Abstract

Academic research is of paramount importance in the realm of higher education as good research promotes great teaching and learning experiences. Research in teaching offers valuable inputs into the practices and the methodologies with which theories defined in the textbooks are derived, thus, encouraging the students to gain knowledge in ways that exams and assignments cannot impart. The purpose of the current research is therefore, to explore the recent scope, prospects and challenges of academic research in higher education of India. To address the study objectives, a quantitative questionnaire is prepared and distributed among 100 lecturers appointed in select higher education institutions in India. The study provides worthy inferences pertaining to the impact of academic research on the quality of teaching, learning capabilities, teaching methods and curriculum designs in higher education. The evidences obtained indicate that academic research aids in the evolution and growth of Indian higher education by affecting job satisfaction levels of teachers, and advancing teaching methodologies and means followed in institutions. It further assists the teachers in comprehending the competency set of students, and the attention required by them for better academic results. The inferences drawn in the study are eminently useful for the academicians exploring the current research domain.

Keywords: Academic research, higher education, quality of teaching, teaching methodologies, learning capabilities.

1. Introduction

Academic research in higher education is of fundamental importance to our society. Society benefits from quality, ethical research, and should rally to support and defend it. Academic research in higher education plays an essential role in society by creating new knowledge, transmitting it to students and fostering innovation [11]. Research-based education has lately received increasing interest both among researchers in higher education and in public discussion. Research in education is necessary in order to provide a basis for educational planning. It is one of the main fields that should be embedded in higher education curriculum [11]. During the last century, knowledge has been a key factor in economic development, and societies that are able to produce, select, adapt, and commercialize knowledge have better chances of achieving sustained growth and better quality of life. Ryan Craig [13] points out that of the three inter-related mechanisms- division of labor, capital accumulation, and technological innovation involved in economic growth, technological innovation is the most fundamental it is self-perpetuating and pushes economic growth on a continuous basis. Each new innovation triggers further innovation, in a kind of chain reaction that fuels long-term economic growth. Thus, in several science-based, technologically advanced economies, economic growth has continued for several decades without running out of dynamism, or even slowing down. This, therefore, underscores the need for research, particularly scientific research in modern economy. Higher education plays an important role in supporting a nation’s R & D efforts. It provides skilled human resources for the R & D system. It is often the lead player in public research arena.
Academic research through universities forms an important component of the technological base of a country [5].

India’s education system, as one of the world’s largest is facing an unprecedented transformation in the coming decade. This transformation is being driven by economic and demographic changes. It has been postulated by Hans N. Weiler [6] that by 2020, India will be the world’s third largest economy, with a correspondingly rapid growth in the size of its middle classes. Since currently, over 50% of India’s population is under 25 years old; by 2020 India will outpace China as the country with the largest tertiary-age population. In order to achieve this, the three central pillars of the government’s plans for education reflect these realities: expansion, equity and excellence in higher education. Over the next five years, every aspect of higher education is being reorganized and remodeled: funding, leadership and management, quality assurance, accountability, relationships with industry, international collaboration and the way academic research in higher education is being conducted.

2. Aims and Objectives

2.1. Aims

The aim of this research is to study and investigate the potential contribution of academic research in higher education. The study will further highlight the prospects and challenges that inform the academic research in higher education in the Indian Context.

2.2. Objectives

- To investigate the effects of academic research in the arena of higher education.
- To explore the recent scope and potential of academic research in the domain of higher education in India.
- To study the hindrances and challenges that infests the domain of academic research in higher education in India.
- To evaluate the degree of evolution and growth in higher education resulting from rigorous academic research.

3. Literature Review

In an attempt to relate the growth of higher education in India, Agarwal [5] highlights the changing funding pattern and emphasizes the need for greater adaptability in the higher education system so that it continues to provide the needed skills and trained workforce to the economy as it integrates with the world economy. He points out that policy measures in higher education are required to promote, sustain, and enhance world-class research. However the weaknesses in the prevailing regulatory and quality assurance environment, needs to be considered in order to provide a roadmap for reforms towards improved accountability of the higher education. There is, indeed, a multitude of interconnected problems that India faces in its higher education system. Higher education in India suffers from several systemic deficiencies. As a result, it continues to provide graduates that are unemployable despite emerging shortages of skilled manpower in an increasing number of sectors. The standards of academic research are low and declining. Some of the problems of the Indian higher education, such as – the unwieldy affiliating system, inflexible academic structure, uneven capacity across various subjects, eroding autonomy of academic institutions, and the low level of public funding are well known [7]. A fundamental requirement for carrying out academic research is the “prevalence of research environment” in the vicinities of the school of higher studies, which would emerge adequately only when provided with the efficient management of these schools of higher studies. Research performance incorporates of three dimensions: (a) Research projects, (b) Research guidance leading to the degree of Ph.D. and (c) Research publications (in refereed journals and conferences). It is the first two (research projects and research guidance) which lead to the generation of the third (research publications). Today, academic research in the domain of higher education primarily focuses on “generating graduates” rather than on generating research, which is informed by reasons like short-run benefit-cost ratio of the former relative to the promotion of the latter. This has resulted in the
lessening of quality of the academic research in higher education [8]. Many other concerns relating to
the dysfunctional regulatory environment of higher education is, accreditation system that has low
coverage and no consequences, absence of incentives for performing well, and the unjust public
funding policies are not well recognized. Higher education is critical for the construction of knowledge
economies [9]. India currently produces a solid core of knowledge workers in Higher education,
however the country needs to do more to create a larger cadre of educated and agile workers who can
adapt and use knowledge, certain measures are also needed to enhance the quality and relevance of
higher education so that the education system is more demand driven quality conscious, and forward
looking, especially to retain highly qualified people and meet the new and emerging needs of the
economy [10]. In order to meet the massive demand for higher education, India requires attracting
significant private investment in terms of both philanthropy and individual fees; even with a major
reshuffling of spending priorities in the public sector, the overall investment needed is likely to exceed
significantly whatever public funds will be available in the foreseeable future [11]. Besides its
quantitative limitations and qualitative deficits, Indian higher education is also considered to be sub-
optimally organized and significantly overregulated, limiting initiatives for change and stifling or
misdirecting private efforts. In its assessment of the existing regulatory arrangements, the National
Knowledge Commission concluded: “In sum, the existing regulatory framework constrains the supply
of good institutions, excessively regulates existing institutions in the wrong places, and is not
conducive to innovation or creativity in higher education”[12]. Such disruptions in higher education
and research can have important and devastating consequences.

4. Research Methodology

The study follows a positivism philosophy, incorporating quantitative approach. Quantitative
analysis will aim to identify the impact of research on the quality of teaching and student learning by
distributing a survey adopting 5-point Likert Scale among 100 lecturers of select higher education
institutes in India. The challenges faced for academic research will be analyzed by this questionnaire.
Quantitative analysis is carried out via SPSS software, where descriptive statistics and one-sample test
are performed.

5. Testing of Hypotheses

5.1. Hypothesis 1

H10: Academic research in higher education does not improve teaching quality of the professionals.

H1A: Academic research in higher education improves teaching quality of the professionals

In order to test hypothesis 1, a one sample T test was applied by using SPSS.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Test Value = 3</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Sig. (2-tailed)</th>
<th>Mean Difference</th>
<th>95% Confidence Interval of the Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Opinions on improving the teaching quality through academic research in higher education</td>
<td>20.009</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.83824</td>
<td>.7551</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The T value corresponding to the mean difference between the teaching quality of the professionals
and a fixed mean value of 3 was 20.009 and its corresponding p value is 0.000<0.05. Since the p value
is less than 0.05, we can conclude that Academic research in higher education improves teaching
quality of the professionals. Hence we can accept the alternate hypothesis and reject the null hypothesis.

5.2. Hypothesis 2

H20: Academic research does not facilitate advanced teaching methods in higher education.
H2A: Academic research facilitates advanced teaching methods in higher education

In order to test hypothesis 2, a one sample T test was applied by using SPSS.

Table 2. One-sample test for hypothesis 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>T</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Sig. (2-tailed)</th>
<th>Mean Difference</th>
<th>95% Confidence Interval of the Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Best practices of ensuring quality teaching in higher educational institutes</td>
<td>20.030</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.83578</td>
<td>.7530/.9186</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The T value corresponding to the mean difference between the advanced teaching method in higher education and a fixed mean value of 3 was 20.03 and its corresponding p value is 0.000<0.05. Since the p value is less than 0.05, we can conclude that Academic research facilitates advanced teaching methods in higher education. Hence we can accept the alternate hypothesis and reject the null hypothesis.

5.3. Hypothesis 3

H30: Academic research does not benefit in choosing the professional teachers for higher education.
H3A: Academic research benefits in choosing the professional teachers for higher education

In order to test hypothesis 3, a one sample T test was applied by using SPSS.

Table 3. One-sample test for hypothesis 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>T</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Sig. (2-tailed)</th>
<th>Mean Difference</th>
<th>95% Confidence Interval of the Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Experience on the benefits of performing research in education</td>
<td>18.362</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.73529</td>
<td>.6559/.8147</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The T value corresponding to the mean difference between the benefits in choosing the professional teachers for higher education and a fixed mean value of 3 was 18.362 and its corresponding p value is 0.000<0.05. Since the p value is less than 0.05, we can conclude that Academic research benefits in choosing the professional teachers for higher education. Hence we can accept the alternate hypothesis and reject the null hypothesis.

5.4. Hypothesis 4

H40: Academic research does not make an impact on the course designs of the higher education.
H4A: Academic research makes an impact on the course designs of the higher education

In order to test hypothesis 4, a one sample T test was applied by using SPSS.
Table 4. One-sample test for hypothesis 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Test Value = 3</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>Df</th>
<th>Sig. (2-tailed)</th>
<th>Mean Difference</th>
<th>95% Confidence Interval of the Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>19.257</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.81863</td>
<td>.7343 – .9030</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Different types of educational researches that are required in higher education of India

The T value corresponding to the mean difference between the course designs of the higher education and a fixed mean value of 3 was 19.257 and its corresponding p value is 0.000<0.05. Since the p value is less than 0.05, we can conclude that Academic research makes an impact on the course designs of the higher education. Hence we can accept the alternate hypothesis and reject the null hypothesis.

5.5. Hypothesis 5

H50: Academic research does not influence the students to learn better by concentrating deep into the particular subject.
H5A: Academic research influences the students to learn better by concentrating deep into the particular subject

In order to test hypothesis 5, a one sample T test was applied by using SPSS.

Table 5. One-sample test for hypothesis 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Test Value = 3</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Sig. (2-tailed)</th>
<th>Mean Difference</th>
<th>95% Confidence Interval of the Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>24.556</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.93873</td>
<td>.8629 – 1.0146</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The T value corresponding to the mean difference between concentrating deep into the particular subject and a fixed mean value of 3 was 24.556 and its corresponding p value is 0.000<0.05. Since the p value is less than 0.05, we can conclude that Academic research influences the students to learn better by concentrating deep into the particular subject. Hence we can accept the alternate hypothesis and reject the null hypothesis.

6. Discussion

The discussion section of the study elaborately presents the entire study. The central focus of the study was to analyze the impact of academic research in the arena of higher education and to explore the recent scope and potential of academic research in the domain. The study further aimed to explore the hindrances and challenges that affect the domain of higher education in India and to evaluate the degree of evolution and growth in higher education resulting from the rigorous academic research. Further, the study proposed five hypotheses, which were intrinsically analyzed by conducting a quantitative analysis. Efficient results were inferred with the aid of a questionnaire developed through a 5 point Likert scale. The primary data for analyzing the potential contribution of academic research in higher education was collected from 100 teachers of selected higher education institutes in India.
According to the literature review, Batra [8] focuses on the fundamental need for carrying out academic research so as to improve the teaching quality of the professionals. As per the quantitative analysis, it is observed that 52% of the respondents agreed that research in the field of higher education aids in improving as well adapting the innovative techniques as per the modern demands, which will inherently aid in improving the teaching quality of the professionals. A majority of 67.6% of the respondents agreed that as a result of the research work, the teachers could adapt to the policies as per the individual needs of the own pupils. About 68.6% of the respondents agreed that the research helps the teachers to learn new lessons. A 66.7% of the respondents agreed that the research could be conducted to find out various ways through which the teachers can gain more information related to the study and 52.9% of the respondents agreed that the academic researchers could introduce teamwork in between the teachers to discuss the goal setting or the course plans, which can inherently contribute towards improving the teaching quality. It is, therefore, concluded that academic research in higher education aids in improving the teaching quality of the professionals.

As asserted by Varghese [10], academic research has the ability to improve the domain of higher education in India by creating a larger cadre of educated and agile workers who can adapt and use knowledge and meet the new and emerging needs of the economy. A majority of 52.0% of the respondents agreed that research would help in understanding the subjects or principles followed by the teachers to teach the students. And 51.0% of the respondents agreed that research would help in identifying the students who are lacking behind and need special attention by the teachers. 53.9% of the respondents agreed that, based on research, new policies or rules could be enacted in a particular school or college for a better education. About 52.0% of the respondents agreed that research helps in improving and adapting the innovative techniques as per the modern demands. A majority of 67.6% of the respondents agreed that as a result of the research work, the teachers could adapt to the policies as per the individual needs of the own pupils. It can be concluded that academic research has inherent potential in developing the scope of higher education in India.

According to Soni [12], it was stated that the existing regulatory framework constrains the supply of good institutions, excessively regulates existing institutions in the wrong places, and is not conducive to innovation or creativity in higher education which can cause disruptions in the academic research in higher education in India. About 68.6% of the respondents agreed that the teachers have a responsibility to develop active citizens, but, following the ideological route might restrict their choices. A majority of 64.7% of the respondents agreed that, by learning new theories or experiences, there is a risk of being outdated and not for looking forward. Another 59.8% of the respondents agreed that the new theories could not be operated in isolation but, it needs to be tested and adapted to suit the environment. 53.9% of the respondents agreed that the teachers and the students could face issues in learning new ways of behaving or other innovative things due to the research. Therefore, it can be asserted from the observation that the domain of academic research in higher education in India indeed faces various challenges.

According to Agarwal [5], the adaption of academic research can positively influence the field of higher education in India. A majority of 67.6% of the respondents agreed that As a result of the research work, the teachers could adapt to the policies as per the individual needs of the own pupils. And another 68.6% of the respondents agreed that the academic research helps the teachers to learn new lessons. About declined amount of 22.5% of the respondents expressed that the impact of the academic research that students start to think on their own and about 65.7% of the respondents agreed that the research could come up with a result of introducing the pedagogical methods in teaching. About 52.9% of the respondents agreed that the academic researchers could introduce teamwork in between the teachers to discuss the goal setting or the course plans. About 66.7% of the respondents agreed that the research could be conducted to find out various ways through which the teachers can gain more information related to the study. A majority of 66.7% of the respondents agreed that the research work could ensure the support of the educational divisions or central university to enhance the education system. About 66.7% of the respondents agreed that class evaluation- a tool, brings changes
and identifies the best practices. 24.5% of the respondents expressed that it helps them modify their teaching patterns. Hence, it can be asserted that academic research plays a critical role in influencing the degree of evolution and growth of higher education in India.

7. Conclusion

Academic research is a fundamental element that aids in the evolution and growth of the higher education in India. The observations and the analysis pertaining to the study indicate that academic research makes substantial contributions towards the various aspects of higher education in India. Academic research in the area of higher education provides various information such as relations in between the job satisfaction of the teachers and the various factors affecting it, information regarding present events and situations in an institute, generates descriptions and explanations of the past situations or conditions in an institute, helps in understanding the subjects or principles followed by the teachers to teach the students, helps in identifying the students who are lacking behind and need special attention by the teachers, implementation of new policies that enhances the educational system etc. The current study explores the effect, the recent scope, the hindrances and challenges as well as the degree of evolution effectuated by research in the field of higher education in India. On employing the quantitative approach of distributing questionnaires among 100 teachers from selected institutions, it has been asserted that academic research positively contribute to the quality of higher education provided to students in India.

8. References

8.1. Journal Article


8.2. Books


8.3. Report

8.4. Online News and Articles

