"EMERGING CHALLENGES OF INDIAN HIGHER EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS"

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ABSTRACT

The Indian higher education institution is in an urgent need of capable leaders who can lead and manage the university affairs in the era of globalization, thus the present paper is an attempt to identify the emerging challenges of Indian higher education institutions and the important role of academic leader in bringing about the required changes.

Keyword: *Academic Leadership, Higher Education, Autonomy, Governance.*

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1. Introduction:

The higher education in India, particularly in last two decades or so, has remarkably transmuted and developed in a notable manner to emerge as one of the largest system of its kind (Sengupta & Roy, 2012). Arguably, these developments in higher education may directly be linked with the several changes that have occurred in the global economy, which calls for more knowledge and skilled worker force, and workers with profounder understandings of new business methods all over the world. In this constantly changing economic environment, higher education system around the globe and especially in the developing nation like India is in constant pressure to respond to rising student expectations and to be at per with the demands of global competition. There is no denying the fact that higher education not only provides individuals with a better chance of employment and growth, but also in turn leads to a better lifestyle, recognition and status. In the words of Sri Narendra Modi, Hon'ble Prime Minister of India, "Good quality education is the foundation of new discoveries, new knowledge, innovation and entrepreneurship that trigger growth and prosperity of the individual as well as that of a nation. For this, we need to make our curriculum and pedagogy relevant to the needs of our society and economy and nurture qualities of problem solving and creative thinking, learning-by-doing, greater engagement with the live context, and confident self-expression from a young age."[1]

The Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India, with its well-planned expansion of learning-driven model, Indian higher education system has not only improved its enrolment ratio but has enhanced its learning outcome in terms of quantitative growth in the number of university level institution and colleges and access to low-cost higher education standards. With abundance of human resources, India is eminently equipped to emerge as a global leader in the knowledge society only if it can provide high quality education to its citizens. It requires no mention, unless the youths of our nation are equipped with knowledge and skills demanded by business and commerce, the process of countries' development and growth cannot be accelerated.

Recognizing the above changes, the Indian higher education system needs to perform numerous roles like creating a new knowledge base through innovation and creativity, acquiring new capabilities and producing highly skilled human resource pool, through quality teaching, research and extension activities[2]. The matter of the fact is that, these changes may be cited as an opportunity which cannot be missed by India, as these changes offers remarkable possibilities for strengthening of the nation's talent and resourcefulness. The Central Advisory Board of Education (CABE) report (2005), long back in its report stressed for improvement and strengthening of teaching learning process and it advocated institutional autonomy in higher education which implies decentralization of management and delegation of authority, responsibility and accountability. The pivot of the key concern for enforcing University autonomy, as Rashtriya Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA, 2013) report argued is 'Institutional Leadership' and attempts to conceptualize a model of that autonomy which according to the report is sine qua non and this is only become possible when head of the institution is a leader in true sense of the term in both administrative and

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[1] UGC annual report, 2014-15.
[2] Higher Education in India: Issues Concern and New Directions, UGC, 2004.

academic matters. Thus, in this paper "**Leadership Challenges in Indian Higher Educational Institutions**" attempt shall be made to identify the challenges/problems of Indian Higher education system and the role of academic leaders to respond to the emerging challenges.

2. Conceptual Framework

The concept of leadership and management are found in several instances to be used interchangeably, but they indeed differ in their purpose. It is needless to mention here that the success of an organization requires a positive correlation between management and leadership, even though it is frequently acknowledged that managers deal with systems, processes, budgets, equipment, and "things," while a leader deals with the vision and its people. The concept of Leadership has widely been cited as a strategic vision coupled with the ability to positively influence and motivate individuals through the systems, processes and culture of an organization. Stogdill (1950) considered leadership as 'the process of influencing the activities of an organized group in its efforts toward goal achievements'. Most of the prevailing definitions on the subject suggest that leadership is all about providing directions and exercising influence. The concepts of leadership are complex and open to various dimensions of definitions and their interpretations (Birnbaum 1989, p. 22; Middlehurst 1993, p. 7; Bush 1995). The definition and concept of leadership in context of higher education is perhaps arbitrary and very subjective. "On an educational level, phrases like 'dynamic leader,' 'strong leader,' or 'visionary leader' are used when answering the question of why a particular academia/ organization succeed while another struggles (Byod, 2002)." Moss (1991) articulated educational leadership as the process of leadership that involves directing the work of the teachers, as well as the property of leadership which refers to the common traits or characteristics shared by effective leaders. Mitchell and Tucker (1992) characterized leadership as a way of thinking, a sense of spirit founded in overlapping environments—our own, that of the profession, and that of the educational process itself. Academic Leadership is a social phenomenon; higher education system itself is regarded as a universal social institution which serves the society at large. Every person who leads a group of people, a community, a society or a nation is termed as a leader (Saleem T.M., 2008). The term 'academic leadership' covers all the previously perceived meanings of leadership and management in academic departments. Leadership as Moore and Diamond (2000) opine is the capacity to release and engage human potential in the pursuit of common cause and academic leaders exercise their leadership within settings that have markedly different institutional purposes, cultures and expectations than the organizations in which business leaders typically exercise their Leadership. Effective Leadership is essential to an organization's success and leadership that is required in higher education is referred to as academic leadership. In simple terms, therefore, academic leadership is a process by which academic leaders exerts influence over others so that they will strive toward the achievement of goals and objectives of the academia. Here the academic leaders stand behind the group to push the members of the group to contribute willingly to attain the goals according to their own capabilities

3. Challenges/ Problems of Indian Higher Education System

India's higher education system has no doubt grown many folds since its independence from only 20 universities and 655 colleges at the time of independence have risen to 190 universities and 7346 colleges in 1990-91 and to 666 universities and university level institution and 39671 colleges in 2014-15. Despite this quantitative expansion and growth, there is a disparity in the quality improvement in the higher education in our country. Few of the key issues in this regard are being discussed below.

3.1 Autonomy of Higher Education

The Education Commission (1964-66) has pointed out that the implementation of academic freedom by teachers is a prerequisite for the growth and expansion of the intellectual climate of our country. UGC in its report argued that for efficient governance and effective autonomy with accountability needs to be facilitated among the academia through the revision of the Acts and Statutes and it is being suggested that no university should have more than 50 affiliated colleges with a total enrolment not more than 50,000 students. The report further linked the low rate of Gross Enrolment Ratio with the dearth of adequate autonomy to universities to bring about the major structural changes in the Acts/ Statutes/ Ordinances and also in the key matters like increasing intake capacity, introduction of new/novel programmes, recruitment of faculty etc.

Autonomy in academia is essential to improve quality standards, equity and implement the required changes effectively; the universities are needed to be given more flexibility so that they can take need-based decisions. The repot of the Central Advisory Board of Education (CABE) clearly argued that autonomy of academia will deliver better framework for fostering delegation of responsibility with accountability. There is no denying the fact, for implementation of autonomy, visionary leaderships is essential, and there lies the need of academic leaders who can translate the vision into reality.

3.2 Accreditation and branding – quality standards

The quality standard of Indian higher education institution is a serious problem to be dealt with. In this context, the 11th Five Year Plan recognized three major areas for interventions — physical infrastructure, academic reform and ensuring adequate faculty. Infrastructure of higher education institutions can be improved with an increase in financial assistance from the central. Academic reform — which includes semester system and credit systems, courses by choice, and examination reform — is a process which needs be advanced and it requires a strong leadership at the institutional level to implement such changes effectively. 'In the case of faculty, which is an issue that has assumed serious proportions, several steps were effected' in the 11th Five Year Plan. However, the problem still persists and due to which Institutional Autonomy in this regard was also identified in 12th FYP.

3.3 Globalization and Indian Higher Education

Globalization has given rise to numerous new challenges to the education system around the globe apart from the above cited challenges. With the opening up of Indian economy to the global players in industry and service sectors, new products and services are being introduced continuously with improved features, quality and based on customers' specification and demand. The secret behind to the success of this new breed of customer centric industries and service units are a group of highly educated, skilled, motivated and meticulously trained human resources. The knowledge and technical skills of this work force have to be regularly updated. The graduates coming out of our higher education institution should be capable of meeting the challenges of the modern industry. They must have a deep sense of quality, work ethics and motivation and be conversant with the skills, interpersonal skills; team work skills, self-esteem, goal-setting skills, leadership skills and they must be creative and innovative.

3.4 Institutional Governance

Usually Universities are run and governed by the directions of the respective Acts, Statute, regulations and ordinance in one hand and internal boies such Executive Council, Academic Council, Finance Committee, University Court, the Senete, etc., and because of that the structures of governance and leadership with in the academia are being virtually defined by such Acts and Statutes. Academic leaders responsible for the institutional governance in Indian higher education system can broadly be categorized in three different levels based on the power; authority and responsibility they possess as the structure of different universities in India are more or less same. At the very top level, Vice-Chancellor of the respective Universities will hold the position of Supreme Academic Leader as the ultimate power, authority and responsibility for making decision statutorily vested on him. The second level will constituted by the Deans of the faculty as they have the responsibility being the Head of the faculty for the conduct and maintenance of the standards of teaching and research in the academia. The third level comprises by the Heads of the respective departments as they have the authority and responsibility to manage their departments with utmost care. The positions in these levels are not static in nature rather subject to change after completion of the tenure. Thus, governance and leadership in Indian higher education involves a complex relationship amongst these levels

3.5 Academic Leadership

To improve the quality of Indian higher education institution can be accelerated through the approaches like strong institutional governance and high quality leadership (Sengupta & Haldar, 2014). Rashtriya Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA) in its report[3] have stressed that academic leadership is an 'area of deficiency'. The Indian higher education institution is in an urgent need of capable leaders who can lead and manage the university affairs. The report further identified that the quality of a higher education academia largely depends upon its autonomy and 'it is the duty of the Vice-Chancellor to safeguard the university autonomy', and without institutional leadership, academic and administrative success in difficult to achieve if not impossible.

4. Conclusion

Today, the scenario of academia in India is changing and expanding with the globalized system of education and universities and university level institutions are facing a veritable explosion of knowledge and technology in all fields. As a result, higher education institutions in India are increasingly becoming forces to compete and required to keep pace with the global system of education by making its own contribution to the society. In such setting, the role of a leader in academia becomes highly essential who will lead within and beyond the classroom, identify with and contribute the community of teachers, students and staffs towards improved educational practice and pursuit (Katzenmeyes& Moller, 2001) of excellence. Indian higher education system, today, is under strong pressure to show improvements which requires institutional governance, autonomy, and high-quality education, but the matter of the fact is that most of the higher education institutions are unable to meet the global standard. As a result, the need of an extreme new breed of leadership in higher education becomes obvious. As because of the matter of the fact that, it is the Academic Leaders who will translate mission and vision in to reality.

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