

Devesh Kapur and Pratap Bhanu Mehta (Eds.), *Navigating the labyrinth Perspectives on India's Higher Education*, 2019, Orient Blackswan Private Limited, Hyderabad, pp. 273, Price not mentioned.

This book is a collection of essays on higher education in India. The first chapter is introductory and contributed by the editors. It contains a brief historical overview of higher education in India and its rapid expansion in recent year. It then passes on to four key challenges, i.e., quality, access, financing and internationalism. They point out that the book attempts to understand the complexity of the challenges before Indian higher education which is receiving increasing academic attention of late. This is all the more essential because there has been expansion and massification of higher education. For example, in 2011-14 alone, 2,467 new colleges were opened – nearly seven per day.

This is followed by an essay by Apoorvan and Jha who writes about Patna College and DAV College, Siwan. The two colleges are different from each other. DAV College is located in a mofussil town in Bihar while Patna College is situated in the state capital. The next essay by Sachi Hatakenaka deals with multidisciplinary research universities in India and draws lessons from international experience. The author seeks to "... provide a qualitative analysis of the Indian higher education system as a system, to explore what it might be missing, what the consequences could be, and what options there are for further development, based on insight gained through system-level comparisons with

other national systems" (p. 71). The situation in India is complex because of the long tradition of bright graduates going overseas to earn to earn Ph.D. On the one hand, it has contributed to the formation of invaluable human capital from which India can gain through repatriation in the future. On the other hand, it has generated a formidable challenge for domestic institutions to compete for the best brains for their Ph.D. programmes. He also says, "There is also a strong case for building genuine multidisciplinary universities in order to meet India's needs in knowledge creation and in education – with the requisite breadth of disciplinary coverage spanning basic sciences, social sciences, humanities to professional disciplines; for instance, including engineering and medicine" (p. 91).

Next, Manish Sabharwal and Srinivasa Kannan deal with vocationalising higher education. They point out that the community college movement started in India in 1995 with the establishment of Pondicherry University Community College in 1995, followed by Madras Community College in 1996. Indira Gandhi National Open University stimulated this movement. They add, "Company training is an essential aspect of vocational universities, since it paves the way for offering non-credit training programmes to employees of MSMEs through the optimal use of institutional resources" (p. 108). They also list the challenges facing work-related learning in India. Megha Agarwal discusses skill development in India from the supply side. She writes about the constraints, "Currently, only close to five per cent of the total Indian workforce has obtained any vocational skills through formal means, in comparison with 60-96 per cent in industrialized countries" (p. 132). She focuses on government initiatives in this respect as the private initiatives are at a nascent stage. As against this, Jeemol Unni and Sudipa Sarkar look at it from the demand side. They raise the question: Is there a demand for higher educated persons, graduates and above, or are we facing a situation of over education in employment? They address the issue innovatively in terms of changes in the nature of jobs and in occupations within knowledge-intensive industries. They conclude, "Finally, having a graduate degree had a greater impact overall on participation in the service industry compared to manufacturing. Senior managerial officials and professionals with graduate and above degrees had a higher chance of being employed in the knowledge intensive industry, mainly services" (pp. 177-78).

K.P. Krishnan discusses the financing of higher education. After a bird's eye view of the conditions in some countries, he concentrates on student loans as a financing option for higher education in India. He concludes, "But the high cost associated with higher education can be major deterrent to participation in higher education. This is particularly true for the economically disadvantaged, across religion, caste or gender lines" (p. 205). Devesh Kapur and Pratap Bhanu Mehta write about the litigation patterns and judicial trends in private higher education with respect to the Supreme Court. They find that a major development has been the rise of the regulatory arms of the state and private educational institutions as litigants, reflecting the changing roles of the state and the private sector in the

change, identifying interventions that the Supreme Court has undertaken in the field of higher education. They consider how judges bring to bear a certain vision of the state and education in their assessment of higher education disputes, and its implications for higher education.

The last essay by Pamkaj Chandra deals with governance in higher education. This has been a subject of concern right from the independence of the country. He raises three questions: (a) what is governance about in the context of higher education? (b) What are the elements of the governance system of higher education in India? (c) What is it about governance in academia that makes it vulnerable to both control and anarchy? He addresses them in a relatively general sense. His thinking is that the Indian academic institutions suffer from an ineffective state of governance. Many of the key governance processes that help to run and renew academic institutions are conspicuous by their absence. The reasons for it are many including bureaucratic and political interference. He says, "The university has to be virtually reconstructed if quality is to be restored" (p. 261).

Briefly stated, these are the contents of this book. The problems of higher education are many in India. They have been discussed here by different authors and solutions offered. They need to be seriously considered to improve the state of affairs. Thus, the book is a useful addition to the available literature on the subject.