ABSTRACT

Higher education is essential for survival and crucial to nation building. Since the 1991 economic reform, India seems to have embarked on a journey of virtually commercializing higher education. On one hand, the state spending on higher education is not increasing enough; on the other it is encouraging private investment and exploring new market-oriented models of public-private partnership. In addition, the government is playing an instrumental role in legalizing massive growth of foreign education providers in India.

Descriptive survey research was conducted on a purposively drawn sample of 460 students, 250 teaching faculty, 200 parents of students and 30 head of institutions/departments in various higher education institutions in NCR Delhi. Educationists and academicians were interviewed to seek their perception on commercialization of higher education in India. Data was collected through self-designed questionnaires and an interview schedule. A mixed model approach of qualitative as well as quantitative analysis was employed by percentage and content analysis of responses of the stakeholders and document analysis of plans and policies on higher education was also done.

The study revealed that higher education in India is getting commercialized through inadequate public financing, extensive deregulation and privatization. Many private institutions operate on principles of profiteering and cost curtailment, and seldom deliver quality education. There is a need to establish more public higher education institutions in the country. Also, engaging the corporate sector and exploring private-public partnership in higher education needs a serious thought and informed debate before implementation.