



## **HIGHER EDUCATION REFORMS IN HUNGARY; RELEVANCE FOR INDIA**

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### ***Abstract***

There has been a huge expansion of higher education in India after independence. There has also been improvement in qualitative terms. However the quest for quality goes on and there is a general agreement that the state of the Indian higher education system needs further improvement if it aims to be a global player. The important aspects of higher education in India like the financing of higher education, accreditation of curriculum and academic autonomy have been critically examined. Various reforms have been made in the Hungarian higher education system pertaining to the above mentioned aspects and suggestions have been offered for the Indian higher education system.

**Key Words:** *Higher education, Reforms, Hungarian Higher Education System*

### **INTRODUCTION:**

It is true that the significant growth of higher education system in India has resulted in building up a large reservoir of scientific, technical and professional manpower in the world. The higher education system in India is almost 153 years old, when the first three universities were set up in 1857. After independence there has been a major expansion of higher education in India. Today we have approximately 506 Universities and more than 19000 colleges, approximately 6, 00,000 teachers. There has also been a considerable improvement in qualitative terms.

The National Policy on Education (1986) states that universities be centres of excellence and relevance, where apart from teaching, research and generation of knowledge, the advancement and extension of the sphere of knowledge should also take place.

In technical and management education the IITs and the IIMs have made a prominent mark and are considered among the top higher education institutions of the world, however the same cannot be said about many higher education institutions in the country .It is without doubt that we need to create more centres of excellence if India has to be a global player in the higher education system

Quality aspects many times have got overlooked in our preoccupation with quantitative expansion. There is general agreement that the state of the Indian higher education system is far from satisfactory .The standards are deteriorating, the knowledge and the skills imparted by our academic institutions to a great extent are irrelevant to needs of the society. The failure of the system to deliver goods has been attributed to a number of maladies including its colonial roots, the failure to control unplanned expansion, perennial shortage of funds ,inflexible academic structures with an antiquated examination system ,resistance to change from all its constituent, activism on the campus, highly politicized and bureaucratized systems of management ,pressures from politicians and special interest groups, the distancing of universities from society and a general lack of concern(Kaul,1988;Altbach,1993;Chitnis,1993).

The other areas of concern that have emerged in higher education are that of the educated unemployed, the underemployed, the unemployable and issues of academic autonomy.

Amongst the different challenges facing the Indian higher education today .the issues of financing in higher education, accreditation of curriculum and academic autonomy have been discussed below.

### **FINANCING IN HIGHER EDUCATION**

The expenditure on education in India is still low compared to the developed nations which have reached almost 6%. India spends around 3.7% of the GDP on education out of which higher education only gets a share of 0.66%.Higher education has been facing a perennial shortage of funds for a long time .Presently the Gross Enrolment Ratio in higher education is 12.5% which means that 87.5% of our youths do not have access to higher education .The GER in higher education for developed countries is 54.6% and is 22% for Asian countries. The global average is 23% GER in higher education. The target that has been proposed in India is to take the GER to 25%-30% by 2020.Presently in India 587million of our population

is below the age 25 years and it has been projected that in the 2011 census 144 million of India's population will be between 18-23 age group. With these projected targets it is estimated that we need to take up the total strength of our universities to at least 1500 from the present 506. This would require massive investments. The opening of private higher education institutions have undoubtedly eased the financial burden borne by the government. Privatization cannot be seen as a panacea for all financial problems facing higher education today. The infrastructural facilities presently existing in many of our higher education institutions cannot be compared to global standards. In this day and age when the world has gone digital there are a large number of institutions which lack the basic information and communication technologies and so do the teachers in their personal capacities. It is obvious that the developmental grants disbursed by the Centre and the State are not adequate to upgrade and maintain institutional facilities which change with the changing needs. This is one of the important quality parameters which cannot be overlooked.

### **ACCREDITATION OF CURRICULUM**

The role of apex bodies as the key players in the enhancement of quality of higher education cannot be ignored. In the era of globalization, privatization, and internationalization of higher education quality improvement and quality assurance assumes special significance. These bodies are responsible for funding, coordinating, determining and maintaining standards in institutions of higher education. Some of these bodies are the University Grants Commission (UGC), All India Council of Technical Education (AICTE), Distance Education Council (DEC), National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE), Medical Council of India (MCI), Pharmacy Council of India (PCI), and The Bar Council of India (BCI). The government of India has taken major policy initiatives in the recent years for quality higher education. One such initiative includes the establishment of the National Commission for Higher Education and Research (NCHER). The NCHER Bill (2010) has been drafted to solve the problems in higher education. Independent national bodies like the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) has been established to review the quality of higher education. However it is disturbing to note that the criteria's that are included for assessment of higher education institution does not include the assessment of the quality of courses offered by different institutions. The 11th Five Year Plan (2007-2012) document has envisaged development in education by addressing reforms in education. This includes skill development and reorienting of the education system to make it responsive with a focus on



ensuring employability of graduates through high quality, relevant need responsive curriculum and teaching.

Though the universities and institutions have the autonomy to design and update their curriculum, often timely measures are not taken, leading to an obsolete and outdated curriculum which has lost their relevance. This is evident from the fact that many of our youth passing out from our higher education institutions are considered unemployable. As per the National Sample Survey on Employment and Unemployment (1993-94) only 10.1 percent of male workers and 6.3 percent of female workers possessed specific marketable skills. Over the years, this situation has not radically changed. IT firms reject 75 percent of engineers and 90 percent of graduates in India today who are unemployable (NASSCOM, Oct, 2009).

### **ACADEMIC AUTONOMY**

The University Grants Commission has made stipulations that every teacher in higher education spends a minimum of 5 hours at their work place. It has been witnessed that many times institutional heads like to control the teachers in terms of the number of hours at the work place. This controlling attitude seems to be a legacy left by the British Raj. And the Zamindari system that was a part of the Indian landscape. Higher education needs to be conceptualized in terms of teacher productivity and research out-put. Norms like this encourage clock-watchers and may or may not ensure any academic-output. The academic world often talks about competing with global academic standards where they have done away these kind of rigidities

### **HIGHER EDUCATION IN HUNGARY; HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

Hungary is situated in East Europe and is a part of the European Union. It has a population of 10 million people. Hungary was under the occupation of the Soviet Union till 1989. It had a Socialist form of government. It was the State's responsibility to provide education; health-care etc. free of charge. Higher education in this socialist regime was elitist. Only 10% of the students were enrolled in higher education and the higher education degree had great value in the outside market. Higher education institutions were under state control for naming programmes, deciding content, accreditation issues, recruitment etc. There was centralization of power and authority and higher education institutions did not enjoy autonomy except in research activities.

Till the introduction of the of he BOLOGNIA process Hungary had its indigenous higher education system of university education (5yrs) which gave a university degree and college education (3yrs) which awarded a college degree. The concept of a Bachelors and a Masters degree was not known till then.

## **HIGHER EDUCATION REFORMS IN HUNGARY**

The series of reform processes in tertiary education was opened by Act I of 1985 on Education (and its 1990 amendment). In 1993 a separate act was legislated on higher education (Act LXXX of 1993on Higher Education). It provided for the establishment and state recognition of non-public institutions, i.e. the Churches and private higher education institutions. With the entry into effect of the 2005 Higher Education Act (Act CXXXIX of 2005 on Higher Education) on 1 September 2006 the structure of higher education changed and the two-cycle education became the general practice.

After the signature of the Bologna Declaration in 1999 Hungary was actively involved in the development of the European Higher Education Area. Higher education is provided through universities (egyetem) and colleges (f iskola) – jointly: higher education institutions. Based on the Bologna Declaration signed in 1999 the Hungarian higher

education system started phasing in the three-cycle educational system from 1 September 2006. In a system organized into cycles, after secondary school students enter the first cycle of tertiary education, the three or four-year undergraduate level (with the exception of teacher training), followed by the second cycle, master's education, which is not more than two years in duration. The third cycle is PhD education. In addition to the new multi-cycle system the one-tier system survived in certain areas where it was reasonable, offering one-tier master programmes in the Bologna system with 300-360 credits. BA and MA programmes have been opened systematically since the fall of 2006 and 2009 respectively, thus the provision of university education and professional qualifications (egyetemiképzés) or college education and professional qualifications (f iskolai képzés) are gradually phasing out.

All European Union nations contribute funds to EU and the budget is made for allocations to different sectors of the economy to the less developed nations.. Since 2003 Education has been a vital area for the allocation of funds. It was realized that if Europe education had to

compete in the global market especially with the United States and the South-East Asian countries drastic reforms would be needed.

In Hungary major reforms that have been introduced in higher education include the BOLOGNIA process, Accreditation of programmes, European Credit Transfer System (ECTS), European Qualification Frame work, curriculum reforms .Other reforms have also been introduced in the financing of higher education, autonomy of teachers etc.

The reforms in the Hungarian higher education in the financing of higher education, autonomy of teachers and accreditation of courses have been discussed below.

### **FINANCING IN HIGHER EDUCATION.**

Hungary spends 4.5% of the GDP on education which is not as much as the other developed nations of the world. The government faces a financial crunch as far as its resources are concerned

The developmental plans formulated for higher education in Hungary is submitted to the European Union for approval and Hungary is allocated 60%-70% of the budget for higher education .The remaining 30% is financed by the Hungarian government .The European Union funding has been critical for the Hungarian higher education system. Under the Socialist regime higher education was totally financed by the state and the state took care

of the infrastructure ,teacher salary, students etc.

Since 1997 higher education institutions have also offered fee-based programmes (kölségtérítésképzés) of their own volition if their academic staff and infrastructure so allows. Students in fee-based programmes must pay tuition fee for their education. The study requirements are identical for students in subsidized and fee-based programmes, however, tuition-fee paying students not only pay the costs of their education but are not entitled to any form of support. Applicants decide whether they are financially capable to undertake fee-based education when they submit their application to higher education institutions. The higher education institution must sign a contract with the students admitted to fee-based programmes. The tuition fee cannot be less than 50 % of the institution's per student spending on professional tasks. Higher education institutions can launch fee-based



programmes in the same areas as subsidized programmes.. The students in the free seat category are selected on the basis of their merit. This helps to create a balance and ensures income generation which is the need of the hour.

In Hungary the guest-houses and printing press operating in the higher education system can be used for commercial purposes and it is called the spin-off component. This further adds to the income-generation in higher education.

### **ACCREDITATION OF COURSES**

The quest for quality has been an ongoing process down the years .Many indicators exist which ensure quality in the higher education system. Relevant courses which change with the changing needs of the individual and the society is an important quality parameter.

With the entry into effect of the 2005 Higher Education Act separated accreditation from the state .The Hungarian Higher Education Accreditation Board was set up and is the member of the European Network of Quality Assurance (ENQA).Its major function is to give accreditation to the higher education institutions. This includes monitoring and regulating quality standards of the different programmes offered at the tertiary level, staff and infrastructure facilities etc. The board gives permission to run the various courses in higher education and the programme content and outcomes are placed on the website. All programmes are evaluated every five years by the agency.

### **ACADEMIC AUTONOMY**

The academic world is different from the other worlds of work. It has been globally realized that academicians are not expected to function within structured boundaries. Teachers in the Hungarian higher education system enjoy utmost academic autonomy. There is no compulsion for them to work from their institutions everyday. They are totally free to work from home if the work demands. The Ministry of National Resources at the national level, the institutional heads at the institutional level have academic trust on teachers which is very evident.

Some of the challenges that the Indian higher education faces today and that have been discussed include financial crunch, quality of the curriculum and academic autonomy. An international cross-cultural perspective helps give suggestions to meet the above challenges.

## **HUNGARIAN REFORMS; SUGGESTIONS FOR INDIAN HIGHER EDUCATION**

- In the Government funded higher education institutions in India all students pay subsidized fees and per student cost is borne by the government. The developmental grants are also inadequate. Therefore there doesn't seem to be an adequate corpus fund in the institutions for various expenditure. There is a dire need that funds be created to maintain and update the existing infrastructure in government institutions. There are institutions that have introduced higher payment units where courses run along with the regular subsidized courses. The time has come when a new impetus has to be given to this new trend. Besides the subsidized fee structure offered in the government-funded institutions some seats need to be in the category where students pay high fees.
- The existing assessment and accreditation bodies in higher education need to be more holistic in their assessment criteria. Different courses offered by various institutions need to be assessed and accredited for their relevance and quality periodically. A separate assessment and accreditation board can be established which looks into the quality of courses and programmes offered.
- More academic autonomy and academic trust is required keeping in tune with global practices. Academicians should be empowered to function from other destinations besides the four walls of their work place. The focus has to be on academic out-put rather than the place of working.

## **CONCLUSION**

In this era of globalization and internationalization of education, global practices give us an insight and help us in tackling issues. Some of the reforms introduced in the higher education system in Hungary can be adopted keeping in mind the Indian context and culture.



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