



Higher education in India: Merits and demerits of privatization

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Abstract

“Privatization is a process, which can be defined as the transfer of assets; management; functions or responsibilities of education previously owned or carried out by the State to private actors” (Coomans & Wolf as cited in Right to Education Project, 2013). Privatization can easily ensure education to all in the developing countries because if people get good education then they will be earning and morally strong and hence the nation will progress. In order to meet the excessive demand of getting higher education, privatization comes as the workable solution for making education accessible to the masses. To rectify facilities to provide higher education to all idea of privatization came in and this can reduce the burden on national budget and can increase the quality of higher education (Mehtap, 2013). In our country process of privatization has already been used but the question is that in this era of cut-throat competition whether the privatization is ensuring quality of education or not. So in this paper author tried to canvass some important points regarding privatization of higher education like its need, its merits and demerits and the most importantly the workable solutions in order to integrate and maintain the aspect of quality during privatization of higher education.

Keywords: Privatization, higher education, quality education, education

Introduction

“Privatization is a process, which can be defined as the transfer of assets; management; functions or responsibilities of education previously owned or carried out by the State to private actors” (Coomans & Wolf as cited in Right to Education Project, 2013). It is clear from the definition that responsibilities which were owned by the government are transferred to private bodies during the process of privatization. Responsibility is something which can be expected from the responsible and dedicated ones. In a democratic country government is run by its citizens through an election process and expects that the selected candidate will be our representative for the next five years and will look after our needs and welfare. In short they have faith in their representative that he is able to make wise decisions in all the spheres which are to be governed, like health, finance, defense, education, etc. and in return representative tries to meet the expectations of the people. Talking about education, a developing country needs a strong educational system in order to be in the queue of developed nations. If people get good education then they will be earning and morally strong and if they are earning as well as morally strong then the nation will progress. But the questions are:

1. How can we ensure education to all?
2. Are we giving such education that can fulfill the needs of a developing country?
3. Are we able to ensure and maintain the quality of higher education?
4. What are the workable solutions for maintaining the quality of higher education?

In order to find out the answers of these questions, this paper will be focusing on the following points:

1. Need of Privatization of Higher Education.
2. Merits of Privatization of Higher Education.
3. Demerits of Privatization of Higher Education
4. Ensuring Quality of Higher Education through Privatization.

Need of privatization of higher education

As we all know we are living in a time of accelerated technology advancements in which technology changes frequently in no time and standards of living are totally changed now. In order to cope up with these frequent changes one needs to be educated and it will make him proficient to survive in this changing world. Developing countries are striving hard in ensuring education to all and facing major difficulties in achieving this goal with their lack of resources, problems of growing population and limited higher education institutions (Glewwe as cited in Mehtap, 2013). It is clear that governments of developing countries are not able to provide higher education to all but something has to be done in this regard. In order to rectify facilities to provide higher education to all idea of privatization came in and this can reduce the burden on national budget and can increase the quality of higher education (Mehtap, 2013). When there will be private universities and self financed colleges then it will be easier to make higher education available to all the students who missed their chances in the public colleges and universities due to high cut off and lesser number of seats. So the idea of privatization of higher education is not bad but it should be ethical on the part of concerned stakeholders and the government.

Merits of privatization of higher education

1. Increased Availability and Accessibility

Public schools are generally less in a particular area which creates tough completion among the students to get admission. Moreover it was difficult for the students to access other public schools because they are situated far from their homes. Privatization increases number of colleges in a particular area so that students can easily take admissions and access them on their convenience (Right to Education Project Report, 2014).

2. More Educational Choices

Generally due to less number of public colleges in a given area, students have to select subjects out of their choices because that particular college does not offer adequate options of courses. Privatization brings choices for the students as there are large numbers of colleges in a particular area or region which offer new and innovative courses for the students. Students have options if one college is not providing the desired subjects (Right to Education Project Report, 2014).

3. Increased Parental Participation

Private colleges generally charge higher fees in comparison to public colleges but the facilities are better in private colleges than the public ones. Parents pay more for the study of the children because they are very much concerned about the grades and marks of their wards. In professional courses campus selection by the various companies demands higher grades in order to attend interviews. That is why parental participation increases. Moreover private bodies give updates regarding the students to their parents regularly (Right to Education Project Report, 2014).

4. Better Quality of Education

In order to attract and be in choice private bodies generally try to provide quality education and to survive in this cut-throat competition of the present time. They earn by their students so they are bound to ensure quality and on the other hand they to serve and contribute to the society so they ensure quality.

5. Less Burden on the National Budget

If privatization occurs government has to pay less in this area and this saving could be spent on other aspects of education, like research, innovations, lower levels of education, education monitoring, etc. so the whole system of education could be able to produce planned and desired results.

6. Scope of Experimentations

Private universities have some sort of autonomy and are free to introduce some core courses and activities of their choice, moreover they can opt assessment system according to their convenience whether it will be semester wise, trimester wise, yearly or half yearly and many more variations they can use or experiment.

Demerits of privatization of higher education

1. Lack of Standardization, Monitoring and Regulation

These are the common problems which arise in which private bodies ignore the rules and regulations prescribed by the state, like regular classes, regular practical sessions, absence of proper space for necessary activities, proper sanitation facilities, proper examination affairs, co-curricular activities, etc. State is not very successful in monitoring and executing regular assessment of the institutes; hence it encourages illegal or exploitative practices resulting in lack of accountability (Right to Education Project Report, 2014).

2. Failures to Ensure Quality

When there is no proper continuous monitoring by the state, private bodies ignore the quality aspect. Syllabus is not timely completed along with the examinations, poor discipline among the faculty, etc. which degrades the quality aspect (Right to Education Project Report, 2014).

3. Stratification of Socio-Economic Differences

Fee is so high in these private institutions that poor people are unable to afford and thus it creates stratification. Low income group is deprived of private education whereas high income group enjoys the benefits of these institutions (Right to Education Project Report, 2014).

4. Increase in Gender Discrimination

Generally people send their male child to get private education due to heavy expenses and try to send their daughters in public institutions. Not mostly but this has been practiced (Right to Education Project Report, 2014).

5. Low Salary Packages

Private sector show somewhat dictatorship and pay their teachers less to make more and more money. Due to privatization we have enough number of teachers available and all are not getting the state jobs. So the private sectors pay whatever they like.

6. Focus on Quantity

More and more number of enrolments is focused for making more and more money. Private bodies need admissions because they have to run their institutes on their own expenses.

7. Commercialization of Education

Education has now become a business, it is seen as a medium to earn and it is believed that education is good choice in terms of business. Earlier it was regarded as a noble profession as a service to humanity.

Ensuring quality of higher education through privatization

1. There should be regular monitoring by the states of these institutions to ensure norms and standards are maintained. Right to Education Project Report (2014) says, "States must establish and maintain a transparent and effective system which monitors the right to education".
2. There should be a provision of compulsory attendance in these institutions and implemented strictly by the management.
3. State and private bodies must cooperate with each other and keep remember the aims of the education of the country.
4. At the time affiliation state should ask for the minimum compulsory output from the private institutions and this affiliation must be impartial according to the prescribed norms regardless of the money, power, or any kind of influence.
5. There should be a feeling among the stakeholders that education is a noble work not a business which should be executed selflessly.
6. Teachers must remember their accountability towards their profession, parents, management, society and the nation.
7. There should be a fix amount of salaries of the teachers working in private institutes decided by the state. Salaries must be in accordance with number of classes per week, courses taught, level of the courses, etc. and other allowances should also be provided.
8. There should be accountability on the part of the owners; if they are willing to provide education to the

- masses then they should be accountable towards parents, society and the nation.
9. There should be provision of awards for the best private university or best self financed college which should be carried out by state and central governments. Criteria should be developed by the policy makers on which awards are to be given. Like students satisfaction, students academic performances, number of placements, etc. this will work as a reinforcement for the universities.
 10. Although state is providing scholarships to the low income group regardless in which institute they are studying but this provision must reach to all the needy and eligible ones.
 11. National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) like monitoring bodies must tighten the norms and regulations and must ensure their proper and successful implementation.
 12. Last but not the least there should be a feeling among stakeholders, state, teachers, parents and students to contribute towards national development.

Conclusion

There are lesser researches which tell us about the information regarding impact of privatization on higher education. But when we see the report of Privatization in Education Research Initiative (PERI) (as cited in Right to Education Project Report, 2014) regarding schools of Africa, South East Asia and East Asia (research carried out in 2011) it tells us that privatization impact both positively and negatively. This is little enough to know the impact of privatization in higher education too.

If we talk generally we live in a country which is developing we have to welcome private sectors into higher education in order to make it available and accessible to the masses and both of them that is state and the private bodies should target the goal of national development, if we want to stand in the queue of developed nations.

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