

## **Higher Education in India: Issues and Suggestions**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Education is a basic human need and a key factor in driving economic development and well being of the nation. Economic development of a nation is significantly influenced by the education system of that nation. Education is Nations strength. It should be transformed to the needs of the time and changing scenario of the world. It provides an opportunity to critically reflect upon the social, economic, cultural, moral and spiritual issues facing humanity. India needs more efficient and educated people to drive our economic development. To develop India as an education hub, India has to strengthen education in general and higher education with research and development in particular. Indian higher education system is the third largest in the World, next to the United States and China. Since independence, India as a developing nation is constantly progressing in the education field. Indian education system, particularly higher education has lot of opportunity and also challenges to develop. The current study aims to highlight the growth of higher education system and challenges as well as opportunities in higher education system in India.*

**Key words: Education, Growth, Opportunities, Challenges**

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### **I. Introduction**

Higher education is very important for developing country like India and it is encouraging to increase human development. Higher education in India has experienced phenomenal expansion since independence. India has produced scientist, engineers, technologists, doctors, teachers and managers who are in great demand all over the world. Now India is one of the top ten countries in our industrial and technological capacity, because of the significant contribution of manpower and tools provided by higher education, especially technical education. India's higher education system is the world's third largest in terms of students, next to china and United States. In future, India will be one of the largest education hub. India's higher education sector has witnessed a tremendous increase in the number of Universities and Colleges. The Right to Education Act which stipulates compulsory and free education to all children within the age groups of 6-14 years has brought about a revolution in education system. The involvement of private sector in higher education has been drastic changes in the field. Today over 60% of higher education is promoted by the private sector. This has accelerated establishment of institute which have originated over the last decade making India home to the largest number of Higher Education institutions in the world, with student enrolments at the second highest. Higher education provides opportunities to the people to reflect on critical, social, cultural, moral, economic and spiritual issues facing humanity. It provides specialized knowledge and skilled persons for nation development.

Despite of growing investment in education, 25% of its population is still illiterate, only 15% of Indian students reach high school and just 7% of graduates. The quality of education in India whether at primary or higher education is significantly poor as compared to major developing nations of the world. India has only 7% of College age population, 25% of teaching positions nationwide are vacant. The correlation between people and higher education is not up to the mark.

Despite of these challenges higher education system of India equally have lot of opportunities to overcome these challenges and have the capacity to make its identity at international level. However, it needs greater transparency and accountability, the role of Universities and Colleges in new millennium and emerging scientific research on how people learn is of utmost important.

### **Growth of Higher Education Sector in India**

As higher education systems grow and diversify, society is increasingly concerned about the quality of programmes, public assessments and international rankings of higher education institutions. However these comparisons tend to overemphasize research, using research performance as a yardstick of institutional value. If

these processes fail to address the quality of teaching, it is in part because measuring teaching quality is challenging.

India has been a land of scholars and learners. In ancient times also, India was regarded all over the world for its universities like Taxila, Nalanda, Vikramshila and its scholars. By independence India had 20 universities, 500 colleges enrolling about 230000 students. Since independence India has progressed significantly in terms of higher education statistics. The number has increased to 677 Universities, 38000 colleges, 817000 teachers and 2, 80, 00,000 students were enrolled by 2014. Central Government and State Governments are trying to nurture talent through focusing on the number of universities and colleges for expansions of higher educations. There is no doubt to the fact much of progress achieved by India in education has come from private sector. In fact the public sector and private sector is not in opposition to each other but they are working simultaneously in Indian education sphere. UGC is the main governing body that enforces the standards, advises the government and helps coordinate between centre and state.

The following table shows Number of Universities, Colleges, teachers and students enrolled for the period of 1951 to 2014 in India.

**Growth of Higher Education in India from 1951 to 2014.**

Year	1951	1961	1971	1981	1991	2001	2012	2014
No of University	28	45	93	123	177	266	574	677
Number of Colleges	578	1816	3227	4738	7346	11146	35539	38000
No of teachers	24000	62000	19000	244000	272000	395000	733000	817000
No of Students Enrolled	174000	557000	1956000	2752000	4925000	8399000	22373000	28000000

Source: UGC Reports.

**Challenges of Higher Education in India**

The system of Indian Higher education is the second largest in the world which fulfills the educational requirements of millions of students who come from different sections of the society. It is our 70<sup>th</sup> year independence still our education system has not been developed fully. We are not able to list a single university in top 100 universities of the World. Various governments changed these decades. They tried to boost the education system and implemented various education policies but they were not sufficient to put an example for universe. UGC is continuously working and focusing on quality education in higher education sector. Still we are facing lot of problems and challenges in our education system. Some of the basic challenges in higher education system in India are as follows:

- ❖ **Enrolment:** The gross Enrollment ratio (GER) of India in higher education is only 15% which is quite low as compared to the developed as well as, other developing countries. With the increase of enrolments at school level, the supply of higher education institutes is insufficient to meet the growing demand in the country.
- ❖ **Equity:** There is no equity in GER among different sections of the society. According to previous studies the GER in higher education in India among male and female varies to a greater extent. There are regional variations too some states have GFR while as some is quite behind the national GER which reflect a significant imbalance within the higher education system.
- ❖ **Quality:** Quality in higher education is a multi-dimensional, multilevel and a dynamic concept. Ensuring quality in higher education is amongst the foremost challenges being faced in India today. However, Government is continuously focusing on the quality education. Still larger number of colleges and universities in India are unable to meet the minimum requirements laid by the UGC and our universities are not in a position to mark its place among the top universities of the world.
- ❖ **Infrastructure:** Poor infrastructure is another challenge to the higher education system of India particularly the institutes run by the public sector suffer from poor physical facilities and infrastructure. There are larger numbers of college which are functioning on second or third floor of building on ground or first floor there exists readymade hosieries or photocopy shops.
- ❖ **Political interference:** Most of the education institution is owned by the political leaders, who are plying key role in governing bodies of the universities. They are using innocent students for theirs selfish means. Students organize campaigns, forget their own objectives and begin to develop their careers in politics.
- ❖ **Faculty:** Faculty shortages and inability of the state educational system to attract and retain well qualified teachers have been posing challenges to quality education for many years. Large numbers of NET/PhD

candidates are unemployed even there are lot of vacancies in higher education, these deserving candidates are then applying in other departments which is a biggest blow to the higher education system.

- ❖ **Accreditation:** As per the data provided by NAAC, as on June 2010 not even 25% of the total higher education institution in the country were accredited and those accredited only 30% of the Universities and 45% of the colleges were found to be of quality at 'A level'.
- ❖ **Research and Innovation:** There are very nominal scholars in our country whose writing is cited by famous western authors. There is inadequate focus on research in higher education institutes. There are insufficient resources and facilities, as well as limited numbers of quality faculty to advise students. Most of the research scholars are without fellowship or not getting their fellowship on time which directly or indirectly affects their research. Moreover, Indian higher education institutions are poorly connected to research centers. So this is another area of challenge to the higher education in India.
- ❖ **Structure of higher education:** Management of the Indian education faces challenges of over centralization, bureaucratic structures and lack of accountability, transparency and professionalism. As a result of increase in number of affiliated colleges and students, the burden of administrative functions of universities has significantly increased and the core focus on academics and research is diluted.
- ❖ **Heterogeneous Education System:** Heterogeneous education system based on geographical, rural-urban, rich—poor set up have posed in great challenge for the educational institutions. Varieties of colleges, universities, technical institutions have produced and different types of quality of education. Some of them are really imparting qualitative education although a few others are doing the dirtiest job. Recently UGC has published the list of fake universities and institutions indulging in education malpractices.
- ❖ **Lack of Moral Values:** Rapid growth of science and technology and subsequent industrialization has caused a great and danger to our old moral and values. The younger generation's dissatisfaction and revolt is the outcome of a decaying system of values.

#### **Emerging Issues of Higher Education system in India**

The role of higher education in the emerging scenario of knowledge economy is very crucial. There are many basic problems faced by higher education system in India. They are as follows:

- **Lower level of teaching quality:** Our education system is torture by issues of quality in many of its institutions and universities. Many of the issues like lack of faculty, poor quality teaching, traditional teaching methods, outdated and rigid curricula and pedagogy, lack of accountability and quality assurance and separation of research and teaching are raise questions on Indian education system.
- **Financing of higher education:** One of the most important things that have to be noticed is the issue of financial constraints regarding higher education before the government. Expenditure on education in common and on higher education in particular by the government, is one of the parameters to judge the quality in education for at all nation. The State governments have already been spending 20% to 30% of its revenue budget on education. It cannot afford to spend more. In India, higher education has received less attention in terms of public spending than other levels. It is not feasible for India to make massive state investment in research and development that produced research led universities in the west such as MIT, University of California, Berkeley in US, University of Cambridge in Britain. More concentrated on theories and rather than practical knowledge. In many jobs is also a minimum requirement of percentage which is high.
- **Traditional method of teaching:** Professors still stick to those older methods of teaching like board, marker. They don't like to make use of audio visual aids in teaching. Also they are not up to date with the information available and what global industry demands.
- **Privatization:** In the present scenario, privatization of higher education is apparently a fledgling but welcome trend and is essential to maintain creativity, adaptability and quality. In India both public and private institutions operate simultaneously. Private providers, in the interest of maximizing profit, have every incentive to minimize costs by compromising on the quality of education provided in their institutions.
- **Inadequate facilities and infrastructure:** In India many of the universities don't have adequate infrastructure or facilities to teach students. Even many private universities are running courses without classrooms. Internet and WiFi facility is still out of reach of many students.
- **Quota System:** Bringing the reservation and quota system for different categories in education lost its quality. Even deserving candidates of general categories are ignored and on quota we have to select other person from reserved category even though he is not suitable.

#### **Suggestions for improving the system of higher education:**

There are some suggestions and expectations from government, industry, educational institutions, parents and students for improving quality and system of higher education.

- ✦ **Student-centered education and dynamic methods:** Methods of higher education also have to be appropriate to the needs of learning, learning to do, learning to be and learning to become. Student-centered education and employment of dynamic methods of education will have to subordinate to the methods that will lay stress on self-study, personal consultation between teachers and pupils, and dynamic session of seminars and workshops. Methods of distance education will have to be employed on a vast scale.
- ✦ **Examination reforms:** Examination reforms, gradually shifting from the terminal, annual and semester examinations to regular and continuous assessment of student's performance in learning must be implemented.
- ✦ **International Cooperation:** Universities in India have been a primary conduit for the advancement and transmission of knowledge through traditional functions such as research, innovation, teaching, human resource development and continuing education. International cooperation is gaining importance as yet another function. With the increased development of transport and communication, the global village ideas witnessing a growing emphasis on international cooperation and action to find satisfactory solutions to problems that have global dimensions and higher education is one of them.
- ✦ **To increase Quantity of Universities:** We need more universities because we are more in number and present number of universities is too less. ON 13<sup>th</sup> June, 2005 Government of India constituted a high level advisory body known as National Knowledge Commission to advise the Prime Minister about the state education in India and measures needed to reform this sector. It was headed by Sam Pitroda and submitted its report in November 2007. National Knowledge Commission has recommended setting up of 1500 universities by 2015 so that gross enrolment ratio increases to 15 percent. It has also called for establishing an Independent Regulatory Authority for Higher Education to monitor the quality of overall higher education in India.
- ✦ **Cross culture Programmes:** After education, tour to every the places in India and World as far as possible with the cooperation of government is necessary so that one can understand about people, culture, arts, literature, religion, technological development and progress of human society in the World.
- ✦ **Action plan for improving quality:** Academic and administrative audit must be conducted once in three years in colleges by external experts for ensuring quality in all aspects of academic activities. The self-finance colleges must come forward for accreditation and fulfill the requirements of accreditation. Universities and colleges should realize the need for quality education and come forward with action plan for improving quality in higher educational institutions.
- ✦ **World Class education:** Indian government is not giving priority to the development of standard in education. India must aspire for the international standard in education. Many International universities like USA, UK, Australia, etc allow studies in higher education for foreign students in their countries and through correspondence courses as well. In the same way Indian Universities of world class education can also offer courses of studies to foreign students taking advantage of the globalization process. To achieve that goal it must adopt uniform international syllabus in its educational institutions.
- ✦ **Personality development:** Education must for the flowering of personality but not for the suppression of creativity or natural skill. In the globalised world opportunity for the educated people are naturally ample in scope. As a result business process outsourcing activities have increased competition in the world trade leading towards the production of quality goods and their easy availability everywhere in the world market. That is the way the world can be developed for peace, prosperity and progress by able and skilful men.
- ✦ **High-tech Libraries:** Our universities have a very good collection of books but they are all in mess. A library must be online and conducive for serious study. Indian universities should concentrate more on providing quality education which is comparable to that of international standards.

## II. Conclusion

Education is a process by which a person's body, mind and character are formed and strengthened. It is bringing of head, heart and minds together and has enabling a person to develop an all around personality identifying the best in him or her. Higher education in India has expanded very rapidly in the last six decades after independence yet it is not equally accessible to all. India is today one of fastest developing countries of the world. Still a large section of the population remains illiterate and a large number of children's do not get even primary education. This is not only excluded a large section of the population from contributing to the development of the country fully but it has also prevented them from utilizing the benefited of whatever development have taken place for the benefit of people. No doubt India is facing various challenges in higher education but to tackle these challenges and to boost higher education is utmost important. India is a country of huge human resource potential to utilize this potential properly is the issue which needed to discuss. Opportunities are available but how to get benefit from these opportunities and how to make them accessible to others is the matter of concern. 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, infrastructure and at the end the responsiveness.

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