

country have seen a decline in applicants starting last year, and a number of national and public institutions as well are suffering from a similar decline. With a decline in student population, universities are having difficulty meeting rising personnel costs without raising tuition. And raising the already high tuition costs discourages students from applying, especially in these times of continuing recession. This vicious circle is the biggest headache within higher education today.

Jesuit institutions of higher education in Japan are responding to the same challenges and developments in Japanese society, but also to added problems related to the effort to maintain a Catholic and specifically Jesuit identity. For instance, the average age of Jesuit faculty members teaching at Sophia University has been rising steadily, and this spring nine more Jesuit educators have reached the mandatory retirement age of 70. This leaves a total of 70 Jesuits teaching in the seven faculties of the university, with a student population of 10,500 undergraduates and 1,000 graduate students. As the number of teaching Jesuits slowly declines, the problem of preserving the Jesuit identity of the university becomes more and more challenging. A question of priorities becomes more pressing, as Jesuits connected with the university try to make decisions as to which faculties should receive special focus when considering replacements for the dwindling Jesuit manpower. In a related problem, up until now foreign languages and foreign literatures have been among the university's strongest areas, and ever since Sophia's founding in 1913, Jesuits of many different nationalities have been the native speakers and experts providing the backbone for these disciplines. Professors in these fields can certainly be found as replacements, but how to maintain a Jesuit presence is rapidly becoming a critical problem.

The question mentioned above about whether to emphasize a strong program of graduate research or undergraduate education is currently being discussed at Sophia University also. Traditionally, Sophia has provided a high level of graduate programs, with doctoral studies in 24 disciplines. Maintaining this tradition while at the same time continuing a solid undergraduate program that provides not only general and specialized education but a formation according to the ideals of Christian humanism is not a simple task. As Jesuit numbers decrease, it becomes more difficult.

One of the attractive features of Sophia University has traditionally been its low student-teacher ratio, which compares favorably with other Japanese universities. If the financial crisis mentioned above continues, it will become more and more difficult to preserve a ratio favorable to the students, without a considerable rise in tuition fees.

In order to continue as a specifically Catholic university, some have urged that Sophia should allow special admittance for students from Catholic high schools, but this

suggestion is rather controversial. Already a special recommendation system has been established with the four Jesuit high schools in Japan, and this system has not always met with the unanimous approval of all faculty members.

There is one area in which Sophia University, among all the national, public, or private universities in Japan, stands in the most advantageous position to meet the needs of the times as outlined by the National Council on Educational Reform. That is the area of internationalization. Sophia has in any given year, 750 non-Japanese students from more than 60 nationalities studying on its campuses, and 107 foreign teachers from 22 countries. Sophia students studying abroad on exchange programs usually number about 150 per year, and that number is growing. One campus of the university houses the Faculty of Comparative Culture, where all courses are taught in English for the benefit of foreign students not yet fluent in the Japanese language.

It is still too early to tell what concrete reforms will be put into effect to meet the current challenges facing Japanese higher education as we reach the end of the 20th century. We can hope, however, that Jesuit educators in Japan will continue to work together with their colleagues in the university community to read the signs of the times and come up with innovations that reflect the tradition of Jesuit education throughout the world.

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## SOME CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS IN INDIA'S HIGHER EDUCATION

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*The Challenge to Education* (1985), a document produced by the Ministry of Education of the Indian Government states that "the whole process of higher education has become warped, disoriented and dysfunctional, producing a number of unemployable young men and women." It may appear odd to quote this as an opening statement of an essay on India's higher education system, but there is no other objective way of introducing the subject. The statement and what follows refer to postsecondary college and university systems, and excludes nonuniversity and professional institutions of higher education. In India, higher education is faced with deteriorating conditions resulting from expansion and worsened by an affiliation system and shrinking resources. Lately, these and other issues, such as declining quality, inadequate facilities, and a mismatch between education and human power requirements, have become crucial themes in current social and political debate. However, this is nothing new—a number of edu-

cation commissions and committees appointed since the country became independent in 1947 have identified these maladies and made recommendations to revamp the system. The latest reform attempt is the New Education Policy of 1986 (modified by the Parliament in 1992), which repeated what the earlier commissions had stated. But the problems of India's higher education system seem to defy solutions. The system continues to remain entrenched in an outdated tradition established by the colonial rulers in the 19th and early part of the present century for a specific purpose suited to them. The system still remains at the periphery.

While examining the issues stated above, one is immediately struck with the phenomenal expansion. There are today 200 universities, 8,000 colleges, 5 million students, and 27,000 teachers in higher education. The figures are high and impressive, but the first casualty of the expansion phenomenon is the quality. The quality could not be maintained because of the absence of proper planning, adequate facilities, and above all clarity of purpose. It may be worthwhile to note that India needs more expansion in higher education because out of 800 million people in the country only 6 percent of the relevant age group study in colleges and universities. But any further expansion has to proceed differently.

Now, about the shrinking finances for higher education: in India, except for a couple of private universities, all universities are financed by the national or a state government. The colleges are also largely funded by government. The students pay a nominal fee that constitutes less than 10 percent of the budget of the institution. Thus, higher education is currently heavily subsidized. Faced with a severe resource crunch, the government and the University Grants Commission (UGC) are encouraging colleges and universities to generate their own funds and ultimately become self-reliant (a utopian idea.) Developments during the last two or three years indicate that the government is seriously considering privatizing higher education. According to a report, the prime minister is soon going to make an announcement launching a privately funded university in memory of the late prime minister, Rajiv Gandhi. The concept of privatizing higher education is being advocated in view of the changing economic policy of liberalization and globalization launched three years ago. The latest issue in the debate on financing higher education is that norms of funding are being revised and institutions may receive reduced grants. The academics and the educational administrators, on the other hand, have expressed a strong feeling that government must not abandon its responsibility of liberal funding of higher education. However, there is consensus in favor of upward revision of fee structures and the creation of a fund by the institutions through donations and other sources, for the development of the institutions.

Lately, the issues relating to the resource crunch and, in general, the funding of higher education in the Indian context have brought into focus a vital issue of university-industry interaction. At present, there is hardly any interaction between the two, except for the management faculties of half a dozen universities. As mentioned, changed economic policies have resulted in globalization and liberalization in trade and industry, resulting in the need for more trained human power and an increase in research and development. (India invests only one percent of what Japan devotes to research and development). Many multinationals and joint ventures have already launched projects that demand employment in a particular sector. University-industry interaction, therefore, has become a very important aspect of higher education. We must not miss the opportunity of such interaction.

Another recent development is the reiteration of the need for vocational education at the higher education level. There is a feeling that general undergraduate education in India imparts perfunctory knowledge of a few subjects, with the result that students neither develop employable skills nor become fit for self-employment. To enhance employability, in 1994-95 the UGC launched a scheme of vocationalization of first-degree education as recommended by the T. N. Dhar Committee (1993). Until now, formation of vocational **skills** has been a neglected area in India's higher education system. The present scheme offers a better opportunity for employment without undermining the existing undergraduate academic programs. (The policymakers have realized that any disruption in the existing structure is going to be resisted). It is hoped that the scheme of vocational education does not become another example of well-intentioned but badly managed and poorly implemented programs. The most important aspect of this program is the training of the students at the plant. This, so far, has been a weak link in the Indian system.

The university system in India is not in a central position, hence it is not able to give direction either to the society or to the government, rather it is at the receiving end. The latest proof of this is the formation of the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) at the initiative of the UGC, which is all the same an exciting development. Established in September 1994, the NAAC would function as an institution for grading institutions of higher education and their programs. It would help the institutions to realize their stated objectives, encourage self-evaluation, help improve teaching and research, and introduce other reforms. The establishment of the NMC is a laudable step toward quality assurance and would make the system more transparent and accountable. Let us hope it works.