

Role of Higher Education in Socio Economic Development

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Education is Democracy; Democracy is Education – John Devy

India is a developing country with more than 60 percent population still dependent on primary sector. Largest illiterate people of the world are living in our country. We are the second largest population. In this sense, we have a huge potential human recourse¹. In the quest for excellence and nation building involving participation of masses no one can deny the crucial role of education. Education plays a complementary and supplementary role in building the resources of the nation-human, financial and physical for consumption or investment purposes. It also adds to the qualitative and quantitative expansion of human resources if it includes inclusionary process and strengthens the base of the pyramid. This role of education is being realized and is part of the mandate of higher education to which public education policy is focusing upon.

In the age of internationalization the whole world moving fastly into digital media and information, the role of education specially ICT is becoming more and more important and this importance will continue to grow and develop in the 21st century. Higher education plays a vital role in the development of any country, as it is viewed as a powerful means to build knowledge based society.²

The advantage is it adds to qualitative manpower development and healthy and good citizenship. Thus it strengthens socio-economic and political-cultural democracy provided qualitative instructions are imparted and the right infrastructure of human, physical, financial and capital resources is available as seed capital to invest and expand the productive power of Higher Education and Rural Development in India. No one can deny the role of education in strengthening the socio-economic and cultural process and strengthening democratic participation from voters and paving the role for civil society. Education has the twin task of building the state and individual and a harmonious civil society structure which is not at logger heads but aims at collective and individual excellence.

No doubt when such a tremendous role of education is clear why is institutional excellence not achieved in cooperative or competitive terms? In most public educational institutions operating at the periphery and few private operators there is clear difference in operational environment as the former work according to public education guidelines from central and federal governments and work for public purposes as they depend heavily on public funds for their requirements of the nation. Here equity with excellence and cost benefit are to be appropriately weighted upon.

Education has always been considered as the only key component of human development and greatest liberating force. Hence, traditionally, higher education has always held the most venerable position in our society³.

A big development Problem of India is employment and education migration which have added to the burden of metropolitan and big cities. Beside that semiskilled, unskilled and illiterate people also move to these areas in search of fortunes. This has contributed to India's urbanization and environmentalism problems. Add to this the sorry state of affairs in terms of socio-economic infrastructure like quality roads, different types of transport in urban areas the plight of commuters can well be understood. Another problem of small hawkers encroaching pavement, unspecified shop extension, choked drains well the state of urban misery can well be calculated by any average person. What has led to this development? The answer is capital concentrated in capital. Problem of urban civic amenities, green cover, hospital and health facilities, sanitation and toilet facilities, rising number of slums, garbage disposal problems, uninterrupted electricity can be thought of dreams to ordinary citizen India's rural poverty is finding reflection in the so called urban prosperity. Yet the same trend can be seen throughout the country. The problem of mass consumerism has added to the garbage and environmental concerns adding to pollution and people searching for fresh air solutions.

In this light India's development problem needs to be probed from a fresh angle. A vision visualized by the father of the nation-Mahatma Gandhi. India lives in its villages where agriculture and sustainable livelihood with a panchayat tradition has been the long term and time tested model. It is here that India's real development lies and effort needs to be focused. During the last five years India's population has been increased three times comparatively opportunities has also been increased specially in rural region. Women constitute 50 percent population of total population and they are the base of the family⁴. Hence higher education and state development and nation building will work better if labor, capital, land and entrepreneurial are brought together with elements of science and technology in a decentralized and federal setting. With immense manpower and

talent hub capital should divert to peripheral areas in building qualitative infrastructure-social and economic. Problem of agriculture, small scale and cottage industries, developing appropriate institutions as support structure, developing multiple skills, increasing capacity and capability to increase income and employability are issues to be addressed in an environment of jobless growth. Cross institutional approach and partnership from various institutional actors catering to rural development challenges and fresh opportunities, policy makers involvement in a decentralized setting and filling the gap between human, natural and financial resources along with technological and management issues is the matrix around which consensus and policy makers should revolve involving all stakeholders. Transparency from one and all is required in execution of the programmed to make output affirmative and useful to the community. The manufacturing capacity of rural India along modern lines can improve rural prosperity and overall prosperity of the nation.

India's challenges are multiple as it is a heterogeneous democracy with complex dualism. The task of modern nation construction is still an ongoing process. With a variety of people, regions, religions, castes, resources and other diversity construction of just and humane society and polity which is culturally rich, scientifically and technologically advanced, strong with leadership, economically and militarily strong and a global power of recognition which can cope with challenges of modernization and globalization along with strong sense of nationhood with sufficient federal and local autonomy where human resources and natural resources function in a sustainable fashion for operation while the latter work for profit motive. The latter have a bleak future while the former have a bright future provided they are properly guided and some reasonable autonomy is provided with right incentives.

A liberal atmosphere is needed with community, students, teachers and apex decision making authority at that level in order to achieve meaningful outcome to one and all. Since the advent of globalization higher education has acquired new meanings and dimensions as it has to address new opportunities and challenges involving skills, entrepreneurship and vocalization along with right leadership besides promoting traditional and classical learning in the disciplines of humanities, social sciences, commerce and management.

Higher education has to be value based and technology driven necessary correctives. The XII Plan categorically highlighted the need for a strong current and comprehensive data for evidence based policy making and effective planning⁵, there is a need of work in this direction. Thus public educational institutions at subaltern levels require participation from all stake holder has to inculcate scientific temper and a spirit of rational inquiry. It has to address the public and private good and judiciously balance the individual and social rate of return in healthy terms. Since the last decade of nineties more actors have been involved in the higher education sphere in India and globalization, regionalization and nationalization have assumed new importance. But in this race how localization and its impact on mass outcomes have been relegated to the background where bulk of the stakeholders face and are confronted with major challenges. Subaltern higher education has to meet such challenges in rural and semi urban context in order to be beneficial to the local communities at large. Herein lie the challenges and opportunities in improving the literary, functional and scientific base of these new learning traditional societies. It has to construct the new educational architecture of India that is in tune with the modern world.

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