Minor Research Project

Challenges in Higher Education
– A Study of Youth in Bangalore Urban

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Submitted by
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Executive Summary

Introduction

At any given time, higher education has been an important force for its ability to change and to induce change and progress in the society. It nurtures the attitude, knowledge, skills and values that will enable the youth to deal with the present and future challenges that are confronting every sphere of life, whether it is one of environment sustenance, economic development, advancement in technology or political stability. Therefore, higher education is vital for the socio-economic development of any Nation-State. The level of participation in higher education is indicative of the aspirations of the people for improving the quality of life. It is also crucial for national development since the skills, creativity, and research developed through higher education contribute to national prosperity.

Higher education also gives numerous benefits such as higher-paying jobs, growing tax revenues and economic activity, enhanced public safety, and a better quality of life. Urban cities like Bengaluru can convene education stakeholders including K-12 postsecondary officials, community-based organizations, workforce agencies, and businesses to establish data driven goals and support action plans to improve education across the cradle to career continuum. To quote professor C N R Rao, “In order to become a progressive country, we have to invest more in education, particularly higher education, for both short and long term benefits” - Task Force Report 2004.

Higher education in India has grown in leaps and bounds both qualitatively and quantitatively. To substantiate, India has the third largest higher education system in the world, after China and the United States comprising of 795 universities, 39,671 affiliated colleges, 10,15,696 teaching faculty and 2,37,64,960 students including 29,34,989 post-graduate and 2,00,730 research scholars. The total enrolment has increased from a meager 2 lakhs in 1947 to 238 lakhs in 2013-14. Colleges, affiliated to 194 affiliating universities, constitute the bulk of the higher education system in India contributing around 86.48% of the total enrolment.
The map below gives an overview of higher education statistics of India states:

Source: Websites - UGC and Collegiate Education of Karnataka

Karnataka has a population of 6.1 crore, out of which a whopping 1.18 crore i.e, 19.5 per cent of the population are in the age group of 20-29 years. Karnataka’s population is reaching its prime with the largest age group in the state being between 20 years and 29 years. Therefore, Karnataka is in an advantageous position with a young demographic profile in the graying global world, as they would be providing the bulk of skilled and semi-skilled workforce to the world in the near future. However, this can be achieved only through access to the dynamic higher education system - FICCI-E&Y. Demographers also point out that this would help in yielding rich dividends in terms of work and productivity. Demographic experts point out that with effective public policies, the demographic dividend can help in achieving rapid economic growth. The data below gives us an overview of population break-up of Karnataka.
### Population break-up of Karnataka

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age group (in years)</th>
<th>Percentage of population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-9</td>
<td>16.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-19</td>
<td>18.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-29</td>
<td>19.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-39</td>
<td>15.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-49</td>
<td>12.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-59</td>
<td>7.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60-69</td>
<td>5.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70-79</td>
<td>2.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80-89</td>
<td>0.811</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90-99</td>
<td>0.17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Registrar general and census commissioner
The maps below give an overview of higher education statistics of Bengaluru & Karnataka:

Karnataka has made remarkable progress in the field of education during the last decade. Bengaluru has emerged as one of the leading destinations for various investments in India. Bengaluru, the capital of the Indian state of Karnataka, is one of the fastest growing cities in India with a population growth of 3.25% per annum and it is expected that the city’s population will touch 10 million by 2021. The phenomenal growth of the city was spurred by the governmental agencies and public sector industries to begin with and later on, it was led by the booming IT sector. Bengaluru has a salubrious climate, high quality of life, cosmopolitan ambience and social diversity. The city is often called “IT Hub of Asia” and also “Silicon Valley of India.” Bengaluru is now competing with other Indian cities (like Hyderabad and Chennai) as well as Asian cities (like Manila and Kuala Lumpur) to attract and generate domestic and international activities and investments. In order to give the city an edge in the competition, it has to ensure that it provides a high level of “urban efficiency”.

The IT city of Bengaluru can lay claim to a new tag. It is also a city of colleges, according to the All-India Survey on Higher Education conducted by the Union Ministry for Human Resource
The survey says: “Bengaluru district tops in the number of colleges with 885, followed by Hyderabad with 544 colleges. Karnataka has 3,098 colleges with 44 colleges for one lakh people.” Jaipur follows Hyderabad with 486 colleges, according to the survey. The survey was conducted in three broad categories: universities, colleges and standalone institutions.

Inspite of the rapid expansion in education, only a small section of the population benefits from this expansion. Access to higher education varies widely in rural and urban areas, between men and women, between Scheduled Castes/Tribes and others and across the districts in the State. There are wide regional differences that have persisted for the last six decades. Despite recent increases, enrollment rates remain low. Often low-income families, girls, indigenous people, and other low income and marginalized groups have only limited access to education. The State has to address these critical issues urgently. Better targeting of State grants to educational institutions and improvement in the quality of education are required. If we are to benefit from the huge investment we have made in education, our teachers must be motivated and equipped to commit themselves, personally and professionally, to the imparting of quality education and to improved efficiency and effectiveness.

The total number of graduates in urban Karnataka stands at 13.67 per cent of the total population of 5.99 crore, compared to a meager 3.61 per cent in rural pockets. The data indicates that the government has a lot more to do especially in rural areas, when it comes to higher education. In the rural pockets of Raichur for instance, the total number of graduates is only 1.82 per cent. Raichur has 1.76 per cent of the total population of the state. The population excludes people living in defence areas. The highest literacy rate of 88.71 is recorded in urban areas in Dakishina Kannada district, while the lowest number of literates are in the urban areas of Yadgir district (43.68 per cent). In urban Bengaluru, the literacy rate is 87.93 per cent. The data revealed that the urban pockets are much better off with Bengaluru (urban) having the highest number of graduates at 16.63 lakh or 18.32 per cent of the population. When it comes to amenities and assets, the divide between urban and rural pockets is much less. As many as 77.38 per cent have mobile phones, compared to 81.4 percent in urban areas. Around 23.75 per cent or 19.11 lakh households have motor vehicles, compared to 38.89 per cent in urban areas. However only 5.95 per cent of the household in rural areas have refrigerators compared to 41.16 per cent in urban areas. This clearly indicates that accessibility towards higher education in Bengaluru Urban district is higher than in other districts. However, this indicator sensitizes the stakeholders to find out the ways and means to enhance accessibility in Bengaluru as well in the rest of districts.
However, according to education experts, Bengaluru’s status is no reason to celebrate since the quality of education and infrastructure in a vast majority of colleges is not up to the mark. This has affected the accessibility to and sustenance of quality in higher education. To quote Dr. M S Thimmappa, former vice-chancellor, Bengaluru University, “By and large, compared to other cities, we have some good colleges providing quality education. But not all 885 are good. I can say 10 per cent of them provide quality education with basic infrastructure”. Thimmappa has stated that the state government must direct the higher education council to take measures to improve the quality of colleges. “It is easy to blame universities, but they can do little about the state of private colleges. It is the duty of the government and other stakeholders to improve accessibility. It is good that the reach of higher education is expanded to provide access and equity to those it has not reached. However there are several issues in the education sector which have to be addressed if higher education in the State is to realize its potential and satisfy the aspirations of the people”.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GAP between urban and rural Karnataka when it comes to collegiate education</th>
<th>Households</th>
<th>Mobile phones</th>
<th>Motor vehicles</th>
<th>Computers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Literacy 76.18%</td>
<td>Urban 50,90,399</td>
<td>Urban 81.4%</td>
<td>Urban 38.89%</td>
<td>Urban 10.4% (with internet)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban 83.91%</td>
<td>Rural 80,48,644</td>
<td>Rural 77.38%</td>
<td>Rural 23.75%</td>
<td>5.26 (without internet)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural 68.46%</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Refrigerators</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban 41.16%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural 5.95</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Land line phones</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Urban 1.7%</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Rural 1.88%</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Socio-economic and caste census (SECC) - 2011. The census was funded by the centre and was conducted by the State Rural Development and Panchayat Raj Department (RDPR).
Bengaluru, Karnataka higher education is confronted with formidable challenges and must proceed to the most radical change and renewal it has ever been required to undertake, so that we can transcend not just the mere economic considerations but also incorporate deeper socio-cultural dimensions that will enable us to create a sustainable and vibrant city-state. It is therefore necessary to re-examine the policies pertaining to accessibility to higher education and to suggest changes which will make the system more effective and dynamic. It was in recognition of this, that the current Minor Research Project was undertaken to study the perception, experiences, expectation, attitude and aspiration of youth towards accessing higher education. This research also intends to study the specific challenges faced by youth accessing higher education in Bengaluru urban district and to understand the emerging issues, problems and implications concerning the same. Finally, the action plan will be proposed to combat these challenges.

**The objectives of the study are as follows:**

- To understand the nature and relevance of higher education to youth
- To examine the challenges faced by youth accessing higher education
- To critically analyze the expectation and aspiration of youth towards higher education
- To appraise the experiences and perception of youth accessing higher education in Bengaluru
- To propose feasible suggestions to combat the challenges faced by youth accessing higher education

**Research Questions**

- What is higher education and why is it imperative for every youth to access higher education?
- What are the challenges faced by youth in accessing higher education?
- What are the specific experiences about issues and problems faced by youth in accessing higher education in Bengaluru?
- Are the stakeholders able to create a conducive environment in ensuring higher education accessibility?
- What is the perception of youth accessing higher education in Bengaluru?
Issues, Challenges and Implications of Youth

The youth constitute a major human resource for development, often acting as key agents for social change, economic expansion, political leadership and innovation. Their creativity, imagination, leadership, vigor, ideals and vision are essential for the continuous development of society and nation.

Youth (16-30 years) constitute about 30% (1.86 crores) of the Karnataka State population. This huge chunk of population will be the dominant working force in the coming years and can act as a ‘demographic dividend’, provided the Government takes appropriate measures/steps for their growth such as training, capacity building, counseling, guiding, employment, nutrition and health. About 24% of youth are illiterate and a staggering 65% of illiterate youth are women. Over 54% of youth are out of a formal education system post SSLC and an even more alarming statistic is that about 87% are out of higher education as per gross enrolment ratio study.

This communicates the urgent need to broaden the base of learning, providing more opportunities for the youth to continue their learning and education. Around 63% of all youth and 76% of marginalized youth live in rural Karnataka. There is a need for a planned approach to reach this majority of the youth who are rural-based. About 49% of this youth are women. There is a great need for the power of young women to be acknowledged and channelized in empowering communities and economies of the State. Around 66% of Karnataka’s youth fall under 20 – 29 years of age where uncertainty of further education and anxiety of employment dominates their actions. This majority will continue being part of the working population of Karnataka and their socio-economic participation directly impacts the productivity of the State. Addressing their employability and building on their inherent skills will be vital for the growth of Karnataka as a State. NCRB statistics reveals that around 54% of the crimes committed are by youth and juveniles. An alarming trend is that Karnataka stands 6th nationally in suicides committed and around 35% of suicides are committed by youth- Karnataka Jnana Aayoga (Karnataka Knowledge Commission 2011). Experts are of the opinion that these challenges can averted through holistic education which can empower them to lead a competitive life.
Policy Recommendations

- Educational institutions of higher learning should meet minimum norms and standards and should improve retention rates and learner achievement by utilizing inclusive, engaging, technology-based teaching methods and curricula that foster the development of values, skills, and self-esteem among youth in Bangalore.

- Governments should emphasize on low cost or free, to reach a large number with least discrimination. They should be target driven and lack self-monitoring mechanism. In the process they pay least attention to process variables of teaching and learning or providing quality education to the concerned stakeholders.

- Education is generally classified as `Public Good’ and therefore excessive reliance on market and community initiatives will not bring about social efficiency and equity. In this context, governments need to work with other private players and create an enabling environment in addition to establishing appropriate monitoring mechanism to control quality and ensure transparency and accountability.

- A clear legal and regulatory framework specifying the roles of public, private and public-private partnership players, their relationships and their areas of cooperation should be articulated, published and periodically reinforced.

- Higher education governance structure and the accountability of each of the players should be made mandatory. Besides, constant monitoring and evaluating/assessing of all the higher educational institutions should be done by an independent agency.

- Provide greater opportunities of access to higher education with equity to all the eligible persons and in particular to the vulnerable sections. Expand access by supporting existing institutions, establishing new institutions, supporting State Governments and Non-Government Organizations/civil society to supplement public efforts aimed at removing regional or other imbalances that exist at present.
• Initiate policies and programmes for strengthening research and innovations and encourage institutions - Public or Private or PPP - to engage in stretching the frontiers of knowledge, skills, creativity, innovation, attitude formation etc.

• Best performing institutions should be incentivized both financially and non-financially. Promoting the quality of higher education by investing in infrastructure, faculty, academic reforms, improving governance and institutional restructuring should be the top priority of stakeholders.

Conclusion

Education is an emancipating force and it is also a democratizing force, cutting the barriers of caste and class and smoothening out inequalities imposed by birth and other circumstances. This statement is fully applicable in the present global environment. Now all the stakeholders are realizing that education is an important variable to transform a developing nation into a developed nation. Among various levels of education, higher education has pervasive and influential impact on all aspects of development. It also has the ability to empower and transform the youth with the necessary skills and competencies by achieving important personal and social goals and thereby contributing to socio-economic development. This study intends to examine the issues, challenges and implications faced by the youth while accessing higher education. It also aims at an introspection of the different critical issues such as social, economic, cultural, infrastructural, financial, moral and personal aspects that has impacted the stakeholders of higher education.

However, the government is actively involved in policy making and even setting a plan of action to carry out educational services to benefit the youth. In addition to providing universal elementary education, the government spells out the implementation to ensure quality, equity and access to higher education too. Besides, the role of other stakeholders such as private institutions, aided institutions, PPP models, NGO’s, parents, media, guardians and youth are also becoming significant. They are playing an important role in translating these objectives into reality by allocating resources and implementing the necessary schemes and programmes. The strengths of these stakeholders can open up opportunities for additional resources, improved service coverage and enhanced quality of services. It is imperative for these stakeholders to maximize the respective strengths and minimize the weaknesses in order to optimize the opportunities and combat the challenges.