
Hiking Stipend: The Perspective of Research

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Abstract:

Education is the tool that empowers human beings. It is the means of development of civilizations. Higher education helps in advancing the frontiers of knowledge. The nineteenth and twentieth century saw a rapid development in the field of higher education. Research and Development were linked to it, which in turn led to national development. In India Research funding is done by public money. Timely revisions were done for better pay package to researchers. The recent hike in scholarship done by DST and UGC and its expected pros and cons are discussed in the present paper.

Key words: Education, higher education, research, scholarship, hike, UGC, DST.

Introduction

*Where money prevails, the work trails,
A few enjoys, and the rest bewails.*

From the time immemorial 'Education' is regarded as the source of illumination, not only in Indian but in the whole world. It is considered the 'third eye' of a man according to contemporary thinkers. As mentioned in 'Mahabharata' there is

no 'eye', that matches education (Altekar, 1915. p 4) (Chauhan, 2007).

'What is education?' is the fundamental question. The word education has a very wide connotation. It is derived from the Latin word *educare*, which means 'to bring up' and another Latin word *educere*, which means 'to bring forth'. The Latin author Varro said "*Educit obstetrix, educat nutrix, instituit peadagagous, docet magister*" which means, "the midwife brings forth, the nurse brings up, the tutor trains, the master teaches." Accordingly, education does not merely mean the acquisition of knowledge or experience but it means the development of habits, attitudes and skills which help a man to live a happy and worthwhile life in society (Taneja, 2007). He must be an asset of the society and not a parasite.

In wider sense Education means self-culture and self-improvement and in narrower sense it refers to instruction and training. According to the contemporary thinking, education was the 'third eye' of a man, which gave him insight into all affairs and taught him how to act (Chauhan, 2007).

Types of Education and Agencies for Imparting Education

To carry out the function of education, society has developed a number of agencies. These agencies are family, community, society, school, college, university etc. These agencies of impart education basically in three modes. e.g. formal, informal and non-formal education. Besides these three, other two specialised forms also exist, these are: education for special needs and adult education.

Formal education is consciously and deliberately planned to bring about specific change in the educand e.g. school, college, university etc. In contrast to formal, **informal education** indirectly affects the educand but is very significant in colouring ones personality e.g. home, society, press, libraries, films etc. Apart from these two, a system of education whose

core feature is flexibility to suit the educand with regard to time, energy, admission, curriculum and place of instruction is also there. This is called as **Non-Formal education** e.g. Open University, open learning and correspondence courses (Aggrawal, 2002).

Special needs education refers to the handicapped children as well as those who are failing in school for a wide variety of other reasons that are known to be likely to impede a child's optimal progress. This group of children need additional support in terms of specially designed curriculum, teaching method and additional human or material resources so as to stimulate efficient and effective learning to achieve desired success (UNESCO, 1997).

According to United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) **Adult education** or continuing or recurrent education covers the entire body of organized educational processes, whatever the content, level and method, whether formal or otherwise, whether they prolong or replace initial education in schools, colleges and universities as well as in apprenticeship, whereby persons regarded as adults by the society to which they belong, improve their technical or professional qualifications, further develop their abilities, enrich their knowledge with the purpose: to complete a level of formal education; to acquire knowledge and skills in a new field; to refresh or update their knowledge in a particular field. (UNESCO, 1997)

Levels of Education

The above mentioned forms of education given by different agencies can be further categorised as stages or levels of education. In Indian context these levels are arranged as: Primary education (of five years), Upper Primary (of three years), Secondary (of two years), Senior Secondary (of two years), Higher education (it includes three year of Graduation,

two years of Post Graduation, two years of M.Phil. and five years of Ph.D.).

First twelve years of education is basically imparted by schools. The need of higher education is served by Colleges and Universities. The basic function of Education is to impart knowledge and skills, and to work at the higher levels for advancing frontiers of knowledge (Saxena, 1975). Research and development which is linked to higher education does the function of knowledge enhancement.

Development of Higher Education

The development of modern higher education was the most profound revolution of the past half century. Although it was least celebrated but it's impact on society, economy and culture continually increased (Scott, 2010).

Although education is a global phenomenon, the numbers of students enrolled for higher education were only one percent of the relevant age group (fewer than five lakh) in 1900 but after that higher education expanded with a rapid rate irrespective of social, economic and political pressures. According to UNESCO, there were more than 100 million Universities and one in every five young adults was enrolled for higher education by the end of twentieth century (Scott, 2010).

In the beginning of the twentieth century, there were rapid rise in student enrolment in Indian Universities (Chauhan, 2007).

Santhakumari (2012) asserts that, the demand for higher education is increased in developed as well as developing countries coupled with its raising cost (Asian Development Bank, 2011).

Higher Education: A Stem to Research and Development

The higher education is linked to Research and Development which in turn help in national development. Harman (2010)

argued that R & D is a major instrument used by governments to avail economic and social benefits. Therefore, R & D is strengthened to give an output of international standard.

The responsibilities of financing of education at all levels were assigned to different level of governance. Financing of education from lower level to higher level has gone to a drastic change in the perspective of right from universalization of education to research in education. But the finance has always been the great matter of concern.

Research work has always been suffering from financial crisis. A few years back due to financial crunch the institutions face a pressure of increased transparency, accountability and efficiency in the field of research and training. In the year 2010 there was financial enhancement and other grants for an all round development of Universities- infrastructural as well as Research work, but the Universities often fail on this aspect and hence available resources are not optimally utilised (Hauge, 1991) as cited in the proceedings of funding of institutions (Santhakumari, 2012).

Financing Higher Education

Funding of higher education is a debated topic. The World Bank supported the notion that it is no longer possible to rely on state funding, thus making access to higher education is more difficult for middle class (Scott, 2010). Spang (1970) argues that Indian students face unusual adjustment problems and usually inadequate financial help for pursuing education at higher level. He further said that Colleges and Universities need to establish programs which can deal effectively with the problems and needs of the Indian students and provide a more successful educational experience for them. Sen (2011) as cited in Santhakumari, (2012) found that, it is the low pay package that keeps qualified persons away from entering into the field of academics.

Harman (2010) has mentioned some widely used government funding mechanisms for supporting R&D. The funds are allocated according to the need and performance of the researcher and research projects. These mechanisms are: institutional or block grants, project funding and special programs funding.

Research and Its Funding in India

In India, Government agencies primarily fund Research and Development, where public money is used. These agencies are: UGC, DST, BSR etc. Grants are given for a specified period of time either on monthly basis and sometimes at one go. The scholarships provided for pursuing M.Phil, P.hD. and PDF are given on monthly basis. The grants provided were revised in 2010. But for past two years there were increased pressure on the government to revise it further. Due to increased pressure from researchers, Government increased the amount of scholarship by 50% (in case of Scientific researches Gandhi, 2014) and 55% (in case of Humanities and social sciences, “To Encourage, 2014). Researchers in the field of Social sciences will get increased amount of scholarships from December 1, 2014 (“UGC Raises”, 2014) while DST increases the amount from October 1, 2014 (Gandhi, 2014). It is the highest ever increase. Though this decision has benefitted a few with bulky stipend but will cause long term harm on educational research. Someday these agencies have to think over, as it is uneven and almost unjustified and illogical too.

In a press released published by DST (October 21, 2014), the hike in Research fellowship was mentioned as:

FELLOWSHIPS	CURRENT (Per/month)	ENHANCED (Per/month)
Junior Research Fellowship	16,000	25,000
Senior Research Fellowship	18,000	28,000
Research Associate I	22,000	36,000
Research Associate II	23,000	38,000
Research Associate III	24,000	40,000

(Source: Department of Science and Technology, Ministry of Science and Technology, Govt. Of India)

University Grants Commission (UGC) is also following the line of DST of hiking Scholarships from December 2014. This is the enhancement in stipend but whether there is parallel qualitative improvement in research is a big question. Though it is not totally unjustified but it is not fully justified too.

Critical Analysis of Scholarship Hike

- It is good that Government has increased the amount of GDP to expend on research work but it should not be in irresponsible manner.
- As Research is a part of higher study, the scholarship is to support the study only but not to hoard money for pleasure.
- 55% increase will be a support for some but a major chunk of students that gets scholarship through easy path is just to hoard it for a long period of five years or more till one gets job at par.
- Only hiking the amount of scholarship will never ensure better result rather it will bring long term stagnating results.
- A considerable amount distributed to many aspirants will lead to better utilisation of monetary resources rather than pouring amount of money to a few only.
- If the Government does not peruse into the matter seriously again or give it a rethink in wide perspective it will bring much corruption in the field of higher education.
- This will ultimately kill the soul of the research, because people will be more attracted by the amount of money bestowed upon as scholarship rather than doing research in real sense, resulting in corruption in admission process also.

- This will lead to denial of admission to genuine candidates and kins and kiths will have definitely a promotion in this regard. In this way only a dynasty will have a series of research scholars like the dynasty of rulers.
- Consequently, only a few will do research and reap the benefits of scholarship/stipend and a major chunk of youth potentially able to do research will be left unnoticed and unadmitted.
- As India's 65% population is youth (in the age group 15-35 years), the Government should think of increasing people's participation in the same proportion in which GDP expenditure for Research and Development is increased.
- Though it would be futile to say that there should not be compromise with the quality in any field like China where a student is given extra time to achieve prescribed quality instead of lowering the quality in any field especially in the fields that erects the nation on reservation basis.

Negatives of Scholarship Hike or Flip Side of Scholarship Hike

- Scholars will unnecessarily linger their work to avail scholarship- an easy money till either they get jobs of their likings or they are forced to submit and leave the space for the next one. This will lead to national wastage.
- Hiking scholarship in this proportion will cause corruption at every level and this will begin from admission till completion of Ph.D.
- Everyone will be greedy to do Ph.D. whether interested or not, just to get scholarship and to enjoy life at the cost of national money.

- This will increase the chances of proxy Ph.D.'s and result in decreasing the liability on research scholars.
- It will ultimately mar the essence (soul) of research resulting in decrease in level of excellence in Academics, leaving the persons in higher education with only money minded approach.

Therefore it is suggested that the Government should give moderate and equal grant to all the research scholars with minimal margin of increased amount to those JRF/SRF.

Positives of Distributing Moderate Amount of Scholarship to Many Individuals

- It will help curb unemployment. Resulting in good use of human resources and national money.
- Result in tackling the problem of brain drain.
- Increase in peace and prosperity.
- Development of nation in long run.
- Thus R & D will flourish including many minds. It will help boost innovation, and creativity also.
- It will also attract foreign students, making India an International hub for education.

Brushing Up Whole Mechanism: Need of the Hour

- The amount of scholarships given to scholars passes through various processes/hands resulting in unnecessary delay in disbursement. This delay affects the education of the scholar also. Therefore, a web based mechanism, with quick and timely delivery of scholarships will lead to more satisfaction and reduce mental pressure of financial insecurity on the research scholars, as directed by Union Minister of state for Science and Technology (Gandhi, 2014).

- As per the UGC guidelines, a scholar should be given single seated room within the radius of 1 kilo meter of the Institution in which s/he is pursuing Ph.D. should be strictly followed and report should be demanded from the institutions. Personal verification or scholars report should also be taken.
- The amount of scholarship should be given after deducting the food and lodging charges. This should be done with keeping in mind uniformity throughout the country. This will stop corruption at this juncture due to the increased effect of local bodies.
- Those bodies working under the UGC, like MANF and others should strictly scrutinise the reliability of the beneficiaries to prevent corruption.

Proposed Areas Where the Money Can Be Diverted

- The amount of money increased in the share of GDP for higher education should be used for creating employment opportunities by establishing new institutions as well as by enriching the existing ones.

Conclusion

The increase of the amount is highly appreciated and welcomed. But the amount is definitely too much to be exploited.

The amount earlier given was highly anomalous and the present hike has brought a big gap between NET and JRF. Though the ratio is the same but the difference of amount is from 8000/- to 12400/-. If it is wisely and scrupulously distributed, in one NET and JRF, one more scholar can be adjusted. The total hiked amount of one NET and JRF reaches Rs. 37200/- and in this amount one more scholar can be accommodated easily which shall be more in national interest.

Giving moderate life to a many one is far better than to provide to a few a luxurious life and to leave rest of the folk starving.

It has been a tradition of India, from time immemorial, to share the benefits amongst almost all rather than to hoard for a few and to exploit and enjoy by them only.

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