

Public Funding and Research Aids for Private Universities in India

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Abstract

Private universities in India are urging University Grants Commission (UGC) to treat it at similar levels with government universities in terms of grants for research work and academic activities. Unlike government universities, grants provided to students of private universities are very few. The demand appears virtuous, logical and robust. Why should UGC discriminate between private universities and government universities? The question may not be responded without the rationale understanding and demystification of the growth of private university sector in India.

Keywords: Academic funding, higher education, research aids, quality issues

Introduction:

Private universities in India are urging University Grants Commission (UGC) to treat it at similar levels with government universities in terms of grants for research work and academic activities. Unlike government universities, grants provided to students of private universities are very few. Citing the high number of enrolled students the demand is that UGC should not ignore the research grants to the private universities. (Times of India, 2014)

The demand emerges virtuous, logical and robust. Why should UGC discriminate between private universities and government universities? The question may not be responded without the rationale understanding and demystification of the growth of private university sector in India.

Universities are established by State and Central Acts and offer degree courses at the undergraduate and graduate levels. There are four type of universities i.e., Central, State, Deemed and Private. India's education system is influenced by the British model. (International education research foundation, 2009) Primary and secondary education is ten years in duration, followed by two years of senior secondary education. Next is the higher education which comprises of graduate and post graduate courses.

Universities in India are supervised by a regulatory body, UGC which was set up in 1956. UGC is controlled by the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD). It holds the authority to approve the universities in India. It also funds the affiliated universities and colleges. It coordinates, promotes, regulates, maintains and monitors the standards of university education. Ministry of Human Resource Development is responsible for assigning deemed and private university status to certain higher education institutions, based on the recommendations of the UGC. Such institutions enjoy autonomy in developing and implementing academic programs and have the power to grant their own degrees, just like regular Indian universities. (University Grants Commission, 2002)

A total of 620 universities have been approved by UGC as in Feb, 2013. Deemed and private universities in India are propagating at a rapid speed and concerns about quality have risen as the number of these universities has reached 278. (University Grants Commission, 2013) Commercialization of higher education has reached at an alarming rate. Education is no more about building the youth for country. It is a business that gives hefty sum of money for one time investment. (Universities in India, 2013) Since 1993 the Supreme Court judgement, growth of commercial higher education or self financing colleges mushroomed in India. The reasons for instigating these colleges unambiguously were to realise huge and quick profits in a short duration and definitely not philanthropic ones. Land is provided by the government to the private players in the masquerade of societies and trusts (family oriented) at huge subsidized rates. (Singh & Purohit, 2011) Recently, Union Minister for Human Resource Development had said that out of 53 private universities inspected by the UGC only five had been found to be in order. The UGC had no power to shut down private universities. The UGC can only direct them to close courses against which complaints have been received. The issue is big enough that it is being raised in the parliament. Citizens are talking about the process that evaluates the deemed universities. (Indian education review, 2013)

A meagre number of private universities operational provide quality education and maintain the basic set standards. Majority of the private colleges when affiliated to State University are involved in corrupt practises which include amassing huge capitation fees, conducting dishonest academic practises, grossly under paying the employees and the most significant being producing inadequately trained and poor quality students. (Yashpal report, 2009; Asia news network, 2010; Mediacom PR, 2011; Singh & Purohit, 2011; Singh & Purohit, 2013) What mayhem these institutes may create once accredited a status of private university is a thought beyond reconciliation.

Research funds allotted to UGC are limited and needs to be best utilised. The scarce research funds at present are being allotted mainly to Central and State Universities. If private universities do not get equal treatment like government universities, it would be tough to convince a corporate house for investments is an argument with no reason. Corporate houses have already mushroomed and exploited the education sector. The matter of research aid being granted to individual students is not of much concern to the masked trusts or societies. Grants' being allotted to the Private University for development is what that matters.

Conclusion

Education in country like India cannot be solely provided by the government. It needs to be acknowledged that private partnership is very much essential. Private partnership in education has a key role to play in nation's development. There are bad State and Central Universities too yet they do are not as shady as majority of the private Universities. If Private Universities are failing to deliver academic excellence in India, it is primarily because there is something wrong with our regulatory system. The head of the regulatory agencies and the Ministry of Human Resource & Development is responsible for renovation and rejuvenation of higher education sector in India. A status quo needs to be maintained with respect to research aids to Private University unless there is an overhaul in there administration and functioning. Surely, a sorry reflection does arise about the students with quality research proposal but no grants to undertake them.

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