

TECHNICAL PROGRAMMES IN PRIVATELY MANAGED HIGHER EDUCATION EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS IN HIMACHAL PRADESH: CERTAIN ISSUES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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Abstract

The main aim of the present investigation was to study major issues regarding appropriate functioning of technical education programmes in privately managed higher education institutions in Himachal Pradesh and to suggest measures for bringing improvement. For conducting this study, private engineering institutions situated in five districts of Himachal Pradesh were selected. The managers/owners, teachers/principals and students were selected purposively. Data were collected with help of self-developed interview schedule and questionnaire. Content analysis technique along with percentage analysis was used for analysis of data. The findings of the study revealed that less admissions, staff crisis, job insecurity among teachers, unavailability of infrastructural, instructional and academic facilities, use of outdated technologies and methods in teaching-learning process and poor placements are the major issues related to proper functioning of technical education programmes in privately managed institutions. To improve the functioning of privately managed technical education institutions, recruiting required teaching faculty on regular basis, giving handsome salary packages, raising the teaching level, emphasizing on practical knowledge involving latest technology in teaching-learning process were the major recommendations for bringing improvements. In the last section of the paper, the findings and suggestions have been discussed in detail.

Keywords: Technical Education Programmes, Private Institutions



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Introduction

The country in which we live, rapid changes are taking place whether politically, socially, economically or technologically. Education, more than any other social activity, is always being affected by these changes. The impact of such changes as seen at global, national, regional, and local levels have been felt in the field of higher education also and has given rise to privatization. Scarce resources, efficiency, competition, choice, quality, and social equity have generated the need for privatization in education sector. Private sector has established educational institutions which has improved the demand-supply ratio of skilled manpower. These institutions consider students of high academic ability and intelligent

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teachers as assets and thus, to attract and retain them in their institution, they provide them facilities and support services. Furthermore, privatization has increased the accountability of education providers, has provided equitable access of education to students in India, irrespective of gender, social class, race, language, origins or geographical location and improved the economic status of the people residing in the area where these institutions are located. Local people also earn money by allowing paying guests and providing rooms on rent. Shopkeepers can expand their business. New shops get opened which is also in favour of local people.

Thus, keeping in mind the demand of industry and society, a good number of private educational institutions have been opened up during last decade but it has also been noticed that these institutions are not providing quality education. Due to the massive growth of technical education institutions in private sector, only number of graduates has increased but they do not get placement. This alarming situation is to a great extent due to the unavailability of efficient and determined teachers in private educational institutions. Undue importance, given to performance and competition among staff members increase emotional pressures and work related stress. In addition to this, management collects huge amounts from the students in the form of fees, funds and other charges like for practical examinations, study tours etc. Students having even less than 20% attendance are allowed to appear in examination after collecting huge amounts from them. Even while making admissions, reservation roster is not taken care of properly. In some institutions, facilities are provided to students according to the amount they pay. It leads to social segregation and homogenisation of students' population inside the institution. Thus, privatization is an important phenomenon which has affected the education system in both ways. The review of related literature also reveals that there are various issues related to privatization of education, in addition to this, it has great impact on the equity, equality and quality of education. A glimpse of some studies undertaken in past is provided here: Sharma (2001) and Kumar (2009) revealed that engineering education was facing many problems such as low quality, lack of practical experience, no intimacy with industry, old and defective curriculum, problem of medium, problem of administration, management and control, problems relating to research, unemployment, dilution of quality and commercialization, etc. In the studies of Devi (2013) and Kumar (2014), it was pointed out that there was lack of more advance and diversified courses, academic and instructional infrastructure. Irregular organization of orientation,

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seminars and workshops for the teachers and the students was also found. About human resources, increasing teacher vacancies, lack of competent and qualified faculty, appointment of ad-hoc teachers, resulting in loss of quality in technical education institutions was indicated by Bansal (2006) and Kumar (2008). Regarding teachers, Shrivastav (2003) pointed out that several of them were only fresh graduates. These teachers were also not paid salary & allowances as prescribed by AICTE. They may be on contract for ten months and are paid remuneration on period basis. Praveen (2003) observed significant addition of new courses to existing ones in the last few years even when employment opportunities for engineers varies from state to state. Hariharan (2003) viewed mismatch between the education imparted in the technical institutions and the activities of the engineers in the industry. To prepare the students to be capable to cope up with technical needs, institutions will have to understand the need of liberalization and globalization as concluded by Jadhav (2007). Kulandaisamy in a book authored by Chaturvedi (2003) suggested that all leading private institutions must be converted as deemed technical universities. Market forces will ensure that only those maintaining quality will survive by attracting good students and faculty. Periodic monitoring and assessment of private colleges must be carried out to maintain or continue their recognition / approval and to ensure quality.

From these reviews, it is quite evident that there is a definite trend towards privatization of higher education in India. Private sector is encouraged to start professional and technical institutions but it must be ensured that they do not lead education to commercialization. Although, there are a couple of drawbacks with respect to privatization of higher education, it is sure to bring in competitiveness and on the whole, refurbish the present educational system.

Objectives of the Study:

1. To study major issues in appropriate functioning of technical education programmes in privately managed higher education institutions in Himachal Pradesh.
2. To suggest measures for bringing improvements in functioning of technical education programmes in privately managed higher education institutions.

Delimitation:

1. The study was delimited to those privately managed technical education institutions at undergraduate level that are affiliated to Himachal Pradesh Technical University, Hamirpur.

2. The study was restricted to only those institutions that are located in 5 districts i.e. Mandi, Kangra, Solan, Hamirpur and Sirmaur of Himachal Pradesh.

Research Method and Research Approach Employed:

Survey technique under descriptive method of research was employed in the present study. The qualitative research approach was followed in present investigation.

Sampling:

Five districts of Himachal Pradesh i.e. Mandi, Kangra, Solan, Hamirpur and Sirmaur were selected purposively for the present study. The investigator separately covered at least 50% of total number of privately managed undergraduate engineering institutions in the sampled five districts. These institutions were selected on the basis of judgment of the researcher. The selection of 09 managers/owners, 124 teachers/principals/directors and 600 students of the selected institutions was made by employing incidental sampling technique. All such stakeholders who were conveniently available and willing to provide the requisite information were taken into consideration for the present study.

Research Tools Developed:

1. Interview schedule: In order to seek the views of managers/owners of privately managed technical education institutions, interview schedule was prepared. The items in this schedule were both open-ended as well as close-ended in nature.
2. Questionnaires: For eliciting the views of teachers/principals/directors and students, two structured questionnaires comprising of both close as well as open-ended questions were developed by the investigator herself.

The validity of these tools was ensured through content validation technique.

Analysis of Data:

The collected information was analyzed with the help of content analysis technique along with percentage analysis.

Discussion of Findings and Implications:

Regarding various problems and issues related to the functioning of technical education institutions, it was found that admission crisis is the major problem being faced in the institutions, as admitted by the teachers and the managers/owners of the institutions. The main cause for this may be infrastructural issues, lack of efficient and well-qualified teachers or placement of students. Private technical education institutions do not get well-qualified and responsible individuals to be appointed as faculty, which fails to attract students. As

stated by managers/owners of the institutions, it further leads to fewer admissions resulting in less revenue collection. It creates difficulty in payment of huge salaries to staff also which adds more fuel to faculty crisis. About faculty crisis, they also opined that after completing engineering course students prefer to join companies rather than doing M. Tech. and Ph. D. and thus, they do not get well-qualified teachers for their institutions. Students in this regard also stated that the teaching staff in their institution is not sufficient. Job insecurity, lack of work specification and salary issues are major reasons behind such crisis as stated by teachers teaching in such institutions. Less revenue generation results in less infrastructural development. In addition to this, about the facilities being provided in the institutions, it was found that the books including e-journals in the libraries are insufficient in privately managed institutions. Even in most of the institutions, librarian is not available in the institutions. They pointed out that research laboratory and language laboratory facilities are not available. Canteen facility and toilets are also in improper conditions. Majority of students reported that sports facilities and internet facilities are lacking in the privately managed education institutions. In respect of, teaching-learning process, it was revealed by the students that traditional technologies are used in the classrooms during teaching learning process. In the laboratories, there is lack of chemicals and equipments in the laboratories and many of the equipments are defective and outdated. The placement of these institutions is also very discouraging and even no entrepreneurship training is provided to students in private institutions. Another problem as viewed by managers/owners of privately managed technical education institutions is sudden changes in govt. rules and regulations, which creates problem in smooth administration and management of the institutions.

To improve the functioning of privately managed technical education institutions, different recommendations were given by different stakeholders. To improve the teaching-learning process, it was suggested by the students that required teaching faculty including computer instructor and librarian should be recruited in the private institutions. Recruitment of faculty should be on regular basis. Moreover, only the candidates fulfilling the minimum eligibility conditions as per AICTE norms should be appointed. To attract the competent and skilled teachers, handsome salary packages should be given to them. The standards and quality of teaching learning process should be improved in these institutions. For this, latest technology should be employed in teaching-learning process. Other than this, refresher and orientation courses for teachers should be organized from time to time. Emphasis should be

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given on imparting practical knowledge to the students. More time should be allotted to practical part in the time table. All the latest required equipments and facilities should be provided by the institutions in the laboratories. Regarding curriculum, teachers and managers/owners suggested that the syllabus should be up-to-date covering required topics according to the industrial needs.

Furthermore, good academic and instructional infrastructure should be provided by privately managed technical education institutions, including well-ventilated and spacious classrooms and seminar hall as well as well-equipped laboratories, workshops and computer centre. Other amenities like toilets, cafeteria, common room and hostels should also be adequate and in proper conditions. The management of institutions should pay due attention to the cleanliness and hygiene in cafeteria as suggested by the students. Internet facility should also be provided to the teachers as well as students. In addition to this, sports and cultural events should be organized by the institutions and students should be encouraged to participate in such events to develop multifarious aspects of their personality. Moreover, more attention should be given to placements of students even after passing out from the institutions. Students should be prepared well for job placements as well, so that they could get placed in reputed companies after passing out. For this, institutions may organize personality development programmes and provide entrepreneurship training, to the students. On the issue of growth in number of institutions, most of the teachers recommended that no more private colleges should be opened in small state of H.P. and private universities in the state should not be allowed to run technical education programmes. In addition to this, it was also suggested that government should keep proper check on the functioning of private institutions. To improve the status of technical education in the country, uniform government policy should be framed and executed. Public-private partnership mode can be promoted to impart technical education, as suggested by managers/owners of the institutions.

Conclusively, it may be said that private institutions are major partners in providing technical education to the students of hilly state of H.P., but there are many issues and challenges in their proper functioning and providing quality education. Hence, the need is to initiate urgent steps both at govt. level as well as institutional level to transform the existing scenario for a prosperous future.

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