

HIGHER EDUCATION DEVELOPMENT IN INDIA: AN OVERVIEW

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ABSTRACT

The Indian higher education system is one of the largest such systems in the World. It is estimated that during the X Five Year Plan period (2002-07), there will be a tremendous pressure of numbers on this system and a large number of additional students will be knocking at the doors of higher education institutions in the country. There are also new challenges of management and regulation being faced by these institutions, which require serious attention, both at the institutions in the public sector and also those in the private sector now growing at a fast pace. As a result, the old structures of management established in pre-independent India and working during most of the twentieth century are now required to undergo drastic changes. Besides, the demands of the society for equity and accommodation cannot be neglected any more. The Policy planning and evolving strategies for this task are somewhat new for the country. But, this is an opportunity which cannot be missed by India, as it offers interesting possibilities for strengthening of the nation's talent and resourcefulness. Privatisation is one of the main global trends in higher education. It is generally understood as the intensive development and expansion of private institutions, increased reliance of public institutions on private funding, and operation of the institutions in a business-like manner. Privatisation implies applying market principles to the functioning of public institutions of higher education. As the ownership and management of the institutions remain with the public authorities, the services provided by the institutions are priced. The price that is student fees levied may be equivalent to the full cost or full cost-plus-profit in some instances. The private sector implies the non - state sector in higher education. The institutions are owned and operated by private individuals or agencies. In most cases, this sector does not receive funding from the government and also it does not rely on the state funding for its growth and expansion, even though at times they receive partial public support in some countries. Private higher education institutions can be universities or non - university institutions offering professional training courses.

INTRODUCTION

India is developing the country and to achieve our goal we have to strengthen our higher education system. The continuing growth of the middle class in India has led to increased demand for higher education and we know that this demand cannot be met by the Indian Higher Education system. Although the Indian government is planning to establish new universities and colleges in the near future, these will not be enough to provide places for all students who seek higher education. If we think that what will India be like 25 years from now? Then we can find in some areas we can estimate quantitatively with a fair degree of confidence. In some others, we know the broad direction but are unable to reasonably put numbers to the country's likely accomplishment. Here we can indicate what would be most desirable and point out the opportunities and obstacles that will arise along the way. The main objective of the study is to identify issues and challenges in the field of higher education in India.

The issue of higher education in India has always been in the limelight for being one of the chief driving forces contributing to skyward social mobility. Sound education, undoubtedly, paves the way for an exalted career. However, our Indian Education System is presently confronted with a great paradox. We are now 'independent' for over 60 years and the goal of universal literacy appears to be a distant dream. Yet, with a slight tinge of optimism, it may be boasted that Indian professionals are regarded among the best in the world are in great demand. This might well signify the inherent strength of Indian education system.

CONCEPT OF HIGHER EDUCATION

"Education is an ornament in prosperity and a refuge in adversity."

-Aristotle

In today's Indian society, marked by a vast variety of socio-cultural and linguistic diversities, ideologies and opinions; the significance of higher education is eyed in contrary fashion by different people. The pluralism of views is quite inevitable and some would opine it should be held in the same token. However, one indispensable question that tickles our mind is what is higher in higher education Professors and students will definitely acknowledge the fact, that it is not just about the higher level of educational structure in the country and there certainly exists greater dimensions. Surely, today's rat race for grabbing high-profile employments, at the hasty conclusion of one's higher education cannot be the true connotation of the value of education. Hence, it requires assertion that there appears to be, if not endless, at least a few problems with the Indian higher education system, which require pulling right. In terms of level, higher education includes college and university teaching

leaning towards which students' progress to attain higher educational qualification. Higher education imparts in-depth knowledge and understanding so as to advance the students to new frontiers of knowledge in different walks of life. It is about knowing more and more about less and less. It develops the students' ability to question and seek truth and makes him/her competent to critique on contemporary Issues. It broadens the intellectual powers of the individual within a narrow specialization, but also gives him/her a wider perspective of the world around.

ROLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN INDIA

The present higher educational system in India Since we have got independence we are facing challenges to establish a great and strong education system. Various governments came and gone. Off course they tried to establish new education policies in the system but this is very sad to dictate that they were not sufficient for our country. Still we are facing lot of problems and challenges in our Education System. India recognises that the new global scenario poses unprecedented challenges for the higher education system. The University Grants Commission has appropriately stated that a whole range of skills will be demanded from the graduates of humanities, social sciences, natural sciences and commerce, as well as from the various professional disciplines such as agriculture, law, management, medicine or engineering. India can no longer continue the model of general education as it has been persisting in for the large bulk of the student population. Rather, it requires a major investment to make human resource productive by coupling the older general disciplines of humanities, social sciences, natural sciences and commerce to their applications in the new economy and having adequate field based experience to enhance knowledge with skills and develop appropriate attitudes. Responding to these emerging needs.

The University has a crucial role to play in promoting social change. It must make an impact on the community if it is to retain its legitimacy and gain public support". It seeks to do so by a new emphasis on community based programmes and work on social issues. Concepts of access, equity, relevance and quality can be operationalized only if the system is both effective and efficient. Hence, the management of higher education and the total networking of the system has become an important issue for effective management. The shift can occur only through a systemic approach to change as also the development of its human resource, and networking the system through information and communication technology. There are many basic problems facing higher education in India today. These include inadequate infrastructure and facilities, large vacancies in faculty positions and poor faculty thereof, low student enrolment rate, outmoded teaching methods, declining research

standards, unmotivated students, overcrowded classrooms and widespread geographic, income, gender, and ethnic imbalances.

Apart from concerns relating to deteriorating standards, there is reported exploitation of students by many private providers. Ensuring equitable access to quality higher education for students coming from poor families is a major challenge. Students from poor background are put to further disadvantage since they are not academically prepared to crack highly competitive entrance examinations that have bias towards urban elite and rich students having access to private tuitions and coaching. Education in basic sciences and subjects that are not market friendly has suffered. Research in higher education institutions is at its lowest ebb. There is an inadequate and diminishing financial support for higher education from the government and from society. Many colleges established in rural areas are non-viable, are under-enrolled and have extremely poor infrastructure and facilities with just a few teachers. A series of judicial interventions over the last two decades and knee-jerk reaction of the government both at the centre and state level and the regulatory bodies without proper understanding of the emerging market structure of higher education in India has further added confusion to the higher education landscape in the country.

There is an absence of a well-informed reform agenda for higher education in the country. A few efforts made now and then are not rooted in the new global realities based on competition and increased mobility of students and workforce. Time to time system influenced with new challenges and government taken a major role to build the system. But there are many challenges always faced by the government. Some of the leading challenges before the higher education system are continuous up gradation of curriculum to keep in pace with rapid growth of science and technology globalisation and the resultant challenges from the international universities; grooming of many private institutions without any method of ensuring maintenance of quality and standard; need for adequate funding to meet the demands of various novel innovative programmes developing a meaningful and purposeful inter-face between the universities, National Research Laboratories, industries, government and society, etc. ICT in higher education policy may not be able to completely overcome all these challenges though it may play a role in information and resource sharing. There are so many people in various parts of country which are still out of reach. This is when we have emphasize more on our education programs and made our system reachable to all areas. Government has to rethink on these areas to implement more on the policies. Money also plays a vital role for the education system which needs to unique for all globally recognized syllabus and curricula. Take a look on our constitution which says that this is the responsibility of central and state government to build good education system. For that we need to have funds. But despite there was a large expenditure on the funds every year on Education where the fund goes and our system remains intact.

CRITICAL ISSUES IN INDIAN HIGHER EDUCATION

Higher Education in India is one the oldest civilizations on earth. Also known as Bharat and Hindustan and officially termed as the 'Republic of India', it is the largest liberal democracy of the world. India is divided into 28 states and 7 union territories. India is also the land of the Vedas - the oldest scriptures in the world. It is divided in four-volumes and is regarded as the storehouse of national thoughts. Today, India is the world's seventh largest country in terms of area and second in terms of population. The sights, the ancient temples and the lush paddy fields make the country unique and amazing. It has 22 major languages with 844 dialects, making this country and its people culturally diverse. The secular nature of India has attracted philosophers and researchers from across the globe to explore India. India possesses a highly developed higher education system and it is the third largest in the world next to China and United States. Higher Education in India refers to the education obtained after completing 12 years of schooling or equivalent and is of the duration of at least nine months (full time) or after completing 10 years of schooling and is of the duration of at least 3 years. Also, India has the advantage of English being the primary language apart from the respective regional languages in higher education and research.

In India, unlike in western countries, higher education is predominantly a public sector activity and it is perceived as public good. In response to increasing expectations of the people in the country, the central government continues to play a leading role in the formulation and implementation of educational policies and action plans. At the apex level, the University Grants Commission is the main governing body and it embodies the enforcement of its standards, advises and makes recommendations to the government. Structure of Higher Education in India In India the institutional framework consists of Universities established by an Act of Parliament (Central Universities) or of a State Legislature (State Universities), Deemed Universities (institutions which have been accorded the status of a university with authority to award their own degrees through central government notification), Institutes of National Importance (prestigious institutions awarded the said status by Parliament), and Institutions established by State Legislative Act and colleges affiliated with the University. Universities and its constituent colleges are the main institutes of higher education in India. The education may be of the nature of General, Vocational, Professional or Technical education.

Technical education includes 65 centrally funded institutions like Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs), Indian Institutes of Management (IIMs), National Institutes of Technology (NITs), Indian Institute of Science (IISc), etc. along with number of engineering colleges set up by State Governments. All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) approves and regulates these institutions in engineering/technology, architecture,

hotel management & catering technology, management studies, computer applications and applied arts & crafts. Vocational Education is another stream of higher education in India. For this a network of public and private polytechnics and vocational institutions exists and they are controlled and supervised by the Councils specializing in respective discipline. India has also developed an Open University system to encourage distance learning. Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) was the pioneer and now there are 14 open universities in India.

The Distance Education Council of India (DEC), New Delhi regulates these universities, maintains the standards, encourages and organizes the activities of Open and Distance learning (ODL) in the country. Higher education sector has expanded due to distance mode of education supported by new information and communication technology (ICT) as it costs 66 per cent less and the students need not leave their homes or profession. The internet and satellite technology are being put to use to further the cause of distance education. The Higher Education sector ensures the quality of the educational process with the help of accreditation agencies established for the purpose. The main agency which accredits universities and colleges in general education is the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) established by the UGC in 1994, whereas a similar function is done for technical education by the National Board of Accreditation (NBA) set up by AICTE in 1994, and for agricultural education by the Accreditation Board (AB) set up by ICAR in 1996. NAAC proposes to introduce the India Education Index (IEI) for ranking institutes based on academic, research performance and other parameters. The outcome will help in the international comparison of institutes. NAAC has entered into an MOU with higher learning institutes of the United States, Taiwan, Norway, and Kuwait and with the Commonwealth of Learning (COL) to facilitate collaborative work on quality assurance in higher education institutions. Opportunities India has emerged as a global knowledge economy. It offers facilities of education, training and research in almost all spheres of disciplines ranging from arts, science, humanities, mathematics, management, engineering, medicine, agriculture, law, linguistics, communication, etc.

It is also the major potential to eliminate poverty and income disparity in the country. Empirical studies have proved that there prevails nexus between enrolment and income disparity. Income inequalities are high where enrolments in higher education are low and vice versa. Higher education benefits the individuals specifically as it equips young people with skills to cope with the rapidly changing labour market needs. It gives individuals powers to get better employment, higher salaries and higher propensity to consume and save. Altogether, investment in higher education enhances the labour power in order to trade it for higher wages. For all these good reasons, a country that provides educational opportunities to its citizens is far more likely to reduce poverty and promote economic growth and thereby achieve social inclusion and India is no exception in this

regard. Challenges. One of the greatest challenges to higher education in India is providing access to the growing segments of the population demanding post-secondary education.

The government data reveals that one out of seven children in India goes to college. It indicates that the nation suffers from both a crippling quantity and quality challenge as far as the higher education is concerned. Addressing a higher education summit organised by the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI), HRD Minister Kapil Sibal said “We will need 800 new universities and 40,000 new colleges to meet the aim of 30 percent GER (gross enrolment ratio) by 2020. Government alone cannot meet this aim,” It has been recognized the need to expand access to 25 per cent by the end of the 12th Five Year Plan (2012-2017). Next, equity is more a difficult challenge than access to higher education. Historically equity has been the major concern of the planners in India.

THE PRIVATIZATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION

Education is always one of the most important needs of human beings. It is the process of instruction which is aimed at the all-round development of children. Human development is the real indicator of the advancement and promotion of a society. The main function of higher education is to add real value to human resources and produce wealth creators and leaders in all fields like business, professions, politics, administration etc. Emergence of knowledge as driving factor results in both challenges and opportunities. Knowledge helps to fulfill ones potential and it is also the key for mobility and economic growth. An educated population is the precondition for economic prosperity of any nation. Higher education was considered as a priority goal in independent India since it was perceived as a promoter of economic growth and technological development. It also was thought of an important instrument of equal opportunity and upward social mobility. Over the past six decades, India made considerable efforts in the field of higher education. Indian Institutes of Technology and Indian Institutes of Management have emerged as the institutes of excellence.

Today majority of all developing countries are under great pressure to cut down the public spending on higher education. The structural adjustment programme favoured by the IMF and World Bank stressed on reduction in public expenditure, on account of budget deficits and external debts. Due to structural adjustment program, many countries tried to explore alternative sources other than the public treasury for various development programmes. In the context of higher education, advocacy of private financing has become increasingly common. Private university offers courses leading to a degree, while courses offered in other types of private higher education institutions very often lead to a certificate or a diploma. The most interesting

phenomenon has been the setting up of professional institutions for imparting job-oriented training modules, which entitle the recipient to an immediate employment opportunity. Privatisation can take many forms and designs. According to Bray (1998), there can be four different models of privatisation in higher education sector.

- Public production with public finance.
- Public production with private finance.
- Private production with public finance and
- Private production with private finance.

The structure of institutions in India shows that the traditional pattern of mostly public universities and private colleges still continues, although the share of private sector in both categories of institutions has increased. The most common form of private higher education in India is self-financing institutions, which do not receive any financial support from the government. They are owned and operated by private enterprises or individuals and for the purposes of funding they primarily rely on the fees levied from students.

SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVING QUALITY OF HIGHER EDUCATION

There are some suggestions and Expectations from Government, Industry, Educational Institutions, Parents and Students for improving quality of higher education¹. Towards a Learning Society- As we move.

Towards a learning society

In every human activity will require contributions from experts, and this will place the entire sector of higher education in sharp focus. Although the priorities, which are being assigned today to the task of Education for All, will continue to be preponderant, the country will have to prepare itself to invest more and more on higher education and, simultaneously, measures will have to be taken to refine, diversify and upgrade higher education and research programmes.

Industry and Academia Connection

The Industry and Academia connect necessary to ensure curriculum and skills in line with requirements. Skill building is really very crucial to ensure employability of academia to understand and make sure good jobs (keeping in view knowledge + skills+ global professional skills = good jobs).

Incentives to Teachers and Researchers

Industry and students are expecting specialized courses to be offered so that they get the latest and best in education and they are also industry ready and employable. Vocational and Diploma courses need to be made more attractive to facilitate specialized programs being offered to students. Incentives should be provided to teachers and researchers to make these professions more attractive for the younger generation.

Innovative Practices

The new technologies offer vast opportunities for progress in all walks of life. It offers opportunities for economic growth, improved health, better service delivery, improved learning and socio-cultural advances. Though efforts are required to improve the country's innovative capacity, yet the efforts should be to build on the existing strengths in light of new understanding of the research innovation-growth linkage.

To mobilize resources

The decline in public funding in the last two plan periods has resulted in serious effects on standards due to increasing costs on non-salary items and emoluments of staff, on the one hand, and declining resources, on the other. Effective measures will have to be adopted to mobilize resources for higher education.

Coming of Information Age

The world is entering into an Information Age and developments in communication, information and technology will open up new and cost-effective approaches for providing the reach of higher education to the youth as well as to those who need continuing education for meeting the demands of explosion of information, fast-changing nature of occupations, and lifelong education. Knowledge, which is at the heart of higher education, is a crucial resource in the development of political democracy, the struggle for social justice and progress towards individual enlightenment.

Student-Centred Education and Dynamic Methods

Methods of higher education also have to be appropriate to the needs of learning to learn, learning to do, learning to be and learning to become. Student-centred education and employment of dynamic methods of education will require from teachers new attitudes and new skills. Methods of teaching through lectures will have to subordinate to the methods that will lay stress on self-study, personal consultation between teachers and pupils,

and dynamic sessions of seminars and workshops. Methods of distance education will have to be employed on a vast scale.

Public Private Partnership

PPP is most essential to bring in quality in the higher education system. Governments can ensure PPP through an appropriate policy. University Grants Commission and Ministry of HRD should play a major role in developing a purposeful interface between the Universities, Industries and National Research Laboratories (NRLs) as a step towards PPP. Funding to NRLs by the government should ensure the involvement of institutions of higher education engaged in research activities to facilitate availability of latest sophisticated equipment. There has been some effort both by the government and the private education institutions to develop the teaching staff at various levels. However, this needs to be intensified with appropriate attention to all the aspects related in order to prepare quality and sufficient number of educational staff. Such efforts need a very serious structuring for the research base institutions. We have to be optimistic that private-public partnership and the Industry interface will take place in the field of education at all levels, and particularly in the backward regions, which is the need of the hour.

To Provide Need Based Job-Oriented Courses

All round development of personality is the purpose of education. But the present day education is neither imparting true knowledge of life and nor improving the talent of a student by which one can achieve laurels in the field one is interested. So, combination of arts subjects and computer science and science and humanities or literature should be introduced so that such courses could be useful for the students to do jobs after recruitment in some companies which would reduce unnecessary rush to higher education. The programme must be focused on graduate studies and research and developing strategies and mechanisms for the rapid and efficient transfer of knowledge and for its application to specific national and local conditions and needs. Meritorious doctoral students should be recognized through teaching assistantships with stipends over and above the research fellowships.

CONCLUSION

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