To adopt this system of ranking there is need to consider the aims and objectives of the educational institution for which they were founded, not the interest of the private educational sector alone.

On the basis of the analysis of various segments of the educational sector, the educational policy of the nation has been changing in the favour of private sector by curtailing the constitutional and social roles and sub-standard qualitative education of public sector. The policies of quality education and ranking are making the role of private sector in Indian higher education bigger.

There is need to save the Indian higher education from the profit making industry in the name of demands of the market and economy. The Indian education policy maker and planner should be more concerned to the well balanced development of the nation through meeting the constitutional obligation and social justice than the profit making. The question of the quality should be sorted out by allowing qualitative and well managed institutions to operate in the higher education of the country. The quality of the education should not be sacrificed in the name of economic nationalism of the private sector. The demand of the economy, society and nation is to have balance development of public and private sector in higher education.

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