

Significance of Public Private Partnership (PPP) for the Quality Assurance in Higher Education

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Abstract: Education plays vital role in the socio-economic development of the country. Since, Higher Education contributes to the human resource of the nation; it has more significance for a country like India. Being a second largest and fastest growing economy of the world, India requires a huge infrastructure for Higher Education so as to brand knowledge based economy. However, National Education Policy, even after revisions could not yield satisfactory results. Plans, projections and targets designed to rejuvenate Higher Education sector still suffers several lacuna. At a juncture where classical Grant in Aid system seems to be failed and the privatization has its own drawbacks, there is a need to devise innovative hybrid solution to revamp the Higher Education sector. Public Private Partnership (PPP) is an arrangement between a government/statutory entity on one side and a private sector entity on the other, for the provision of public assets and/or public services, through investments being made and/or management being undertaken by the private sector entity, for a specified period of time. Because of greater efficiency, better delivery system, more accountability and value for money, the concept of PPP has received a wide acceptance in the various field of service delivery including the primary education. The paper presents the significance of the Public Private Partnership in improving the quality of Higher education in India.

Key Words: Public Private Partnership, Qualitative Assurance, Higher Education.

1. INTRODUCTION:

Education is a social institution which provides mental, physical, ideological and moral training to the individuals of the society, so as to enable them to have full consciousness of their mission, purpose in life and equip them to achieve that purpose. Higher Education is the key of development of any nation. It is the process through which a nation develops its self-consciousness by developing the self-consciousness of the individuals who compose it. Talented and skillful youth of a country can double the rate of its growth.

Quality is a key concern of academia across the globe and several efforts in multiple directions are made by the administrators and academicians to induce this component into the teaching learning situation. Quality means different things to different people. The Oxford American Dictionary defines quality as 'a mental or moral attribute, trait or characteristic, a feature of one's characters a habit'. Quality may refer to the relative nature or kind or character, trait, faculty or skill, accomplishment or characteristic. In fact it refers to a degree or level of excellence possessed by a person, thing, unit or system under consideration in relation to the accepted norms or standards.

Harvey and Green identified five different approaches to define quality viz. quality as exceptional, quality as perfection, quality as fitness for purpose, quality as value for money and quality as transformation.[1] The notion of 'quality as exceptional' is related to the traditional and elitist academic view that perceives quality as something special, and distinctive. In 'quality as perfection' approach, quality is perceived as a consistent or flawless outcome. It focuses on the specifications of processes. The perspective underlying the 'quality as fitness for purpose' is conformity with institutional missions as well as capacity to fulfilling customer's requirements. Quality as value for money approach perceives quality in terms of return on investment or expenditure. This view embodies efficiency, effectiveness and accountability. Quality as transformation refers to the classic notion that views quality in terms of change of the learner from one state to another. In educational terms, transformation refers to the enhancement and empowerment of students or the development of new knowledge through the learning process. This notion of quality presupposes a fundamental purpose of higher education in terms of transforming the life experiences of students.

PPP in education is essentially an arrangement where the private sector partner participates in the provision of services traditionally provided by the government. It is usually characterized by an agreement between the government and the private sector, with the latter undertaking to deliver an agreed service on the payment of a unitary charge by the government. While access to quality education for the underprivileged is traditionally expected from government schools, they alone may not be able to fulfill this enormous task.

Applying the rigorous mechanism for quality assurance, PPP can be developed to expand the access to schooling and improvement of the quality of an education. Further interventions like teachers training, school up-gradation, ancillary service provisions, etc. can be made to reach and benefit the children of the marginalized groups and poor, who are not been served adequately in traditional education system.

2. NATURE OF STUDY AND METHODOLOGY :

The aim of the present study is to appreciate the concept of Public Private Partnership in the field of Higher Education in India. The objective of the study is to propose Public Private Partnership for the quality improvement of the Higher Education System in India. Since, there is a significant debt for the necessary infrastructure for higher education in India; it is quite relevant to find the alternate financial resources. Moreover, the higher education sector suffers the mediocrity with an island of elite institution with quality. Hence, it is the need of an hour to treasure for the quality improvement techniques for the higher education sector. The present research is of purely a doctrinal in nature. A secondary data from the government report and research journal are referred. The scope of the study is limited to the Higher Education sector within the territory of India. A working hypothesis is formed as,

“There is a direct relationship between the Public Private Partnership and the quality of the Higher Education in India.”

The hypothesis is tested through the analytic arguments along with a reasoned discussion made in the later part of the paper and finally a conclusion is drawn.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW :

Quality in education is seen as a positive and dynamic idea achievable by design with meaningful investment [2] and the quest for quality should reflect customer oriented approach with continuous improvement of the products and services, and of the processes brought about by the planning, implementing, evaluating, and decision making methods. [3] Quality principles in higher education are meeting customer needs, continuous improvement, leadership, human resource development motivation, appreciation and reward, coordinated teamwork, evaluation and decision making. [4] Quality in education is achieved when education output conforms with the planned goals, specifications and requirements.[5]

The concepts and principles of quality management, which are effectively used in today's competitive production and business environments, have become indispensable in today's business of higher education. There is a strong correlation between a country's competitiveness and the quality of higher education provided within that country. [6] Today's most advanced economies are based on the greatest availability of knowledge. Comparative advantage is increasingly determined by the competitive use of knowledge and of technological innovations. This centrality makes of knowledge a pillar of the wealth and power of the nations. [7]

4. HIGHER EDUCATION IN INDIA :

Higher education in India has recorded impressive growth since Independence. Today, India's higher education system is the third largest in the world, next to the United States and China. In India, the University system has passed through major political, economic and social changes. There have been several reviews of our education system, including the university system especially after independence. The reports of the Radhakrishnan Commission (1948-49), the Kothari Commission (1964-66), the NPE-1968, the NPE-1986 and Review of NPE by Acharya Ramamurthi Commission (1992) contain significant observations and recommendations to strengthen the autonomous character of our university system.

Historically, the affiliating system of colleges was originally designed when their number in university was less. The university could then effectively oversee the working of its affiliated colleges, act as an examining body and award degrees. However, with the rapidly growing increase in the number of colleges / educational institutions, the system became unmanageable and started losing its governance. [8] The University's monitoring of the quality of teaching, research, physical facilities like library and laboratory equipment is often nominal. Although the university sets standards, there is no proper mechanism to monitor the observance of those standards.

Several initiatives have been launched for improving the quality of higher education in the country. These include the Global Initiative for Academic Networks' (GIAN) to support international faculty assignment in Indian higher educational institutions; Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya National Mission on Teachers and Training (PMMMNMTT) to address issues related to training of teachers; the National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF) which outlines a methodology to rank institutions across the country.

The University Grants Commission (UGC) has formulated Guidelines on Adoption of Choice Based Credit System on 12th November, 2014. It has also laid down several regulations for setting minimum standards of higher education in the country. The UGC is implementing schemes for providing quality skill development through higher education namely; Community Colleges, B.Voc Degree Programm and Pandit Deen Dayal Upadhyay KAUSHAL Kendras in the Universities and Colleges in the country.

During the Twelfth Five Year Plan, Rashtriya Uchchar Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA) seeks to achieve equity, access and excellence in State Higher Educational Institutions. The overall quality of existing State higher educational institutions is sought to be improved by ensuring their conformity to prescribed norms and standards and adoption of accreditation as a mandatory quality assurance framework. Academic, administrative and governance reforms are an essential element of RUSA.

5. PPP IN HIGHER EDUCATION :

A co-operative arrangement between the public sector and private organizations for the implementation of government scheme or program is popularly known as the Public Private Partnership, i.e. PPP. In other words, PPP may be described as an exceptional public-private cooperation framework model which has its own structure, contractual relations, clearly labeled implementation and expected benefits. It is a legal binding involving public and private sectors for the provision of assets and the recovery of services that allocates responsibilities and business risks among the various partners. The private sector invests its own funds, experience and initiative while implementing such program or project to provide public services, to improve services, or to create the social and financial capital needed for the provision of public services. Hence, PPP may be regarded as a model of public procurement based on long term relationships between the government or other public bodies and the private sector for the delivery of the services. PPP can also be viewed as a contractual arrangement whereby the resources, risks and rewards of both the public sector and private organizations are combined to provide greater efficiency, better access to capital and improved compliance with a range of government regulations regarding the environment and workplace.

Broadly, PPP in education can operate to provide (i) infrastructural services, (ii) support services and (iii) educational services. There appears to be a progression in scope with the simplest being one in which the private partner provides infrastructure services but the government provides educational and other support services. The next stage in progression is where the private sector provides both infrastructure services and support services. The third type is where private sector provides infrastructure, support and educational services bundled together.

There are many potential benefits to PPPs in education, the most significant of which is that they can help to widen access to education. The public sector experiences considerable resource constraints in financing and providing education services to all. PPPs can play a complementary role to the State by providing additional finance to the education sector through filling the gaps left by the State. PPPs can also increase access by making use of private schools to absorb the excess demand for schooling in particular geographical areas. This directly increases access for those attending private schools and reduces class sizes for students in overburdened public schools.[9]

University Grant Commission (UGC) is the chief functionary that enforces its standards, advises the government, and helps coordinate between the center and the state for the education at the tertiary level. The University Grants Commission set up an expert committee under the chairmanship of K.B. Pawar, hence called Pawar Committee, to look for the possibilities of public-private partnerships in higher education in India and come up with models which could be utilized to improve access and quality of the higher educational institutions. The report submitted by the committee highlights that public-private partnerships in higher and technical education would bring benefits of saving resources and time; improve efficiency of the system; improve performance and promote autonomy which will ensure high quality in higher education. The said Committee has recommended the following four models of PPP in higher education;

Model I – Basic Infrastructure Model: Private sector invests in infrastructure while government runs the operations and management and makes annualized payments to the private investor; this model will be best suited for real estate and infrastructure companies, as well as financial institutions — who do not want to enter into operations of education sector.

Model II – Outsourcing Model: Private sector invests in infrastructure and runs the operations and management while responsibility of the government is to pay the private investor for the specified services; the private sector will not only invest in the infrastructure but also run and manage the institutions and the government will pay for the selective services it will avail from the institution.

Model III – Equity/Hybrid Model: Investments in infrastructure is shared between the government and private sector while operations and management vests with the Private sector; the investment will be done by both the government and the private sector but the institutions will be run and managed by the private players.

Model IV – Reserve Outsourcing Model: Government invests in infrastructure and the private sector takes the responsibility of operations and management. The government will invest in the infrastructure and private sector will run and manage the institution. This model is best suited for school management companies, which have experience in managing and operating schools on contracts.

6. DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS :

A Public Private Partnership is institutionalized form of cooperation of public and private partners, which on the basis of their own indigenous objectives, work together towards a joint target. [10] Thus, Public Private Partnership imply a sort of collaboration to pursue common goals, while leveraging joint resources and capitalizing on the respective competence and strength of the public and private partners.

Following are the aspects of procurement which distinguishes Public Private Partnership from privatization.

- (i) **Delivery of service :** In case of privatization the private sector is entirely responsible for the delivery of the service as well as its funding. While such responsibilities are fully retained by the government in PPP project.

- (ii) Ownership : Under privatization, the ownership rights are sold to the private sector along with associated benefits and cost. Whereas the legal ownership of asset is retained by the public sector.
- (iii) Decision making : The nature and scope of the services under privatization is determined by the private provider, while in case of PPP, both party contractually determined the same defining the terms and condition of the contract.
- (iv) Risk and reward : Typically risks and rewards are shared among the partners of PPP i.e. government and the private organization. However, in case of privatization, all the risks of the project rest with the private sector only.

A system of providing public subsidies to the private education sector in India, called ‘grant-in-aid’ (GiA), originated in the colonial times and initially consisted of financial support to private non-profit institutions for a part of the recurrent and capital costs of providing education.

An overview of the GiA in comparison with the PPP mode for an institute of higher education is given in the following table.

Table 1 : Comparison of GiA and PPP model for education institute

Aspect of Work	GiA	PPP
Policy Framework	Weak	Under Development
Contractual obligation	Absent	Strong
Performance measurement	Little	Detailed
Monitoring	Weak	Tough
Nature of relation	Supply side	Demand side
Financial Burden	On the State	On private party
Repayment of charges	Absent	Detailed
Quality assurance	Weak	Robust

From the above discussion it is evident that the GiA system for education institutes has failed to produce desired results. Yet for the primary education, which is a responsibility of the state, the model may be useful in order to reach at the marginalized people in accordance to the inclusive policy. However, in case of higher education, where a state is not in a position to bear expenses, GiA increases a financial burden on the government. On the other hand against the GiA or any other traditional approach of procurement of services, Public Private Partnership has opened up a new horizon for private players into the field of an education.

Further, a PPP model has produced remarkable results in the field of primary education. Through detailed studies of the various models of Public Private Partnership in practice, various advantages of PPP procurement are observed as follows.

- (a) Cost saving for the entire project and implementation.
- (b) Scope for the innovation and flexibility in operation.
- (c) Risk sharing among the partners.
- (d) Novel modes of revenue generation.
- (e) Increased efficiency and performance.
- (f) Transparency in governance and reduction in corruption
- (g) More accountability among the stakeholders of Higher education system.

Nevertheless the critiques of the Public Private Partnership argue regarding the loss of control of the government, bias in the selection process of private partner as well as the service conditions of the employees. However, any of such issue or threat could be well addressed by the properly drafted instrument creating such partnership between the state and the private players.

7. CONCLUSION :

The concept of Public Private Partnership as a structural solution could be intended mainly to provide an enabling environment to improve and strengthen the teaching and learning process, benchmarking quality initiatives.

Public Private Partnership in Higher Education is expected to provide a better framework for fostering these factors than the affiliation system with all its constraining conditions hanging as a dead weight on the state sponsored higher education system. Further the concept of Public Private Partnership leads to the decentralized management culture. The delegation of responsibility with accountability for academic as well as associated management functions is essential for the success of PPP.

Thus it can be concluded that the use of Public Private Partnership structures in education projects in India is set to continue and expand in the coming years. There is a stream of project in the pipeline. PPP can be an important part of the overall strategy to achieve quality at scale, but is not a panacea. The PPP strategy must fit into and be in line with the overall higher education strategy and priorities. Public Private Partnership is useful to the extent that it

helps meet the larger goals. Also Public Private Partnership should never limit or restrict government itself from offering educational services or running education institutions because it has a PPP partner in that area.

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