



Quality of Research, Professional Degree and Research Publications in India—Is Quality of Research and Education Declining in India ?

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During the period, from 2006 to 2009, the research competence of India has developed to 8th rank from 10th rank. Overall contribution of research publications was reported as 0.2% to 5%, in which pharmaceuticals, pharmacology, toxicology and chemistry fields recorded the highest score of 5% whilst computer science field recorded the lowest score of 0.2%. Contributions of agriculture, biological science and biochemistry fields were about in between 3-4%.¹ With reference to reports by British council India (2014), there are four major challenges have been coded, against the progress of higher education and research in India, viz. a) high supply and demand gap, b) low quality of teaching and learning, c) constraints on research capacity and innovation, d) uneven growth and access to opportunity.²

Report by TV Padma from "Nature" stated that Indian research is hampered by stifling bureaucracy, poor-quality education at most universities and insufficient funding" and "The density of scientists and engineers in India is one of the lowest in the world, and there are very many important areas where we are not able to do research.³ In contrast, the number educational institutes exist in India to offer higher education has been notified as adequate, but capability of institute towards producing a challenging graduate in research and innovation is quite uncertain.

Review on quality of education and research in India, it was felt that the trend is quite unfortunate, and bifurcated to produce more graduates rather than producing 'quality graduates'. It is the time to focus at quality of education not/or in addition to quantity, if we ensure us to participate in international collaborated research. It is disbelief that fake degrees, are becoming more common even in medical education, and it seems that considerable number of graduates are undergoing formal training and doing practice as registered physician. It is well percolated and pronounced in other allied medical fields and technical field too.^{4,5} In view of spectators, non-governance of this unacceptable, unhealthy and avoidable scenario may ruin the public health and economy of any nation; hence needy steps are always required to demolish such sub-standardizing events.

In India, number of private universities and institutions offering doctorate and master degree in health and technical profession has been reached beyond the margin of requirement. The quality of profes-

sional and doctorate degree from majority of private universities are now questionable, with an exception to minor proportions. This view point may differ from region to region, and may also differ among state governments and their regulations on higher education. Unlike olden days, privatization of education is trendy throughout the globe but, it has been commercialized in India and reflected on standards of quality education. Despite of norms on requirement of facility, infrastructure, and upgraded curriculum, a majority of senior professionals and employers sense that the existing educational standards and competent quality of health/technical students are relatively low as compared to olden days. It was evident from media that many professional health and technical degrees are awarded even without minimum participation, learning and skills, and surprisingly many of technical and medical oriented courses in many institutes are unethically offered in part-time basis. Glance to newspapers and other telecasted information reveals that allied health/technical program admissions provided by private universities or/and private colleges under affiliations are not met by the prescribed regulations of their own or approval or affiliating bodies. Of course, the government and universities in India are trying to hamper the unethical events and fighting against malpractices. In addition, University grants commission (UGC) and other statutory bodies have been instigating newer regulations and rules to hinder malpractices in education and making efforts to uplift the standards of professional education.

But, it was told by many experienced academicians that the existing policies and regulations are not relatively enough to improve the standard or/and to eradicate malpractices. In fact, there are several reasons for this worst scenario, such as a) education has been turned out as a business in India, b) enormous number of private institutions, c) In many states, number of permitted seats available is more than actual strength of students who wish/eligible to take admission, d) declining employment opportunity for professional graduates, e) insecurity on role of education and qualification in economy.

In India, there are several types of universities under the recognition of University grant commission (UGC), such as Central University, State Universities, National institutes, Deemed universities, State Universities, Private universities, University with potential excellence (UPE), University with Centre with Potential for Excellence in Particular Area (CPEPA). In the same way, Colleges were also categorized such as Colleges under 12B and 2F, Colleges for potential excellence, Community colleges, academic staff colleges, and autonomous colleges. Apart from UGC, there are many councils are existing as government statutory body to regulate the educational standards of the respective program (Examples: Medical Council of India, Dental Council of India, Pharmacy council of India, Indian Nursing council,

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DOI : 10.5530/PTB.1.3.1

All India council for technical education (AICTE) etc). In addition to that there few accreditation bodies such as National assessment and accreditation council (NAAC) and National board of Accreditation (NBA) are also available to accredit the quality of institutions. Such accredited institutions are quite free from malpractices but education standards are yet to attain the level employer expectation and global standards.

Granting, there is nothing to comment on the documented regulation and rules of these statutory bodies, but their action plans and strategies on control of unauthorized degree certificates, unethical admission regulations and substandard quality education in private institute and private universities are absolutely in paucity. On the other hand, recruitments in developed countries are primarily focused on the standard of academic degree, institution and quality of program. Even if both full time and distance research degrees (PhD) are valid in India, it seems that distance based Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) degree is being denied in many foreign universities for any sort of position. It's a reflection of substandard research degree offered by Indian private universities and increasing trends of unrecognized and commercial based degree. We could see that many unrecognized private universities are listed in UGC website, and but still UGC has to provide a list of universities eligible to offer PhD along with discipline and intake. While inspection, still these universities are capable producing a document of standard procedure that they follow in award of doctorate and master degree, despite of the fact that the practice is commercial and blemish.

Today's regulation on PhD award by universities are little stringent as compared to olden regulations. It is felt that admission procedure is made tough and due to pre-requirements like entrance, interview, Pre-PhD and research review meetings and publications etc. But the admission procedures followed by many private universities are not so as stringent, still many malpractices and unethical business orientation has been entertained. It was a surprise that there are many private laboratories, centers have been opened to provide commercial services to carry out research work, research paper writing, thesis and dissertation writings too. In this aspect, regulation and action plan by universities and statutory bodies are certainly, inadequate or failed to implement the documented regulations.

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It was evident that substandard paid journals are serving as one of the businesses, rather than a reference source of an original research, with an exception of fewer open access publishers. There are several hundreds of paid journals, publishing research paper without proper review and plagiarism check. Sometime, being an author of this note, I have come across many fabricated and unreal works without logistical approach. These business oriented journals have been fading the image on standard research papers of Indian origin and on other side it supports the research paper requirement for the award of PhD degree by many universities. In India, research paper publications are at extreme level of commercial value rather than a source of novelty or authenticated ideas that are reliable.

In connection with thesis writing, we could see that few thesis writing program, thesis writing services and thesis consultation centers are also available in India. Despite of training services, and certificate program for scholars/students as a skill learning program, undertaking commercial contract on whole process of research design, presentation and publications paves a way for fabricated quality among researchers. In recent times, number of contractors who undertake PhD and master degree commercial contract from students and scholars, have been increased and making unhealthy and unethical educational environment.

In addition to above, conceding eligibility criteria appended by universities for PhD supervisors and co-supervisors, are also moderately influence the quality and intensity of research. There should be an appropriate expert team in particular discipline, need to examine the compatibility and eligibility both guide and scholar to undertake a particular research proposal of PhD work. In addition, co-guide has to be appointed only in case of interdisciplinary research, if scholar and supervisor, request a committee. With reference to few universities in India, a list of standard journals has to be enlisted as appendix of research admission. If reputed conference proceedings may also be considered as an equivalent. This allows the scholar to publish their research in standard journals and authenticate a proper review. These create more confidence among research scholar and improve the quality of research; also it will prevent malpractice and unethical publications.