
HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM IN INDIA : ISSUES & CHALLENGES

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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. Unlike China, however, 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 as compared to 20 per cent in China. 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.

Key words: Higher Education , Indian Institutes of technology (IITs).

INTRODUCTION:

At present in 2011, there are 227 government-recognized Universities in India. Out of them 20 are central universities, 109 are deemed universities and 11 are Open Universities and rest are state universities. Most of these universities in India have affiliating colleges where undergraduate courses are being taught. However Jawaharlal University is a remarkable exception to this rule. 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 and 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.

Some institutions of India, such as the Indian Institutes of technology (IITs), have been globally acclaimed for their standard of education. The IITs enroll about 8000 students annually and the alumni have contributed to both the growth of the private sector and the public sectors of India. However, India has failed to produce world class universities like Harvard and Cambridge. According to the London Times Higher Education (2009)- Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) World University rankings, no Indian university features among the first 100. But universities in East Asia have been included in the first hundred. Hong Kong has three, ranked at 24, 35 and 46; Singapore two ranked at 30 and 73; South Korea two ranked at 47 and 69 and Taiwan one in the 95th position. Notably, China's Tsinghua University and Peking University are ranked at 49 and 52 respectively. There is no Indian university

in the rankings from 100 to 200. It is only when one moves on to the next 100 that we find the Indian Institute of Technology, Kanpur at 237; IIT Madras at 284 and the University of Delhi at 291.

A recent evaluation of universities and research institutes all over the world, conducted by a Shanghai university, has not a single Indian university in the world's top 300 while China has six. The Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore, comes in somewhere in the top 400 and IIT, Kharagpur, makes an appearance after that. Yet this decisive edge also has its shortcomings. Besides top rated universities which provide highly competitive world class education to their pupil, India is also home to many universities which have been founded with the sole objective of making easy money. UGC and other Regulatory authorities have been trying very hard to extirpate the menace of private universities which are running courses without any affiliation or recognition. Students from rural and semi urban background often fall prey to these institutes and colleges. Today, Knowledge is power. The more knowledge one has, the more empowered one is. According to the University Grants Commission (UGC), India needs 1500 more universities with adequate research facilities by the end of the year 2015 in order to compete in the global market. The country lacks the critical mass in higher education. Its gross enrolment ratio (GER) is a mere 11 per cent compared to China's 20 per cent, the USA's 83 per cent and South Korea's 91 per cent. This means that in comparison to India, China has double the number of students pursuing higher education. The Eleventh Five Year Plan envisages increase in the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in higher education to 15 per cent of the population in the age cohort group of 18-24 years by 2011-12. This requires a substantial increase in the number of institutions and consequently would require an adequate number of teachers for imparting education. Failure to redress the faculty shortage would hamper the achievement of the targets for increase in GER set out by Government.

Critical issues in Indian higher education :

As India strives to compete in a globalised economy in areas that require highly trained professionals, the quality of higher education becomes increasingly important. So far, India's large, educated population base and its reservoir of at least moderately well-trained university graduates have aided the country in moving ahead, but the competition is fierce; from China in particular. Other countries are also upgrading higher education with the aim of building world class universities. Even the small top tier of higher education faces serious problems. Many IIT graduates, well trained in technology, have chosen not to contribute their skills to the burgeoning technology sector in India; perhaps half leave the country immediately upon graduation to pursue advanced studies abroad, and most do not return. A stunning 86 per cent of Indian students in the fields of science and technology who obtain degrees in the United States do not return home immediately following their graduation. A body of dedicated and able teachers work at the IITs and IIMs, but the lure of jobs abroad and in the private sector makes it increasingly difficult to lure the best and brightest to the academic profession.

The present system of higher education does not serve the purpose for which it has been started. In general education itself has become so profitable a business that quality is lost in the increase of quantity of professional institutions with quota system and politicization adding fuel to the fire of spoil system, thereby increasing unemployment of graduates without quick relief to mitigate their sufferings in the job market of the country. So, the

drawbacks of the higher education system underscore the need for reforms to make it worthwhile and beneficial to all concerned.

The growth of higher education in India has been largely guided by the serviceable prerequisite of the economy. After independence, the role of the state in planning out a development path and also in building higher education institutions was guided by mutuality of purpose. Most observers of higher education in India feel that performance of higher education institutions has been less than satisfactory in terms of access, equity and quality. Now there is an urgent need to work for the development of the educational sector to meet the need of the emerging opportunities, increasing younger generation population and challenges of the 21st century.

Challenges of 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 recognizes 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 reductive 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 UGC stated: "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 programmers and work on social issues. Concepts of access, equity, relevance and quality can be operationalised 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.

Central government prepares policies and plan while responsibility of State government is run those policies on ground. The standard education facilities are higher in the states which are much rich. There is a need to change such defects from the country education system which only can be influenced by increasing funding and providing better facilities to students. But we know there is always increase in the fund for the education system but never implemented in that area. So we have to work in this area. Government tries to make different policies which are implemented but quality never checked. Majority of fund goes in the pockets of officials working for this. There is a vast need to improve the quality and standards.

The time now is to modernize our education system so that our country can get much more technically graduated people which can help our country to developed state. Today's youth always try to go foreign for his higher education as they have much better facilities and quality of their system. Can't we get that quality here itself? We have to stop this brain drainage so as avoid students to run away from country. Our governments trying for various challenges faced but no one is doing well for that. Government came and goes but system remains intact.

Higher education is extremely diverse and the challenges and issues faced by higher education institutions are just as diverse. The process of education is not merely digesting books. It is also about doing several co-curricular and extra-curricular activities that give a broader meaning to life in general and education in particular. I believe that opportunities for such holistic development are not enough in India. Facilities for the same are lacking or not easily accessible in India. Even where facilities exist, there is a lack of information about the same.

There is a lack of universities and institutes for education but one most important fact is that the quality of education is absent in higher education. There are very few teachers and their knowledge is very insufficient. Most of the teachers are making money with tuitions. I have seen my places where there tuitions. The teachers are not having proper knowledge of subject even and resources to student community are very poor. Students do not have any student-ship ethics, they just want marks in the subject and they study only for grabbing jobs. There is no creativity in students. Our top class students are hard-worker but not innovative. They are not capable enough to produce new technology. There is a great need to revolution in higher education. These are just some challenges 6. 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.

CONCLUSION :

After independence, there has been tremendous increase in institutions of higher learning in all disciplines. But with the quantitative growth has it been able to attend to the core issue of quality. India is today one of the fastest developing countries of the world with the annual growth rate going above 9%. In order to sustain that rate of growth, there is need to increase the number of institutes and also the quality of higher education in India. To reach and achieve the future requirements there is an urgent need to relook at the Financial

Resources, Access and Equity, Quality Standards, Relevance and at the end the Responsiveness.

Report of the National Knowledge Commission if implemented can help boost education sector in India. We are moving towards an era which would be defined by the parameters of knowledge and wisdom. India in order to become a developed nation by 2020 and knowledge power by 2015. The decisions that are going to be taken on these are likely to hold the key to India's future as a center of knowledge production. We need higher educated people who are skilled and who can drive our economy forward. When India can provide skilled people to the outside world then we can transfer our country from a developing nation to a developed nation very easily and quickly.

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