

PRESENT SCENARIO AND CHALLENGES OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN INDIA

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ABSTRACT

Higher Education in India is one of the most developed in the entire world. There has in fact been considerable improvement in the higher education scenario of India in both quantitative and qualitative terms. Present article explores and discusses the present condition and efforts to recent changes in higher education in India.

India aspires to become a world knowledge hub which in years to come hopes to transform millions of young people from across the world into educated global citizens. In order to achieve this, the entire education system in the country has to become sound and robust by achieving excellence. With significant improvements in school education, achieved by flagship Government programs such as Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) and Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA), it is the right time to address the higher education system in the country.

Higher Education in India has evolved in distinct and divergent streams with each stream monitored by an apex body, indirectly controlled by the MHRD. As of 2011, India has 42 central universities, 275 state universities, 130 deemed universities, 90 private universities, 5 institutions established and functioning under the State Act, and 33 Institutes of National Importance. Other institutions include 33,000 colleges as Government Degree Colleges and Private Degree Colleges, including 1800 exclusive women's colleges, functioning under these universities and institutions as reported by the UGC in 2012. The emphasis in the tertiary level of education lies on science and technology. Indian educational institutions by 2004 consisted of a large number of technology institutes. Distance learning and open education is also a feature of the Indian higher education system, and is looked after by the Distance Education Council.

IGNOU is the largest university in the world by number of students, having approximately 3.5 million students across the globe. The engineering education and business schools are monitored and accredited by the (AICTE) while medical education is monitored and

accredited by the Medical Council of India (MCI). Likewise, agriculture education and research is monitored by the (ICAR). Apart from these, (NCTE) controls all the teacher training institutions in the country. The country has some ace engineering, management and medical education institutions which are directly funded by the MHRD. Admission to all professional education colleges is done through all-India common admission tests of which the IIT-JEE, AIEEE, CAT and CPMT are the most popular ones. Most of the institutions reserve a small percentage of seats for foreign students.

As per Report of the Higher education in India, Issues Related to Expansion, Inclusiveness, Quality and Finance, the access to higher education measured in term of gross enrolment ratio increased from 0.7% in 1950/51 to 1.4% in 1960-61. By 2006/7 the GER increased to about 11 percent. Given the vast network, India's Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in higher education, currently pegged at 19%, is far below the world average. Further, the quality of most of the higher institutions is debatable especially given the absence of any Indian institution in global Top 200 list.

The higher education system in India has grown in a remarkable way, particularly in the post-independence period, to become one of the largest systems of its kind in the world. However, the system has many issues of concern at present, like financing and management including access, equity and relevance, reorientation of programmes by laying emphasis on health consciousness, values and ethics and quality of higher education together with the assessment of institutions and their accreditation. These issues are important for the country, as it is now engaged in the use of higher education a powerful tool to build a

knowledge-based information society of the 21 Century. Recognizing the above and the basic fact, that the Universities have to perform multiple roles, like creating new knowledge, acquiring new capabilities and producing an intelligent human resource pool, through challenging teaching, research and extension activities so as to balance both the need and the demand. (NCHER), Introduction of foreign universities in India, public and private partnership in higher education and evaluation and accreditation system are the some important efforts to bring changes in higher education.

National Commission for Higher Education and Research (NCHER):

A draft legislation for creation of an overarching body in higher education prescribes that every new university or institution should have accreditation before it can start functioning and sets out tough rules for selection of vice chancellors. The HRD Ministry made public the draft bill on creation of (NCHER) which will replace existing statutory bodies like (UGC), (AICTE) and (NCTE). The draft NCHER bill says that the proposed body will specify norms and standards for grant of authorization to a university or a higher educational institution to commence its academic operations. No university or institution empowered by or under law to award any degree or diploma established after the coming into force of this Act shall commence academic operations unless it is so recognized.

The new institution will furnish documents on accreditation when applying for authorization. However, a university or institution deemed to be university existing before the commencement of the Act shall be deemed to have been authorized under it, unless revoked. The NCHER will maintain a national registry with names of eligible persons for the post of vice chancellors. In case of vacancy, the NCHER will suggest five names from the registry for the post. The NCHER will have seven members, including the chairperson. The chairperson and other members will be appointed by the President on the recommendation of a selection committee headed by prime minister. Other members of the selection committee shall be the Lok Sabha Speaker, Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha, minister in charge of higher education and minister in charge of medical education. The chairperson and three other members shall work whole-time and get salaries. They should be scholars with standing in the field of academics and

research. The salaries and allowances of the whole-time members other than the chairperson shall be the same as of an election commissioner. Besides, there will be a collegium which will aid, advice and make recommendations to the Commission for coordination, maintenance of standards in and promotion of higher education and research. The collegium shall recommend names of eligible persons for inclusion in the national registry of prospective vice chancellors to be maintained by the NCHER. The NCHER shall recommend five names from the registry for appointment to the post of vice chancellor of Central universities or head of such institutions. When called upon by the states, it will recommend five names for the vice chancellor for the state university. No person shall be eligible for and qualified for the post of VC unless his name is included in the registry.

Assessment and Accreditation:

It is ironic that the beneficiaries of privileged access to institutions of higher learning are ever ready to persuade others to believe that the Indian education system has expanded beyond reasonable limits. The fact of the matter is that the system needs to be expanded to a much greater scale to serve the needs of the Indian youth. Many institutions of higher education in the country are excellent in the sense that their infrastructure, resources, faculty, programmes of teaching and research are almost as good as the best in the advanced countries. But, the same cannot be said of the average institutions of higher education in the country. They do not come anywhere near the level of average institutions of higher education in the advanced countries. This vast gap in standards and facilities has been a cause of constant anxiety and concern to the policy planners of higher education in India. The issue of accessibility to quality higher education needs to be addressed in the light of the vast economic and social disparities, cultural and linguistic diversities, and extremely uneven opportunities of learning at the school level together with the aspirations and capacities of the potential students. Therefore, the question of access to higher education needs to be addressed at the local, regional, national and international levels from trans- disciplinary, inter-disciplinary and discipline-specific perspectives. The issue of accessibility of quality higher education arises in the context of the transition in the country from elitist to mass education in the post-independence period.

Presently some bodies are active in assessment and accreditation of the institutions like NAAC and IQAC. Setting up of NAAC has sent the right and positive signals for generating and promoting awareness of the urgent need of quality upgradation of Colleges and Universities. The need is to identify effective ways and strategies to expedite the completion of assessment and accreditation by NAAC within a stipulated time frame. Quality upgradation is not a onetime phenomenon. Quest for excellence is a continuous and perennial pursuit. In view of this, post- accreditation complacency must be arrested by evolving quality assurance mechanism for self-regulation. The setting up of an (IQAC) is one such mechanism. The IQAC comprising the Chief Executive, senior academics and officers of the institution should work as a steering group.

Public/ Private partnership:

Indian higher education system has undergone massive expansion in post-independent India with a national resolve to establish several Universities, Technical Institutes, Research Institutions and Professional / Non-professional Colleges all over the country to generate and disseminate knowledge coupled with the noble intention of providing easy access to higher education to the common Indian. The Public initiatives played a dominant and controlling role in this phase. Most of the Universities were Public institutions with powers to regulate academic activities on their campuses as well as in their areas of jurisdiction through the affiliating system. Even the private institutions enjoyed large-scale financial support in the form of grants from the public exchequer. Private funds as well as individuals played key roles in the cause of higher education. With the public funding being no more in a position to take-up the challenging task of expansion and diversification of the higher education system in the country to meet the continuously growing demands at present, there is little option other than bringing in private initiatives in a massive way to meet the various challenges. The deregulating mechanism of controls started with the granting of "Autonomous Status" to identified Colleges in the 1970s. Some of these Colleges have graduated further to receive the "Deemed to be University" status in later years. Now, the country is on the threshold of the establishment of Private Universities in different States.

There are several recommendations by UGC regarding public/private partnership in the higher education, like; it is the primary responsibility of the State to provide the eligible with good quality higher education at reasonable cost. There shall be no withdrawal of the State from this responsibility. In fact, the investment in this area by the State shall be stepped-up to 3% of the GDP. This is essential for the intellectual strength of the State to address equity concerns, it is important to realize that we live in a fast changing world, dictated by the developments in technology. Quick access to information has made knowledge creation fast, and the multiplier effect has made it even explosive. It is increasingly difficult to anticipate changes and respond to them with creative purpose. Designing courses with relevance to the future and developing the necessary manpower to deliver them is a challenging task. All this calls for a team of professionals in different areas to come together to develop proactive strategies for higher education to meet the future demands etc.

Introducing foreign universities:

The **Foreign University Bill** officially called the "The Foreign Educational Institution (Regulation of Entry and Operation) Bill, 2010" seeks to regulate entry and operation of foreign educational institutions imparting or intending to impart higher education (including technical education and award of degree, diploma and equivalent qualifications by such institutions)." The Foreign University Bill got the approval from the Government of India. This paves its way into the Parliament. The passing of the bill in the Parliament will remain a mere formality.

Impact on Standard of the Indian Education: Almost all the foreign Universities follow a syllabus which develops an individual. More stress is given to the presentation skills, seminars, practical knowledge and public speaking. In India, more stress is given to the theoretical concepts and the ability to memorize. This system of education is extremely useless. Only the IITs in India follow a curriculum which will actually help the Indian students. The introduction of foreign Universities will definitely help to increase the standard of the Indian education. With competition with the best in the World, more and more Universities in India will start to adopt a similar curriculum and would try to match these Universities. It is expected that most of the Universities

will set up their centers at locations prime to the people of India.

A solution to Brain Drain:

Once you have Universities coming in India, they will come offering jobs not only in India but also abroad. This will result in huge savings as cost of living in India is very less. When a student goes abroad, he spends nearly Rs.15 to 20lakh overall. Out of this only 30% are the tuition fees. Most of the Universities have tuition fees of only Rs. 3 to 7lakh per annum. Now, if he is getting the same education and same job opportunities from India itself, why will he go abroad? The Foreign University Bill will not only prevent a lot of brain drain but will also be a milestone of providing quality education in India. The major factor why India doesn't progress like the foreign countries is the brain drain. All the young and dynamic Indians go abroad as opportunities are very high abroad. Education is much better and standards of education are better. Once they get used to the lifestyle, they do not come back. This trend is very harmful as the people who should have worked here and made India a better place went abroad and made the already developed country stronger. This Foreign University Bill will try to eradicate this problem by removing the need of Indians to go abroad for quality education. This education will be provided in India itself. Thus Foreign University Bill will definitely be a milestone for higher education in India. This bill will take Indian education to levels it has never reached.

Finally, it can be concluded that India being a country of the sub-continental size with a population above 1 billion, the quantitative expansion of education (i.e. accessibility dimension) is of paramount importance to mitigate disparities across regions, gender and social strata in the field of education. So this should be given due consideration. For this and more, several reformations are going on in higher education in India. As being a responsible citizen of India its our duty to

play an active role to face the challenges of higher education and contribute accordingly for its betterment.

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