



The Rural People and Higher Education: A Big Challenge

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Abstract

Education has spread its wings from Local schools to Global Universities. Strengthening the roots of global education has become the trend with most of the countries. Always a sound and effective system of education result in the development of learner's potentialities, enlargement of their competencies and transformation of their interest, attitude and values. Recognizing such an enormous potential education, all societies of this earth have committed themselves for this quality education at all levels. However, higher education has also great potential in this respect. But it is accessible only a small urban section of the society. It is true that in India, for the enhancement of higher education in rural areas UGC has enhanced various interventions. But it is illusion to us and become a critical dimension. We are spending a large budget for better provision and higher enrolment from rural mass but result is scanty. It is because-Heavy gaps in research findings and policy formulation, we are unable to understand, "how to do and what to do?" Which are essential in Higher education, Gaps in relationship between access and quality, Arrival of new ICTs develop illumination in the rural learners' mind, Gaps in Brain Drain to Brain Gain, Inability to realize the importance of higher education in life by the rural people, Lack of information and instrument collaboration among rural institutions, Unable to localizing the approach,

Mother tongue dilemma in higher education, Lack of Priority in rural higher education by which Rural people are always silent against any policy. They have no strong voice for their rights. They are always victimized. Lack of strong political will for rural education, lack of New Public Responsibility, less involvement of NGOs, and farms for opening of higher educational institutions in rural areas, High corruption at higher education system which demands urgent relevant plans to bring a desirable change in rural society in the form of quality and quantity higher education.

Key words: Rural People, Higher Education, ICT, Challenge

Introduction

Education has spread its wings from Local schools to Global Universities. Strengthening the roots of global education has become the trend with most of the countries. Today the general trend is that students are no more reluctant in crossing boundaries for better education as they believe that studying abroad can significantly improve their career prospects. But here the question is that how many students from the rural background are going abroad for higher education and how many of them enrolling in our own higher education system?

As everybody knows that, education is a process of human enlightenment and empowerment for the achievement of a better and higher quality of life. Always a sound and effective system of education result in the development of learner's potentialities, enlargement of their competencies and transformation of their interest, attitude and values.

Recognizing such an enormous potential education, all societies of this earth have committed themselves for this quality education at all levels. However, higher education has also great potential in this respect. But it is accessible only a small urban section of the society. It is true that in India, for the enhancement of higher stage for rural mass UGC has enhanced various interventions. The interventions are:

- . Magnitude of the tasks
- . Competencies development in different areas of higher education
- . Commitment of the persons engaged directly and indirectly towards society
- . Capacity building of effective managers at higher education
- . Operation of faculty recharge programme
- . Establishments of Academic Staff Colleges
- . Special assistance programme

- . UGC-INFONET connectivity programme
- . Establishment of Hostels
- . Enhancement of innovative programme
- . Research works, etc.

On the light of the above we are **highlighting a few points on** Higher Education system in our country which may enlighten us on rural higher education. When we are taking the word 'rural', so many points are coming to our mind, such as availability of men, material, management and uses/access. But does it really available? The fact is that over last fifty years our country is doing a lot of activities in the educational sector to include everybody; but is it illusion to us and why again and again we are running behind the target in the form of enrolment? Why is it illusion to us and why the issue of rural education has assumed a critical dimension? We are spending a large budget for better provision and higher enrolment from rural mass. But we are still far away and cry for that word quantitatively and qualitatively higher education for every citizen. It is due to-

1. **Heavy gaps in research findings and policy formulation:** It is because either our research findings are not giving any new idea or the policy makers do not want to involve our own findings especially for rural mass which must be taken care. The points are

- a) **Research implementation**

Further, in the form of input-process and output the social and academic contributions of institutions of higher learning depend largely upon the quality and quantity of works/plans/programmes undertaken. But what is in practice? In our country, the government and non-governmental bodies are using the research findings/organized plans/programme of action of other parts of the globe for making developmental plans and policies in the field of education. Those findings are relatively unsound and irrelevant for a uniquely diverse socio-cultural milieu and pluralistic nature of our rural country. Therefore, it is necessary, to debate on the issues.

- b) **Lack of motivation among teachers**

Teachers as well as researchers constitute the largest work-force of the country. Their contributions to the society largely depend upon their involvement in undertaking researches relating to the problems faced by the society. But surprisingly in North East States of our country, majority of the teachers from higher education stage (near about 70% as reported by Chaddha Commission) are working without any research degree. Most of them have the interest to pursue research programme and undertake research project especially for rural sector, but failed to do so due to lack of awareness. Therefore, to create such awareness different kind of platforms as suggested by National Knowledge Commission (NKC) 2006 (Sam Pitroda) need to be arranged/created/facilitated, otherwise the

higher education of our country will be only stereotype or urban centric and traditional, which may not meet the society's emerged needs.

2. We are unable to understand, "**how to do and what to do?**" Which are essential in higher education? The sixth goal of the Dakar Framework on Education for All (2000) clearly stated that every learner has the right to education in their respective field.
3. Gaps in relationship between access and quality: There is a common misunderstanding that access to education must always precede attention to quality. But there is evidence that in many cases the rural learners are not taking advantages of the access, when they are available. Further it has been acknowledged by 120 nations at UN Education forum in 2003 that, higher education for rural people is a dream and unattainable.
4. **Arrival of new ICTs** in education and illiteracy among the persons engaged in higher education which creates high gap in thought and practice. Therefore, many teachers/researches found a series of literature about the impact of technology on education but developing illumination in their mind, without taking much benefit from that. It is because till today arrival of ICT is only urban centric.
5. **Gaps in Brain Drain to Brain Gain:** It is a major headache for everybody at higher education stage. In practical those who are opportunist are gaining brain by draining brain from others. It is true that changes have never happened without the forward movement. But how can the rural people do that? Who shall/will help them to do that? Govt? NGOs? or self?
6. **Inability to realize the importance of higher education in life by the rural people,** which helps us for learning, earning knowledge, social life and in many more.
7. **Lack of information and instrument collaboration among rural institutions.**
8. **Unable to localizing the approach:** Always we are creasy for distort information from others which miss match with our own need. Hence we suffer a lot to carry out our own plan/ programme for higher education. Therefore, in the view of the above and suggestions given by UNESCO we must encourage and engage ourselves by combining national will with local power in the field of higher education, by which we can contribute solid information and sustain a quality higher education.
9. Mother tongue dilemma in higher education: Languages are regarded as an integral part of a people's identity as shown in "UNESCO's Universal declaration on Cultural Diversity (2001)". It recognizes language and identity are interlinked. A healthy identity establishes different aspects of our personality. A community always expresses its

identity with its own language and it develops faith among the community members. Educators are highly convinced of the value of multilingual education and researches have shown that anybody can learn better and produce better result with their mother tongue, because learning in mother tongue has cognitive and emotional value. In our country it is completely different because of many languages (2 national, 25 scheduled languages and 1652 local dialects) as suggested by the NPE 1986- English and Hindi, where as in higher education, only English and hardly any other language is adapted which is the real burden. Therefore, this situation creates dichotomy, tension and fear among the learners at higher education stages which strongly urge some plan from the social reformers and policy makers.

Further, when we want to minimize the gap between mother tongue and other foreign language, we must consider about the Global concept in higher education, otherwise it may create different problem to the learners in future. As we know some languages do not have the range of vocabulary and concepts to be useful beyond the early stages of schooling.

10. Lack of priority in rural higher education: Today, in rural India, habitations are increasing without decent higher education and life and life of each people lead with full of problem, which needs to be addressed by the educationist, but hardly any interest among majority of them. Rural people are always silent against any policy. They have no strong voice for their rights. They are always victimized because of poverty, no opportunities, no gainful employment, no adequate nutrition, no infrastructure and poor communications. Further it has been realized that there is no such good political interest in rural country. It is because most of the legislators do not assess rightfully the importance of higher education for rural people of our country. There is also strong bias for urban on the part of politicians and policy makers. Though government has already brought so many bills for rural people, but all are just in black and white, not in the practical field. It is not a new problem, but it is great sadness that rural people have been consistently neglected for which their participation in any educational level, especially in higher education is about to nil or a very small proportion. Hence, it requires high involvement of rural learners by which the changes will take place in the form of quality higher education.

11. Action Plans and strategies in Collaboration: We need a partnership in between educators, NGOs, community activists, policy makers and governments by which we can develop real ideas about knowledge than in the abstract for rural higher education. Through open net working we may help each other for internalization of higher education. Those models should be a collaboration rather than competition.

12. Institutionalizing commitment: Educating the children at higher education involves the leadership amongst the village, block and district levels and officials from various

departments judiciously not with political aim but with social mission by which we can develop awareness about the existing conditions of higher education at rural areas.

- 13. Re-orienting existing programmes:** Suppose we want to implement computer education, we must first train the parents, community members and older siblings of the society especially at rural areas. It is because, if they will realize the importance of the computer education, then they will motivate the youngsters by whom the programme will succeed, otherwise all the efforts, plan and money will be in vain. Therefore, each and every new educational programme may be a success for quality if it will start from grass root level.
- 14. To make a strong political will:** As we know each and every state of the country must place the higher education at the centre of it policy. They must build strong educational surrounding for each and every person. They should not compare themselves with others, in fact they should try to gain some insight into how higher education is diversified with different disciplines today in different states of our country and must understand a sense of where is their higher education system?
- 15. New Public Responsibility:** That is public management in the new market and which model is required especially for rural people? What is the customers need?
- 16. Involvement of NGOs, and farms for opening of higher educational institutions in rural areas.**
- 17. Needs to check corruption at higher education system**

Conclusion

Therefore, it is urgently required to take a lead for motivating young professionals for undertaking relevant plans which may help to bring a desirable change in rural society in the form of quality and quantity higher education and help to bring a change on policy and practice of our country. Therefore, at this juncture, by taking these opportunities, we wish the findings of this programme may help to meet the needs of professionals. Keeping in view the aforesaid perspective, it is urge that the central/state government, NGOs, University/College teachers, research scholars and different organizations must foster different activities especially in the untouched areas and thrust areas (need for present and future) of the rural county and particular to the region, which may help to each and everyone of the globe for better higher education.

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