



Issues and Challenges in Higher Education

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Abstract

India's higher education system is the world's third largest in terms of students, next to China and the United States. India has the advantage of English being the primary language of higher education and research. India educates approximately 11 per cent of its youth in higher education. Indian higher education is a large and complex system. Knowledge is the driving force in the rapidly changing globalized economy and society. Education general and higher education in particular, is a highly nation-specific activity, determined by national culture and priorities. There is an inadequate and diminishing financial support for higher education from the government and from society. Research and higher education are complementary to each other. Student-centered education and employment through dynamic methods of education is required from teachers with new attitudes and new skills. Industry and Academia connect is necessary to ensure curriculum and skills in line with requirements. To attain and sustain national, regional or international quality, certain components are particularly relevant, notably, careful selection of staff and continuous staff development, in particular, through the promotion of appropriate programs for academic development, including teaching/learning methodology and mobility between countries and higher education institutions.

Key words: Higher Education, Economy of Knowledge, Quality development, Research development.

Introduction:

The education plays enormously significant role in building of a nation. There are quite a large number of educational institutions, engaged in imparting education in our country. Majority of them have entered recently into semester system to match with international educational pattern. However, our present education system produces young minds lacking knowledge, confidence. To promote economic and industrial development in a country, the essential requirement is the capacity to develop skilled manpower of good quality in adequate number. India now possesses a highly developed higher education system that offers facility of

education and training in almost all aspects of human creation and intellectual endeavors values and skills.

India's higher education system is the world's third largest in terms of students, next to China and the United States. India has the advantage of English being the primary language of higher education and research. India educates approximately 11 per cent of its youth in higher education. The main governing body at the tertiary level is the University Grants Commission (India), which enforces its standards, advises the government, and helps coordinate



between the centre and the state. Universities and its constituent colleges are the main institutes of higher education in India.

Statistics on Indian Higher Education 2012-2013:

With 700 universities and more than 35,000 affiliated colleges enrolling more than 20 million students, Indian

higher education is a large and complex system. The structure of degree-granting institutions is cumbersome primarily due to "affiliation" and funding sources. More than 85% of students are enrolled in bachelor's degree programs with majority enrolling in three-year B.A., B.Com. or B.Sc. degrees. One-sixth of all Indian students are enrolled in Engineering/Technology degrees.

Tble-1 : Higher Education Institutions in India

Type of Institution	Number	E.g.
Central Universities (Public)	44	University of Delhi
State Universities (Public)	306	University of Mumbai
State Universities (Private)	154	Amity University
Deemed Universities (Private or Public)	129	Tata Institute of Social Sciences
Institution of National Importance (Public)	67	Indian Institute of Technology
Total Degree-granting Institutions	700	
Affiliated Colleges (Public or Private)	35,539	

Table-2: Enrollment of Indian Students by Level of Education

Level	Number ('000)	% of Total
Graduate (Bachelor's)	17,456	86%
Post-Graduate (Master's)	2,492	12%
Research (Doctoral)	161	1%
Diploma/Certificate	218	1%
Total	20,327	

According to the Department of higher Education government of India, 16,885 colleges, including 1800 exclusive women's colleges functioning under these universities and institutions. There are 4.57 lakh teachers and 99.54 lakh students in various higher education institutes in India. Apart from these

higher education institutes there are several private institutes in India that offer various professional courses in India. Distance learning is also a feature of the Indian higher education system.

Economy of Knowledge:



Knowledge is the driving force in the rapidly changing globalized economy and society. Education general and higher education in particular, is a highly nation-specific activity, determined by national culture and priorities. The emergence of India as a knowledge-based service driven economy has made its human capital its major strength and opportunity for growth.

This indicates that on the science and technology side, India has built up the largest stock of scientists, engineers and technician. In order to sustain these positive trends and an economic growth rate of 7%, a venture Intelligence calculates that India's higher education gross enrollment ratio (GER) would need to increase from 12 to 20 percent by 2014.

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.

Issues and Challenges in Higher Education:

In present scenario the challenges in higher education are:

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.

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.

Development in Quality:

Quality depends on all functions and activities: teaching and academic programs, research and scholarship, staffing, students, building, facilities, equipments, services to the community and the academic environment. India's highest-quality institutions have severely limited capacity. In order to increase the supply quality should be maintained.

Development in Research:

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.

Research and higher education are complementary to each other. India's higher education institutions are poorly connected to research centers. So this is another area of challenge to the higher education in India. 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.

Faculty Shortage:

In order to overcome this, government is planning to have short-term measures like raising the retirement age in teaching posts from 62 to 65 years and enhancement in salaries and other benefits for teachers. Also some long-term measures have also been initiated for attracting young people to opt for this (teaching) career. These include enhancement in fellowships and attractive start-up grants in various disciplines. The quality of education is absent in higher education. There are very few teachers and their knowledge is very insufficient.

Suggestions to improve the quality and for the development of Higher Education in India:

The key points to improve the quality and development of higher education in India are as follows:

Quality Assurance System:

Colleges and Private institutes should set up Internal Quality Assurance Cell and must follow a minimum standard to give degrees.

Stipends and Fee concession to Students:

Meritorious doctoral students should be recognized through teaching assistantships with stipends over and above the research fellowships. Identifying talented, meritorious students and encouraging them through

recognition is very important to attract students into research and teaching.

Government should offer tax concessions/fiscal incentives for setting up campuses of higher education by private/corporate sectors. Launching of a new scheme of interest subsidy on educational loans taken by professional courses by the economically weaker students.

Personality Development:

Education should be for the flowering of personality but not for the suppression of creativity or natural skill. In the globalized world opportunities for the educated people are naturally ample in scope.

Student-Centered Education:

Student-centered education and employment through dynamic methods of education is required from teachers with new attitudes and new skills.

Industrial Support:

Industry and Academia connect is necessary to ensure curriculum and skills in line with requirements. 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.

Examination Reforms:

Examination reforms, gradually shifting from the terminal, annual and semester examinations to regular and continuous assessment of student's performance in learning should be implemented.

High-tech Libraries:

A library must be online and conducive for study. Indian universities should concentrate more on providing



quality education which is comparable to that of international standards.

Broad band connectivity to all students:

There is great need for providing broad band connectivity to all students along with low priced computer accessibility. The world is entering into an Information Age and developments in communication, information and technology. This 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 the industry.

Recommendations:

- Review of the functioning of existing Deemed Universities.
- Law for mandatory assessment and accreditation in higher education through an independent regulatory authority.
- Passing of the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Bill.
- Government should encourage foreign universities to come to India to set up independent operations or collaborate with existing Indian Institutions.
- Good salary packages and benefits to the faculty so that good brains can be attracted to this profession.

Conclusion:

In order to sustain the pace of growth, there is need to increase the number of institutes and also the quality of higher education in India. To attain and sustain national, regional or international quality, certain components are particularly relevant, notably, careful selection of staff and continuous staff development, in particular, through the promotion of appropriate programs for

academic development, including teaching/learning methodology and mobility between countries and higher education institutions.

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