AN ONLINE SURVEY OF THE PROBLEMS BEING FACED BY STUDENTS AND TEACHERS IN HIGHER EDUCATION WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO JAMMU REGION

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In the present paper results from an online survey have been reported. The study was conducted to identify the problems being faced by the teachers and students working/enrolled in institutions of higher education in Jammu region. The survey involved a sample of 350 students and 50 teachers (total 400), selected randomly from a population of 4000 community members both students and teachers who were enrolled as members of a social media platform Educational Community. For the purpose of conducting survey, two questionnaires, one meant for students and the other for teachers were constructed and uploaded on Survey Monkey website for administration. The participants were free to respond through the use of desktop computers, laptops, tablet/iPads, smart phones etc. The responses were later analysed. Students and teachers were able to identify different problems they were facing while receiving/imparting education in higher education institutions. These were ranked in order of magnitude. The main problems in case of students were lengthy courses/curriculum for studying, long distance between institution and residence, inability to express ideas, less or no financial-aid/scholarships, lack of communication skills, financial problems in the family, etc. Problems reported by teachers were regarding the salary, workload, job insecurity etc. The results highlight the need to conduct such surveys periodically so that the problems faced by the major stakeholders in higher education can be identified and solutions provided to raise the quality of higher education in different regions.

KEYWORDS: Online Survey, Higher Education, Educational Community

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INTRODUCTION

Higher education provides people with an opportunity to develop critical, social, economic, cultural, moral and spiritual faculties. It contributes to national development through dissemination of specialized knowledge and skills. In the context of unprecedented explosion in knowledge, higher education today should be dynamic enough to satisfy the changing needs and aspirations of the students and teachers. Despite large scale expansion of higher education sector in India, its quality remains questionable. No higher education institution in India stands in top 200 list at global level. Not only is the system of higher education churning out youth with poor competencies, capabilities and employability, the capacity of the teachers to inspire students and create high caliber intellectual property is quite below the international standards. Several other factors have also been identified by experts in recent years for the poor quality of higher education in India. Restricting our attention to the State of Jammu and Kashmir, out of 277 Institutions of higher education (269 colleges and 8 universities) only 52 (50 colleges and 2 universities) stand accredited till date (NAAC, 2016). One of the major reasons of poor quality could be that the higher educational system is not geared towards alleviating the difficulties faced by the major stakeholders i.e. learners and teachers. Very few research studies are available on the subject with respect to Jammu region in J&K State.

The findings presented in the present paper form a part of the report of a major research project funded by the UGC entitled "Education Facebook: A Community Network for Stakeholders" under the supervision of main author (Gupta, 2015). In the study, an attempt was made to explore the potential of social media in higher education towards quality improvement in terms of improving engagement levels, awareness and use of social media among major stakeholders i.e. students and teachers in Jammu region of J&K state. For this purpose, an online community of 4000 learners and teachers (both male and female) enrolled / teaching in higher educational institutions of Jammu region was created. They were included as members of an online social network entitled educational community which enabled them to remain connected on a 24 x 7 basis and share their views, feelings, comments, photos, videos etc. on educational, social, personal and allied matters. As a part of the study, an online survey was also conducted to identify the problems being faced by the teachers and students working/enrolled in institutions of higher education on a representative sample.

METHODOLOGY

Survey method of research was used in the conduct of this study. The online

survey was based on 10 percent of the total sample. A sample of 350 students and 50 teachers (total 400) was selected randomly from the community members of Educational Community numbering 4000.

TOOLS AND DATA ANALYSIS

For identifying students' problems, a tool entitled 'Problems/Challenges Faced by the Students' was developed. This tool contained 27 items which sought information related to the intensity or severity of a particular problem being felt in terms of three response categories namely 'strongly felt', 'somewhat felt' and 'not felt'. A similar tool consisting of 50 items to identify the problems of teachers imparting higher education was developed.

All the items in the online forms of Students' and Teachers' questionnaires were uploaded on Survey Monkey TM website for administration. All participants were asked to participate in the survey through their Facebook log.in, email accounts, miersocial.in and a link was also made available for this purpose on college website www.miercollege.in. Participants were also allowed the use of computer lab of the college for data collection. Community members were free to choose any alternative to participate in the survey. They filled the questionnaire through desktop computers, laptops, tablet/iPads, smart phones etc.

The data was downloaded and subjected to analysis. Due to the nature of the study, descriptive techniques were used. The findings were presented in the form of tables and interpreted accordingly.

A) FINDINGS

Problems Being Faced by the Students Enrolled in Institutions of Higher Education

The problems being faced by students enrolled in higher education as perceived by them have been given in Table 'A' given in the Appendix in which the frequencies and percentages showing the magnitude of problems felt are also given.

It can be seen from the responses given by the students that all the problems happen to be real ones and the student community is perceptive and alive to the same. If the problems are seen in the perspective of their magnitude and ranked accordingly, the top twelve problems being faced by the students in the institutions of higher education in Jammu region can be identified. These have been given in Table 1.

Table 1

Top Twelve Problems Being Faced by Students Enrolled in Institutions of Higher Education.

Rank	Problem	Felt N (%)
1.	Lengthy courses/curriculum for studying	216 (61.7)
2.	Long distance between institution and residence	183 (52.3)
3.	Inability to express ideas or difficulties	172 (49.1)
4.	Less or no Financial-aid/Scholarships	167 (47.7)
5.	Lack of communication skills	156 (44.4)
6.	Financial problems in the family	153 (43.7)
7.	Health problem	146 (41.7)
8.	Lack of recreational facilities in the institution (like canteen, common rooms, sports room etc.)	142 (40.6)
9.	Lack of group or individual guidance and counselling and placement services	136 (38.9)
10.	Non availability of transport	121 (34.6)
11.	Preferred course/subject of my choice not available	120 (34.3)
12.	Family problems	118 (33.7)

A) Problems Being Faced by Faculty Members/Teachers

Table 2

Top Twelve Problems/Challenges Being Felt by Teachers Imparting Education at Higher Education Institutions.

Rank	Statement	Acutely Felt N (%)
1.	No awards/ rewards for good performance	42 (84%)
2.	Uneven workload at the institutions	40 (80%)
3.	No time to do research work	40 (80%)
4.	Maintaining balance between work and life situations	33 (66%)
5.	Lack of research skills	33 (66%)
6.	Salaries not as per the norms	32 (64%)
7.	Job insecurity	30 (60%)
8.	Inability to express ideas or difficulties	28 (56%)
9.	Inadequate personal space at work place	28 (56%)
10.	Non cooperative/indifferent attitude of colleagues	28 (56%)
11.	Fewer opportunities for promotion	28 (56%)
12.	Lack of Transport facility	25 (50%)

The problems as perceived by teachers in the colleges and institutions of higher education have been given in Table 'B' given in the Appendix in which the frequencies showing the magnitude of problems felt are also given.

It can be seen from the responses that the problems are real and teachers' community is perceptive and alive to the same. If the problems are seen in the perspective of their magnitude of being experienced, the top twelve problems being faced by the teachers in the institutions of higher education can be identified. These have been given in Table 2.

IMPLICATIONS

The following implications can be delineated from the major results presented in Tables 1 and 2.

A) For Students

Curricula for various courses being offered in institutions of higher education need to be revised.

1. Hostel facilities should be provided for the benefit of more students receiving higher education.
2. Opportunities for students for expressing their ideas should be created at institutional level.
3. There should be more provisions of funds for financially helping students receiving higher education.
4. Emphasis should be given on improving the communication skills of students receiving higher education.
5. There should be provision of more recreational facilities in the institutions of higher education (like canteen, common room, sports facilities etc.).
6. There should be arrangements for providing group or individual guidance/ counselling to the students receiving higher education in their institutions.
7. Transport facilities for students receiving higher education should be made available for larger number of students.
8. Provisions for teaching a variety of subjects in the institutions of higher education should be made to enable students to have a wider choice while selecting subjects.
9. Some mechanisms need to be devised to look after the health and family issues being faced by the students receiving higher education. This would help them to put in best efforts towards the attainment of their educational goals.

B) For Teachers

1. Deserving teachers working in higher education institutions should be suitably recognized and awarded for good performance;

2. There should be equal distribution of work among teachers teaching in higher education institutions;

3. Teachers working in higher education institutions should be given time to do research work. Further, liberal grant/resources should be released for carrying out research work. Also, research skills of teachers should be polished by providing them requisite training.

4. Workshops should be organized for teachers to improve their quality of work life and strike balance between the work and life situations;

5. Salaries of teachers, especially in private sector, should be equated with those in government sector, to provide stability of staff in the private institutions.

6. Rules for availing study leaves for higher education need to be liberalized;

7. Teachers working in higher education institutions should be provided adequate job security and avenues of promotion;

8. Opportunities for teachers for expressing their ideas should be created/provided.

9. Adequate space at work place should be made available to teachers working in higher education institutions;

10. Transport and residential facilities should be improved for the benefit of the teachers working in higher education institutions;

On the basis of the obtained results, it would be worthwhile for the policy planners, institutional authorities and managements to take up measures to redress the problems being faced by the students and teachers. Also, it would be worthwhile to conduct such surveys as a part of regular monitoring to identify the problems being faced by members of students and teaching community in higher education institutions at district levels. Such steps would go a long way in ensuring better learner and teacher satisfaction and help in attaining educational objectives, besides improving the quality of higher education in Jammu region.

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