

REGIONAL CHALLENGES FOR JESUIT HIGHER EDUCATION IN SOUTH ASIA

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1. PERSPECTIVE ON HIGHER EDUCATION:

Higher Education in India has expanded enormously during the last sixty years. It is also encountering a few important and significant challenges. The concept of education itself has gone through a sea change.

- ☞ Education for Knowledge
- ☞ Education for Information
- ☞ Education for Skills
- ☞ Education for Employment
- ☞ Education for Livelihood
- ☞ Education for Empowerment
- ☞ Education for Social and National Development

2. CHALLENGES FACING HIGHER EDUCATION IN INDIA:

1. Expansion with Equity
2. Privatization of Education
3. Internationalization & Globalization of Education
4. Conflict between Uniformity, Conformity and Creativity
5. Quality & Excellence of Higher Education
6. Funding of Higher Education
7. Employability of our Students and Providing the necessary Skills
8. Vertical Mobility

9. Minority & Non – Minority Institutions
10. Accountability of Teachers
11. Fragmentation of Higher Education
12. Degree Awarding Colleges
13. In- Cooperation of deals of Jesuit Education
14. Academic & Administrative Reforms
15. Industry, Institutionalization linkage vibrant & Dynamic
16. Suggestions for the Future
17. The Philosophy of Education

3. ISSUES IN HIGHER EDUCATION:

3.1 EXPANSION WITH EQUITY:

- ★ Enrolment of the poor and the underprivileged
- ★ Having access to higher education and giving them quality training
- ★ Higher Education in India has expanded many folds since independence. The number of universities has increased from 20 in 1947 to 378, colleges from 500 to 18064, teaching staff from a meager 15,00 to nearly 4.80 lakhs and students population in higher education from 1 lakh in 1950 to over 112 lakhs in 2005. Many fold expansion in institutional capacity of higher education has enhanced enrolment ratio from less than 1% in 1950 to about 10% in 2007.
 - ★ Since independence, the system has grown around 22 fold in terms of Universities and 33 folds in terms of number of colleges suggesting a transition from an elitist system of education of the British India to a mass system of education characterizing a democratic republic.
 - ★ Today it is estimated we have 450 Universities, 22,000 Colleges and only 6,000 come under the section of 2f (12B) of UGC Act recognized by UGC.

★ University Enrolment Data

Developed countries – 55%

China 33%

Developing countries 13%

★ India 7%

Women 3%

Dalit men 3½ %

Dalit women 2%

Rural 2%

★ At the highest policy making levels, a consensus exists on the need for expansion of the Higher Education sector to meet the developmental needs of the country. The growing economy faces a manpower crunch and fully qualified professionals with the needed soft skills are in short supply. India keeps adding higher education places each year but the population of 15 to 19-year-olds is expected to explode from 114 million in 2005 to 127 million in 2020.

★ Several well established universities have sought to ensure inclusion by promoting open learning and adopting the distance education mode. Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) is doing it in a big way. For optimal use of trained faculty, infrastructure and knowledge resources, the concept of convergence between the conventional university system and Open and Distance Learning (ODL) system is promoted.

★ Despite these efforts, the National Knowledge Commission Report (2007), rightly claims that the present number of universities in India is too small to cater to the growing needs and that India should go for a massive expansion and achieve at least a five-fold increase to around 1500

universities nationwide, that would enable the country to attain a gross enrolment ratio of at least 15 percent by 2015.

★ More importantly, increasing access to higher education is perceived today as a justice issue. At the national conference of Vice-Chancellors (October 2007) on ‘Development of Higher Education: Expansion, Inclusion and Excellence’ the Vice-Chancellors said private parties should be nudged into setting up universities in rural, remote and underprivileged areas. The very purpose of the big push that the government plans to give to higher education in the 11th Five Year Plan is to improve access and promote inclusiveness.

3.2 PRIVATIZATION OF EDUCATION:

The growing privatization of higher education in India while meeting a vital national need seems to have an unintended negative side effect. It has selectively improved access particularly among the well-to-do and those on the higher rungs of the Caste ladder. Along with privatization has come also commercialization of education and forbiddingly high fees (and capitation fees) effectively excluding the poor. What were intended to be inclusive measures are making the system even more exclusive and less equitable.

Special care of the economic and educational interests of the underprivileged sections, particularly, the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes is laid down as an obligation of the State under Article 46 of the Constitution of India. Yet, as the country celebrated 60 years of its Independence, the sad reality is that the benefits of higher education have not percolated through to them.

→ The spread of higher education was achieved through active state support whereby public funding was considered necessary in order to provide equitable opportunities of higher education to all. It has, however, been a proclaimed policy of the country to also encourage private

investment in higher education so long as they are driven by charitable and non-profit motives.

While universities have largely been in the public domain, India has had a history of having large number of colleges established and maintained by private management.

→ In recent times, the private self-financing institutions colleges and other degree awarding institutions have gained prominence. At the same time, there has also been witnessed a tendency among the public funded institutions to start and run courses on self-financing basis. More recently, the private universities, either under state legislature or through the deemed university mode have also come to be established.

→ As situations prevail today, the system is characterized by rapid expansion in private self financing colleges specially in medical, engineering, dental and education, self-financing courses in government and government aided colleges, private universities and also in unrecognized private institutions offering diploma and certificate programmes.

→ We do need proper regulatory framework for the private sector, to ensure the quality of higher education and also the equity. It is, therefore, important that we develop regulatory framework for the private universities, particularly in terms of their admission, fees, teaching-learning process and governance. The regulation of self-financing courses in government and aided colleges and also those in the self-financing institutions with respect to fees, quality and inclusion of girls, socially and economically deprived groups is imminent.

→ Private sector as the partnership of 80% of the institutions. How do we regulate the self financing colleges, can Jesuits start self financing colleges without sacrificing our preferential option to the poor and the social mission.

3.3 INTERNATIONALIZATION & GLOBALIZATION OF EDUCATION:

* The issues concerning internationalization of higher education can be discussed into two broad heads, which represent two broad dimensions of the issue. The first aspect deals with the demand for opening Indian higher education for international service providers while the second aspect deal with the internationalization of Indian higher education. Going abroad for higher education has long been the most cherished goal for students of underdeveloped and developing countries. While most foreign students were known for their diligence and dedication and were often a source of pride for their universities, they were seldom seen as a source of revenue. But things have changed a great deal in the post WTO/GATS regime.

* Developing countries are now seen as a market for higher education and foreign universities from other countries are competing each other to increase their market share. As the demand for opening the higher education sector in India for international service providers is increasing, the issue of providing appropriate regulatory framework for international education providers is under consideration of the government. Effective regulatory mechanism is required to ensure quality higher education with equity and accountability.

* The second aspect of internationalization deals with as to how can Indian universities and colleges benefit the most by the process of internationalization. Indian higher education is widely recognized and respected across the globe. The Indian faculty in foreign universities is generally well respected for their teaching and research abilities and Indian students abroad are rated at par with the best students of the world. We, therefore, need to identify reasons for the same and find out ways and means to addressing those in order to attract international students on our campus.

* It was also felt that foreign universities must not be permitted to encourage in gross commercialization and debasement of higher education and that only universities of repute

are permitted entry and that such universities should be required to set up their full-fledged campuses in India rather than resorting to franchising and courseware renting. It was also felt that Indian universities and colleges should be permitted to form strategic alliances with international universities and other institutions of repute and that universities in India should be permitted to take up collaborative research with foreign universities but the arrangements should be such where Indian counter parts share Pattern Rights and copyrights.

✳ There is a growing trend to start campuses of foreign universities on the Indian soil. The important issues to be considered are is education, a service, or commodity and business will the foreign universities send the students to us. The advent of foreign universities will be a tread to our institutions resulting in competition with global institutions.

3.4 CONFLICT BETWEEN UNIFORMITY, CONFORMITY AND CREATIVITY:

1. Have we developed an Indian curriculum responding to the global and local needs.
2. Autonomous colleges suppose to be for experimentation, innovations and academic freedom are subject to the rules of the affiliating universities and respective state governance.

3.5 QUALITY & EXCELLENCE OF HIGHER EDUCATION:

☞ It is to be emphasized that when we talk of ‘quality’ it is essential to bear in mind quality to whom and quality education for what. In other words ‘quality’ needs to be understood in objective terms and in the context. It is saddening to note that 128 universities who got themselves accredited by the NAAC only 32 percent could get ‘A’ or above level of rating while another 52 percent of them could manage with ‘B’ or above grade. The remaining 16 percent fall in grade ‘C’ or above.

☞ NAAC assessment indicates that 68% of colleges are rated as ‘B’ while another 23% colleges are rated as ‘C’ grade; and only the remaining 9% are A grade. Universities are

somewhat better for only 46% universities are rated as B grade while another 23% are C grade; and the remaining 31 are A grade.

☞ Ensuring quality education demands structural and institutional reforms in addition to committing enhanced financial resources. Imparting quality education would entail better infrastructure; greater use of ICT; teaching and learning in smaller groups; granting autonomy to the faculty, department and individual teachers. But more than that, imparting quality education requires ‘faculty development’ or what many call ‘faculty recharge programmes’ so that the faculty does not go stale, it retains its vibrancy and dynamism in doing research, in learning, and innovating and in devising new methods of teaching.

☞ The 11th plan proposed four fold strategy, which include (a) bringing of non 12(B) institutions under the orbit of UGC’s grant (b) reducing the quality gap by helping B and C grade institutions (c) setting up of new universities / colleges / institutions with quality infrastructure, quality faculty and efficient academic and administrative governance and (d) focus clearly on improving the adequate availability of quality of teachers.

☞ The 11th plan proposed strategy for bringing non – 12 (B) colleges and non – 2(f) universities under the ambit of assessment and development assistance mechanism of the UGC with joint support by centre, state and individual institutions with matching contribution for development of the needed physical facilities and other facilities to make them eligible to receive development assistance from the UGC.

☞ It also proposed to reduce the quality gap by bringing C and B grade universities and colleges at par with those in grade A again with the joint efforts of the Centre and state Governments.

☞ It recognized that quality improvement will have to specially focus on ensuring quality improvement will have to specially focus on ensuring quality faculty in adequate numbers. This calls for strategies to attract and retain the best brains as faculty members including incentives and rewards for promoting excellence in teaching and research and by developing a comprehensive scholarship / fellowship program.

☞ It proposed that new 16 central universities and additional 14 universities and 350 colleges in districts with lower enrolment on the Prime Minister initiative will be based on model institutions with potential for quality and excellence.

3.6 FUNDING OF HIGHER EDUCATION:

- ❖ 32,000 crores were allocated for higher education in the XI plan.
- ❖ 50% goes to Central Universities including the 14 new Central Universities and 16 global universities.
- ❖ 20% goes to Deemed Universities set up by the government and institutions of the national importance.
- ❖ Only 30% come to colleges which are the basic units of higher education touching the stakeholders, teachers, students, research and extension.

3.7 EMPLOYABILITY OF OUR STUDENTS & PROVIDING THE NECESSARY SKILLS:

Required and dictated by the job market.

3.8 ADVENT OF COMMUNITY COLLEGES:

3.8.1. CONCEPT:

The Community College Movement in India was started in 1995. It is thirteen years old. It aims at the Empowerment of the Disadvantaged through appropriate skills development leading

to gainful employment, thus making a qualitative difference in the lives of the urban poor, rural poor, tribal poor and women in collaboration with local industrial establishments and potential employers, community leaders after taking into account the opportunities available for employment and self-employment in the local area.

3.8.2. THE ROLE OF ICRDCE:

The Indian Centre for Research and Development of Community Education (ICRDCE), Chennai is an initiative of Madurai Jesuit Province and a unit of Chengai Jesuit Society of Chennai Mission. It was started in January 1999. It is a facilitating and coordinating agency for Community Colleges in India. It has been involved in the preparation, establishment, monitoring and evaluation of 234 Community Colleges in 19 States of India. It has also trained 1208 teachers. The Centre has conducted 48 Workshops involving 950 NGOs, 2179 participants and has also organised 6 important National Consultations and 41 Regional Consultations among Community Colleges. It has also prepared the basic curriculum material and supplied to all these Community Colleges. It has published 25 books and 52 articles in the leading educational journals of India and abroad on the concept and implementation of the system. The Centre also has an up-to-date documentation on the movement by way of newspaper clippings, video, audiotapes, CDs, photographs, etc.

3.8.3. THE UNIQUE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE MOVEMENT:

The unique achievement of the movement is the empowerment of the disadvantaged groups leading to the up gradation of their educational standards resulting in alleviation of poverty. A profile of 58,566 students attending 190 Community Colleges from different parts of India shows that women 73%, Married, 10%, Widows and Deserted women 2%, have so far benefited from the movement. Ninety per cent come from socially backward groups (SC, ST, MBC, BC).

Ninety One per cent are economically poor (monthly family income is below Rs.3,000/) and 95% educationally weaker sections or cannot go for further education (School dropouts, below 10th, 10th passed, 12th passed). A breakup by way of religion shows that 55% are Hindus, 38% are Christians, 6% are Muslims and 1% are Buddhists. Two hundred and seventy nine physically challenged students have passed through this system and come out with flying colours. We have 2622 industries that have tie up with 190 Community Colleges. After Passing through the Community College System, 75% of the students are employed. In most cases their family income has been doubled. It has led to poverty alleviation through income generation. The concept has become a secular one transcending religions, castes and languages. It is truly a nation - building and capacity building exercise. ICRDCE has achieved a significant networking of all groups: Christians, Muslims, Hindus and all other service minded NGOs and organizations.

Paving the way for Horizontal & Vertical mobility Certificate/Diploma/First Year Degree/Associate Degree and Third year Degree through credit transfer through INDIRA GANDHI NATIONAL OPEN UNIVERSITY (IGNOU).

3.8.4. INTERNATIONAL COLLABORATION:

- ICRDCE has created ten Community Colleges in East Africa and South Africa. The book on Life-coping skills “We Shall Overcome” written by Fr. Xavier Alphonse has been translated into Afrikaners language with the title “ONS SAL OORWIN” Vaardighede om die lewe te hanteer (433 pages) and prescribed as a textbook approved by the Government of South Africa. The ICRDCE has trained 50 teachers from South Africa and East Africa from June 2005.
- ICRDCE and the Director have been appointed as the Consulting Agency to the Honourable Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea (PNG) for the creation of 13 Community Colleges in 2008 under the scheme “Inclusiveness in Education for National Development

through the Community Colleges”. It has also trained 7 teachers as the first batch from PNG in June 2008.

3.9 MINORITY & NON - MINORITY INSTITUTIONS:

- Introduction of minority rights articles 29 & 30 – Indian Constitution
- To establish and administer minority institutions
- The new concept of control over minority institutions which are getting aid.
- Selection of Assistant Professor, Associate Professor and Principal of the College.

3.10 ACCOUNTABILITY OF TEACHERS:

- $\frac{3}{4}$ increase in salary and benefits
- How many hours do our teachers spend in the campus in terms of formation of students.

3.11 FRAGMENTATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION:

❖ The conflict between regulatory bodies, UGC, AICTE, Medical Council, Dental Council and Nursing Council of India etc.

3.12 DEGREE AWARDING COLLEGES:

- ★ Permanent affiliation
- ★ 15 years of Autonomy
- ★ Spotless record of examinations and evaluation and reputation in the society.

3.13 INCORPORATION OF IDEALS OF JESUIT EDUCATION:

- ✓ Men and Women for others
- ✓ Justice and social sensitivity
- ✓ Extension programmes like Sphered programme responding to the social community needs and relevance of the institutions.

- ✓ Teaching of Life Skills, Communication Skills (Soft Skills)

✓ Flexibility and Affordability

✓ How do our institutions reach out to the rural and tribal communities and the under privileged.

3.14 ACADEMIC & ADMINISTRATIVE REFORMS:

✍ Unlike expansion, equity/inclusiveness and quality/excellence, where efforts are in making, the policies concerning reforms in the arena of academics, administration and governance are already well formulated and publicity announced. These are all elaborated upon in detail in the reports of Radhakrishnan Commission (1948), Kothari Commission (1968), National education Policy (1986), Programme of Action document (1992), CAGE committee reports, resolutions of the conferences of the Vice Chancellors organized by the UGC and the AIU and a host of other committees constituted by the UGC and MHRD from time to time.

✍ While these recommendations about credit system, semester system, more of international assessment and less written examination component, teachers evaluation by students, inter-institutional mobility etc have been generally accepted, quite a few of them have not been implemented and operationalised as yet. Some of these have been tried and failed while some others have been implemented on selective basis. As a result there is a lot of institutional variations in admission, examination, faculty and governance related practices.

✍ Besides there are issues related to governance, including appointment of Vice Chancellors.

3.15 INDUSTRY INSTITUTIONAL LINKAGE:

➤ Vibrant & Dynamic

3.16 SUGGESTIONS FOR THE FUTURE:

1. There is correlation between economic and higher education, equity and higher education. Hence attention should be focused on higher education for sustainable development of the marginalized.

2. This also means the marginalized should be challenged to a high standard, mentored to achieve a higher standard.

3. There is high concentration of institutions of higher education in the south. This also is reflected in the economic development.

4. Most of you are aware of “Good to Great”. The same author Jim Collins wrote a book earlier called “Build to Last”. There he applies the Principle: BHAG – Big, Hairy, Audacious, Goal. In heroic leadership, Chris says that the early Jesuits applied the same principle for higher education, inspite of the fact that they had no experience, no money and no men.

5. Bold and audacious thinking and strategies are necessary in partnerships, financing etc.

6. From regional thinking to national thinking. This may lead to innovative interprovincial collaboration, inter provincial institutions and exploiting the brand name we have Jesuit/Loyola/Xavier.

7. Under the cloak of minority, we lack transparency accountability etc.

8. Participative decision making process

9. Opt for autonomy/private university with grant –in-aid and some control. This will foster bold collaboration – staff exchange, joint research.

10. Make use of the international name for collaboration

11. Education for all – regional preference, but global outlook. Education for the elderly, continuing education.

12. Anywhere/anytime education using modern technology

13. Mind set for quality and excellence. Create a tension between equity and excellence and challenge it.

Fr. N. Casmir Raj, S.J.

3.17 THE PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION:

THE PRESENT NEED BALANCING THE TWO APPROACHES

 The need is somehow to strike a balance or draw a synthesis between these two approaches the one – a trajectory of vocationalised, instrumentalist education arising out of an increasing need of skilled people in the market place and its plan to fit people for jobs and generating wealth for individuals and the other being the broad humanist, liberal vision of education built upon “inner eyes”, “Sympathy” and “Concern for others”. Creating men and women for others. How to achieve this balance, to us is the greatest challenge and most formidable question. It is this question that should guide any discourse on reforms and enhancing quality of education in India.

THE IDEA OF A CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY

In 1982, Ignacio Ellacuria, S.J., the martyred President of the Jesuit University of Central America, spoke eloquently about how a university should connect the hungers for truth and bread. He said:

- Ellacuria: We, as an intellectual community, must analyze causes; use imagination and creativity together to discover remedies; ...
- ... educate professionals with a conscience who will be the immediate instruments of transformation; and continually hone an educational institution that is academically excellent and ethically oriented.

Let us pray along with Fr. Pedro Arrupe and Fr. Luis Espinal:

- What you are in love with,
what seizes your imagination,
will affect everything. It will decide
what will get you out of bed
in the morning,
what you will do
with your evenings,

▪ how you will spend your weekends,
what you will read,
who you know, what breaks your heart,
what amazes you with
joy and gratitude.

✦ Courtesy: XI Plan Document and Rev. Fr. M. Devadoss, S.J., Provincial, Madurai Jesuit Province, “A Policy Towards Jesuit Higher Education in India”.