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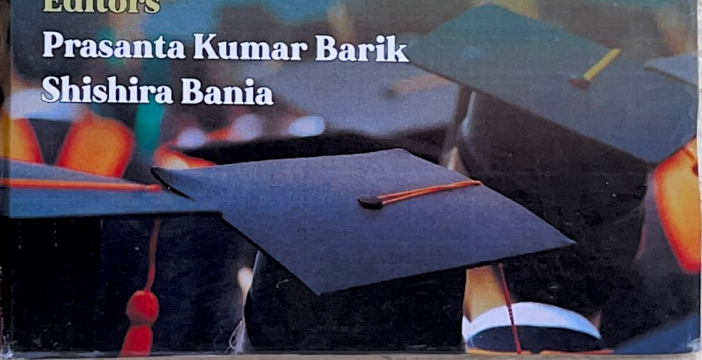
Privatisation of Higher Education in India

Editors: Prasanta Kumar Barik, Shishira Bania

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Editors

**Prasanta Kumar Barik
Shishira Bania**



11. Positive and Negative impact of Privatization of Higher Education	79
• <i>Rajendra Kumar Muljibhai Parmar and Mohit Bani</i>	
12. Privatization of Higher Education in India: Challenges and Concerns	86
• <i>Dipanjali Sahu and Basanta Kumar Mahakur</i>	
13. Need, Emergence and Consequences of Privatization of Higher Education in India	93
• <i>Sujata Senapati</i>	
14. Privatization of Higher Education in India- Need and Suggestions for Quality Improvement	100
• <i>Rajendra Kumar Muljibhai Parmar and Riya Virat Mehta</i>	
15. Privatization of Higher Education in India: Concept, Factors and Impact	105
• <i>Niranjan Murthy N J and Pampateertha B.</i>	
16. Marking vs Grading with Reference to CBCS in Higher Education System	115
• <i>Kailash Chandra Pradhan and Jayadeva Sahoo</i>	
17. Issues and Challenges of Privatisation of Higher Education in India	124
• <i>Rachita Behera</i>	
18. Privatization of Higher Education: Some Concerns and Suggestions	131
• <i>Netramani Padhan</i>	
19. Factors Responsible for Privatization of Higher Education in India	138
• <i>Rajendra Umar Muljibhai Parmar and Dwij Nandwani</i>	
20. An Analysis of the Need of Privatization of Higher Education in India	143
• <i>Sujata Meher</i>	
21. Quality of Higher Education in Arunachal Pradesh: Issues and Challenges	147
• <i>Millo Mamung, Prasanta Kumar Acharya and Narender Singh</i>	
22. Open Educational Resources (OER) – An Effective Tool for Enhancing Learning in Higher Education	161
• <i>Sushant Kumar Nayak and Mihir Kumar Beura</i>	
23. A Quality Concern in Public versus Private School Education	173
• <i>Narender Singh and P. K. Barik</i>	

A Quality Concern in Public versus Private School Education

I Narender Singh* and P. K. Barik†

Abstract

The last three decades in India are dedicated to progress and development as a whole in all areas. The progress in the field of education is awareness and interest of the masses towards importance of education. The government policies strengthened public trust in education and in improving the life of the educated one in particular and common people in general. India being a densely populated country with limited resources is struggling to provide quality education to all its children though efforts have been made on the part of the government but economic strength and infrastructural weak position makes it hard to be completely successful. Right to Education, 2005 act binds government to make provision for free and compulsory education for all learners up to the age of 14. To fulfil this provision government decided to use various avenues like privatisation of at all level. However, before this act, education was in private hands, too, at some levels but implementation of act boosted the process of privatisation. The process of privatisation of school education increased enrolment but it significantly increased the gap of quality among learners. This paper is an attempt to highlight the quality issue in school education.

INTRODUCTION

Many states in the world consider education as an essential service and it is solely the responsibility of the state to provide education to all its citizens. The

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research in the field of education suggests that providing education to its citizen by the state is a real investment and that always pays back with huge benefits leading to collective contribution having cumulative rewards in each domain of life. In India, The last three decades in India are dedicated to progress and development as a whole in all areas. The progress in the field of education is awareness and interest of the masses towards importance of education. The government policies strengthened public trust in education and in improving the life of the educated one in particular and common people in general. India being a densely populated country with limited resources is struggling to provide quality education to all its children though efforts have been made on the part of the government but economic strength and infrastructural weak position makes it hard to be completely successful. Right to Education, 2005 act binds government to make provision for free and compulsory education for all learners up to the age of 14. To fulfil this provision government decided to use various avenues like privatisation of at all level.

However, before this act, education was in private hands ,too, at some levels but implementation of act boosted the process of privatisation. The process of privatisation of school education increased enrolment but it significantly increased the gap of quality among learners. Some Critics in India and abroad points out that it is the policy fault and inefficiency of the government that has made privatisation of education (Chubb & Moe, 1990; Richards, shore.& Sawicky, 1966) as a business and profit gaining enterprise. Economic compulsion in India also forces the state to go for privatisation. To make education as business may lose its character but with certain rules it may be privatised to ensure that nation could maximise its efforts for universalization of education.

Privatisation will boost other democratic norms of decentralisation of education. Various strategies like magnet school or alternate schools in USA provide an option to parents and students but it does not mean that education has been a private matter. It is regulated by government agencies but adds values to the work culture and creativity of the individual organisation that views education as an area of experimentation and improvement. Other strategies like Voucher System, Charter System and private management have been successful in various countries because of flexibility adopted by the system and decision-making power has been decentralised to the extent that an improved system of policy governance is clearly visible in private institutes. Voucher system (USA) guarantee distribution of governmental funds in the form of voucher to the parents that they can redeem in any type of school (public or private). It is based upon natural selection theory of Darwin that manifest survival of fittest. Evidence based results show that quality of education is better in private schools as compared to public schools. Voucher system increases competition among institutions. If parents are not satisfied

with the quality of education that the school is providing to their children then they shall opt for another school for their wards and the school will lose funds leading to closure of the school if it does not work on improving the quality of the education. In India private school education and quality education has become the right of the rich.

Government in India provides financial helps to government run or government aided schools only. Parents are forced to send their children in government run schools despite the fact that quality standard in government school is inferior to private run schools. If government introduce voucher system in India too, it may revolutionise the mean and mechanism of providing education in India. Gap between education of children of poor and rich parents will be over and institutions (private or government) will become more competitive in nature leading to quality enhancement. Government of India under right to education act is bound to provide free and compulsory education to children under the age of fourteen. The question that stirs controversy is that, this free education shall be available through government run schools only. There is no provision to know how much money is spent on educating a child for a period of eight years or up to the age of fourteen years. If the calculated money is given to parents in the form of a voucher/ coupon or cheques directly to the parents in instalments in that form it will motivate parents to enrol their children in a school that provides quality education. The procedure adopted will force the schools and teaching staff to be competitive, innovative and quality productive. Another most popular form of privatisation in USA is Charter school. Under this scheme state transfer grants directly to schools. In India, in some states, there is provision for grants in aids schools where government provides funds but all affairs of the school are managed by Private management board. It is a somewhat more stable and provides teachers a non-transferrable security.

Private management fixes accountability of persons working in this school and resources utilisation practice is almost perfect. Like Voucher System, Charter school system too, is not working in India, as various states do not have enough financial resources to maintain this sort of practice. Another practice that is adapted in various other countries is handing over management of schools to private contractors. This practice too is not feasible in India as it again requires sufficient financial budget for education. Government at both levels, centre and state, struggle for budget allocation for education. There is fixed budget allocation, not as per the requirement and any well-established procedure, but to maintain the minimum standard of the education in the states and country.

The quality concerns in public and private sectors that have been identified are:

- **Sense of Belonging to Institutions:** Teachers and staff working in private schools have their identity attached to the schools and are recognised by the place where they work that motivates them to improve and establish a bond with the institution. Reputation of the institution is their identity in the society. Contrary to private schools, teachers and staff working in public school suffers from identity crisis and motivation factor for excellence is missing there.
- **Resources Utilisation:** Private schools may run with minimum resources but management there brings efficiency in the system while in public schools there is poor management of resources. Both human and material resources impact quality of the education in an institution. In public school head teacher/ principal are the main custodian of material resources while in private schools they are accountable to private board of management.
- **Parents Awareness:** Parents awareness is another factor that promotes quality in education. Parents of the private school visit and enquire about the facility being offered by the school while in public school there is school management committee that may not be functional with its prime objective. Parents of public school going students do rarely visit to enquire about the quality of the education being offered in that school.

CONCLUSION

Level of education and training of teachers' impacts quality standards but it is not the sole criteria to determine quality education standard in an institution. If highly qualified and trained teachers are not managed properly then it is like a donkey lading an army of lions. Management may overcome many quality parameters by its virtues of skilful management of both human and material resources. Another factor that is most important in raising the quality standard is the parents involvement and continuous monitoring of the progress of the students and fixing accountability of the teachers.

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