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***Higher Education in India: New Perceptions and Perspectives* by Prin. Dr.
H.V. Deshpande**

Title: *Higher Education in India: New Perceptions and Perspectives*

Author: Prin. Dr. H.V. Deshpande

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Reviewed by:

Vijay Thange

Associate Professor,

K. J. Somaiya College, Kopergaon.

Higher Education in India: New Perceptions and Perspectives is useful for all those who are working in the field of higher education (HE) and for all the stakeholders of higher education institutions (HEIs). It discusses the philosophy, the legacy, the crisis in HE and the solutions to overcome the problems of HE. It deeply analyses the reports of all the commissions and committees appointed hitherto to form HE policy and to bring about reforms in the system in the context of globalization. The book provides a comprehensive review of NAAC efforts to enhance the quality of HEIs in India. The book is highly informative in its content, lucid in its style and it articulates a comprehensive statement with clear ‘perceptions’ and ‘perspectives’ on HE scenario in India today. It is an extensive critique of Indian HE in the context of national development and global knowledge society.

Dr. H.V. Deshpande is a renowned Indian educationist, former principal, NAAC assessor and office bearer of many academic, cultural and literary bodies. He has many books to his credit on varied subjects ranging from literary criticism to research and literature to NAAC assessment; he is an outstanding teacher and an exceptional author. The author is involved in the system of Higher Education (hereafter HE) for almost half a century and contemplating over the policies, crisis, complexities, verities, ambiguities and anxieties involved in the system of HE. Dr. Deshpande’s book *Research in Literature and Language: Philosophy Areas and Methodology* (2007) has clearly accentuated the need of Indo-centric perspective on higher education and the importance of research. Both the aspects have been extensively discussed in the recently released **National Education Policy-2020**. It shows the vision and acumen of the author.

The book, *Higher Education in India*, is divided into five parts with twenty-eight thought-provoking articles in all. The author has critically analysed the philosophy, history and significance of HE in India. The book includes author's articles, lectures, speeches, keynote addresses and radio talks on HE system. However, the greater part of the book includes author's specially written comprehensive and contemplative chapters in new perspective on the contemporary HE in India.

The first part of the book is entitled as 'Philosophical Contemplations' which includes eight chapters. In this part the author has thoughtfully written about the philosophy of vision, mission and objectives of Higher Education Institutions (hereafter HEIs). In NAAC'S assessment framework vision, mission and objectives of HEIs need to be clearly defined and thus these three important things should go hand in hand with the academic programs and courses, curriculum designing and its implementation. The curricular, co-curricular and extra-curricular activities must be carried out in consonance with the vision, mission and objectives of any HEI. Further, the author talks about the concept of quality in higher education in which he takes the review of the concept of quality and underlines the dire need of value education, spiritual and ethical aspects in HE which are now also reflected in NEP-2020. The author comments, "Education devoid of human values is disastrous." The twenty first century has underlined the quality and excellence in HE all over the world and hence Indian higher education has to compete with the world-class universities of the western world. The author criticizes the mediocrity of HE in India on the one hand and on the other hand appreciates NAAC'S efforts to uplift the quality of higher education in India. The role of information technology has gained unprecedented significance today in the field of education and hence the author talks about it and co-relates it with HE development. In the covid-19 pandemic the importance of information communication technology has gained momentum but the author aptly comments the "the technology is a means to an end; it is not an end in itself." The concept of integral education of Dr. Karan Singh has been felicitously expounded by the author with an emphasis on physical growth, intellectual growth, social growth and spiritual growth. The relation between the teacher and the taught; the significance of library in HE the ancient Indian universities have also been thrown light upon by the author.

The second part of the book deals with the legacy of higher education in India in which the author has taken a survey of HE in India and the assessing bodies of HE in India

like NAAC, NBA and NIRF. According to the author, the Vedic period system of education of the Ashram and Gurukulas had produced great scholars and scientists like the mathematician Panini, the astronomer Aryabhata, Varamihara and Bhaskara, the physicians Dhanvantari and Charaka and the surgeon Sushruta. The great Indian HE institutions like Takshashila, Nalanda, Vallabhi and Vikramshila had attracted students from far of places like Nepal, Tibet, China, Korea and Magnolia between the first and eighth century AD. The book extensively talks about HE in the colonial as well as post-independence period of India. The beginning of HE in India, its early tribulations, various commissions appointed by the government of India, the establishment of university grants commission and the establishment of various statutory autonomous bodies like AICET, NCTE, MCI, etc. have been elaborated with comments objectively by the author. One of the most significant developments in the HE in India was the establishment of National Knowledge Commission headed by Dr. Sam Pitroda. The reports submitted by Pitroda in 2005 and 2006 clearly recommended an independent regulatory body for HE in India and winding up of AICTE and other similar institutions. He also suggested modifying and limiting the role of the UGC. This book is a must read for everyone who is working in HE in India and abroad. Further the book talks about the origin of Gandhi's concept of *Nai Talim* of 1937 and Vinoba Bhave's views about *Nai Talim*. The establishment of National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) is one of the most significant milestones in the system of HE in India. The very beginning of NAAC and its crucial role in uplifting the quality of HEIs in India has been critically discussed further. National Board of Accreditation (NBA) had also played significant role in the evaluation of technical institutions since 1994 in India. Another initiative by the HRD (Human Resource Development) Ministry in setting up of a methodology to rank institutions of HE across the nation has been discussed extensively by the author.

The third part of the book is devoted to the critical analysis of HE in India in present time under the title 'The Ailment.' This part talks about the current crisis in Indian higher education in which the author contemplates the grim situation of HE, unemployability of the graduates and the politicization of HE in India. The author comments "Surprisingly, those who exploit the HE system to their advantage are the severe critics of the system." (p.103). The author also critically comments on the status of India in world university ranking of January, 2000 in which there isn't any university in top 500 universities of the world and there are only 9 universities in top 1000 universities of the world. The U.S.A, China,

Germany are far ahead of India in top ranking of the universities as well as in the number of patents filed by the nations. Further, student's participation in the quality enhancement of HE has been discussed in the book which will be helpful to the HEIs in conducting the student satisfaction survey in NAAC's assessment process. One of the most important aspects of HE is teaching, learning and evaluation strategies which has been thoroughly discussed in part III, chapter 3 of the book. The author has given some practical tips to HEIs for the betterments in teaching, learning and evaluation and some best practices also have been discussed. The author has aptly pointed out that affiliating system of HE is one of the causes of mediocrity in quality of HEIs in India. The National Education Policy-2020 also clearly talks about giving full stop to affiliation system and giving autonomy to the institutes. The book underlines the importance of curriculum design in HE system in the context of autonomy to be given to HEs. One of the interesting aspects of the book is that it has repeatedly highlighted the significance of research in higher education and it extensively talks about Indo-centric approaches to literary criticism in particular and research in general. The author keenly aspires for 'Modern Indian School of Literary Criticism' and appeals young scholars and researchers to come forward for building and developing this approach.

The part four of the book is entitled as 'The Symphony' and deals with some of the most important backbones of higher education i.e. teachers, students, parents, college managements, employers, patrons, alumni, donors and society at large. It also highlights the role of IQAC (Internal Quality Assurance Cell) in the development of any HEI. The chapter deeply contemplates the action plan for higher professional education institutes and focuses on '*Atmanirbhar Bharat*' through innovative ideas, skill-based education and knowledge management. One of the most striking features of this book is its deep insights given on NAAC'S new assessment framework. It talks about the administration in HEIs at various levels and suggests some remedies for its effective functioning. The book gives ideas of various audits to be conducted in HEIs and throws significant light on the online courses. This part underlines the importance of the role of language teachers in HEIs. The author believes that the canons of 'Modern Indian School of Literary Criticism' will help the 'parrots' in the departments of English in Indian universities to come out of the colonial 'western cultural and literary imperialism'.

The last and fifth part of the book is entitled as 'New Horizons' which includes critical analysis of National Education policy-2020. It questions the bureaucratization of

higher education system in India. The National Education Commission itself is full of bureaucrat and ministers. There should have been more renowned, apolitical educationists and less number of bureaucrats. Even it (NEP-2020) is encroaching upon the managements of HEIs through a Board of Governance (BoG) in which 1/3 members will be appointed by the government as government representatives. The present book not only criticizes the NEP-2020 but also appreciates some of its recommendations like National Research Foundation. This part takes a review of the National Knowledge Commission (NKC) established in 2006 and chaired by Dr. Sam Pitroda wherein he critically commented that the mediocrity of research quality had affected the number of patents filed by India. The writer cites Dr. J. P. Naik's answer to the question why his report of Kothari Commission was a failure; he answered, "Our recommendations were ignored and the report was defeated by the bureaucracy and the teachers in the HE system." This, says the author, should not happen again. The book repeatedly highlights the importance of research and the need for National Research Foundation (NRF); it has also been articulated in NEP-2020 and in the budget speech of the Finance Minister of India on 5th July 2019. In the concluding chapters, the author earnestly argues that like ISRO, we must bring NAAC, NITI Ayog, MHRD, industry, academia, NRF and the top HEIs together and that all these institutes must sit and think together for achieving specific targets and sketching some time bound programs.

The author appreciates the government's initiative of establishing 'National Police University' as articulated in the budgetary speech of the Finance Minister of India in February, 2020. It will certainly bring in some reforms in Indian Penal Code with necessary cooperation from home and law ministries and our judicial system. While the author highly appreciates NRF in NEP 2020, he discusses the report of the Kasturirangan Committee in detail which has made some impracticable recommendations as well as the bureaucratization of HE system. The author honestly expects that there should be sufficient deliberations over NEP-2020 in the parliament in order to ensure the 'collective wisdom' for a stable HE policy for India.

Finally, in the epilogue, the author wishes that every ministry in the government should carry out their SWOC (strength, weakness, opportunities and challenges) analysis independently. This act will definitely help for the better functioning of the government. The author appeals to all that we must rise above petty party politics and come together for the better future of India. He says that all party leaders should come together for having

consensus on National Education Policy-2020 and cites an example of the scientists of America, Canada, Japan and China. These scientists have come together, in spite of their nation's differences, in the Indian Institute of Astrophysics, Bengaluru, to make the most powerful telescope of the world, then why can't Indian political leaders come together to form the new HE policy to make India a superpower? The author honestly longs for a collective decision making over the implementation of the new HE policy including the renowned educationists, the concerned parliamentary committee chair-persons, leaders of different political parties, bureaucrats and ministers. Then only the National Education Policy-2020 will be accepted by all. He wishes that the renowned educationists, scientists and academicians should be taken into consultation in decision making procedure and also in the implementation of the HE policy. The book ends on a positive note for our bright future.

The book, *Higher Education in India: New Perceptions and Perspectives*, by Dr. H.V. Deshpande (Notion Press, Chennai) can be availed at support@notionpress.com