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Role and Relevance of Research in Higher Education

Abstract

Research in education is very important which plays a crucial role in all-round development of the nation. Teaching, Research and Extension are key words in higher education from which research is the core element. Research is found in two ways. Firstly research done by the faculty and secondly research done by the students. The aim and the purpose of both are different. For quality research, one should provide proper research culture, management structure, infrastructure, e-resources, well equipped library, funds and research oriented faculty and students.

Education research is the systematic, original investigation of inquiry ... Concerning the social, cultural, economic and political context with in which educational systems operate and learning takes place; the purpose of education; the processes of teaching, learning and personal development ... ; the work of educators; the resources and organizational arrangements to support educational work; the policies and strategies to achieve educational work; the policies and strategies to achieve educational objectives; and the social, cultural, political and economic outcomes of education (Brew A. and Boud, D., 1995: 15).

Education is the backbone of the nation's development. It plays a crucial role in economic, religious, social and cultural development of the nation. So, education can be considered the national responsibility and the role and relevance of research in higher education is unique for the development of the nation. It stands at the heart of the Knowledge society. Research is the collection, analysis and interpretation of information. So, it plays vital role in decision making process. The main aim of higher education is to serve the human society.

According to the National Policy of Education, 1986, education is a process of empowerment which is to be promoted through the development of knowledge, skills and values. It is an instrument of social change that provides means for upward economic and social mobility through enhancement of qualifications.

In 1947, the number of universities were only 20 with about 500 colleges with less than 3,00,000 students. Today, the situation has changed. At present time, the Indian higher education system is one of the biggest educational systems of the world after USA and China. We have around 600 universities with 32000 colleges along with 7,00,000 faculties and 17 million students.

A nation's strength lies in its intellectual property and there is a close combination between intellectuality and education. So, education should be innovative and research based. But in India, the quality and quantity of research is poor and not up to the mark. There is a need to improve quality of innovation and research in higher education. There is a need for giving importance of research activities in the educational institutions of the country. The condition of higher education in India has been examined and evaluated by a number of commissions and committees appointed by the government from time to time and tried to improve

the quality of education. However improvement in these problems and obstacles have not completely solved because of the lack of resources and inadequate human resource developments. The Radhakrishnan Commission in 1950 and the Kothari Commission in 1966 gave valuable suggestions regarding educational reforms. The knowledge Commission of India has also acknowledged the need of a good quality of research development. But the value and quality of research has not properly improved yet.

The role of research is much more important than any other sources in defining excellence in institutions of higher education. Research is an important parameter in judging the level of colleges and universities. In many countries, the educational institutions are regularly assessed on the basis of the quality of their research output. As far as research is concerned, Indian higher education is not so excellent as in other developed countries. Indian institutions have to make their mark at the world level. There is not any systematic process to evaluate the research performance of the institutions. Even the NAAC accreditation gives only 10% weight age to research.

There are various definitions of research. According to Creswell, Research is a process steps used to collect and analyze information to increase our understanding of a topic or issue. The Merriam Webster Dictionary defines Research as a studious inquiry or examination, especially investigation and experimentation aimed at the discovery and interpretations of facts, revision of accepted theories or laws in the light of new facts or practical application of such new and revised theories or law.

It is widely accepted that the quality of higher education research in India is not up to the mark. There are various factors responsible for its poor condition in research. They are lack of proper infrastructural facilities, lack of proper planning and management, poor financial constraints, poor administration, lack of research resources, lack of e – resources, lack of committed research oriented students, superficial supervision etc. The social, cultural, economic and political environment of the country is also responsible for it. So, it should be recommended that for the strong and true research culture, appropriate leadership, management structure, infrastructural facilities, facility of e – resources, well equipped library, research oriented faculty and funds are needed.

The main function of higher education institutions are Teaching, Research and Extension. Teaching means dissemination of knowledge and information to the students and the students have to pass the examinations in order to get degrees and good marks. Teaching is a compulsory activity in higher education. It is a class room activity. To improve the class room activities, to be an excellent and dynamic teacher, research is necessary. So, research becomes necessary to improve the quality of teaching, learning and evaluation process. Extension work is an applied aspect used for the benefit of the society. Though Teaching, Learning and Extension are important for the quality development in higher education, it has been found that the research aspect of Indian Universities is poor. Only 5% of the research expenditure is made through universities.

At the university and college level, research is found in two ways.

- (1) Research done by the faculty
- (2) Research done by the students.

Research done by the faculty members are generally in the form of projects – Minor Research Projects and Major Research Projects funded by UGC or research projects by other resources. Research done by the faculty is for the enhancement of the career. The Research done by the students is for the purpose of getting degrees like M.Phil. and Ph.D. They complete their research to get the job and stable life also.

The leading agencies like UGC, Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD), National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) are encouraging faculties for research for the better academic performance of the teachers and they are responsible for funding and monitoring higher education. The government has also emphasized the quality research and that is why in Performance Based Credit System (PABS) and Academic Performance Indicator (API) research has important place. But nowadays , the main purpose of doing research is to get a degree or to get benefit in career advancement. So, the purpose or original quality research is not found.

In the courses related to research like M.Phil. and Ph.D., entrance test is compulsory. In this process, sometimes it happens that the students are not able to pass the entrance and if they pass the entrance, they are not able to get the supervisor of their own choice and vice versa. Proper quality in research is found only when there is a nice combination of a supervisor and research oriented students.

One of the most important reasons for the poor research in India is that a vast amount of research work remains unnoticed. The research work is not utilized for the benefit of educational institutions and the society. In fact, the results of researches or a particular field can be propagated to the entire stakeholders through seminars, workshops and discussions. The findings of the research should be openly discussed, debate should be organized on that particular topic and it should be tested by the members of the society. Researches in social sciences or humanities have implications for the society, so that proper policies can be formulated.

One should judge the quality and utility of the research by the publications and citation also. Research results which are not published have no credit. There should be the government agencies that should take care of publication of all researchers and its research and findings should be put on website. This will be helpful to the society and also no repetition would be done from the researcher's side.

Another reason for poor research is lack of infrastructural facilities and educational resources. Inadequate research facilities discourage the researchers. In many educational institutions, there are neither well equipped libraries nor lab facilities. The educational institutes are also not connected with research institutes and government departments. Some of the institutions have not even the basic facilities for research. Limited number of computers and no internet facility are also responsible for the poor research work. If the resources are not properly available, it is difficult for the researcher as he/she has to spend a lot of time in finding the research sources.

In short, the following steps should be taken for the better and quality research work.

- Better infrastructural facilities and proper environment should be provided to the researchers at university and college level.
- For the betterment of the society, quality research work should be recognized at the local level.
- Priority areas of research in each subject should be displayed.

- There should be some unification where the results of each research in all the subjects should be published.
- More research work should be encouraged.
- There should be job guarantee for the person who has completed research.
- Innovation should be encouraged in research.
- One should develop research friendly libraries.
- There should be easy availability of computers and internet.
- Access of latest journals in the libraries is also an important factor for research development.

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