

# Higher Education in India: Strategies and Visions

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## INTRODUCTION

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. At present in 2020, there are 260 Private Universities, 47 Central Universities, 1 Central/national Open University 13 State Open Universities 74 Institutes of National Importance (INI) 290 state public universities 5 institute under state legislature act 123 deemed-to-be universities. The Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) is responsible for supervising the functioning of all the universities in India through its chief regulatory body-Universities Grants Commission (UGC). The other government organizations whose contribution for the upliftment of Indian educational scenario is worth mentioning are All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) and National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC). 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.

## PRESENT SCENERIO OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN INDIA

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. 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. 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. Our former President Abdul Kalam rightly said, "by 2020 India must have at least 50% per cent of Higher Educated Youngster who can transform India's future." He further added that the country intends to raise gross

enrolment ratio in higher education in swift way, which means almost tripling the enrolment from the present 14 million to about 40 million.

#### OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To understand the importance of the higher education system in India.
2. To evaluate the employment opportunities of the Indian youths.
3. To examine the drawback in the present Indian educational system.
4. To enlighten the measures to improve the quality of educational system in India.
5. To highlight the present scenario of the higher education system in India.

#### HYPOTHESIS OF THE STUDY

1. Education is the true force which brings twin lights in the lives of the youths.
2. The present education system is not based on future requirement.
3. There is no co-relation between rural and urbanites disparities while acquiring knowledge-based education.
4. College Libraries in India are abysmal in nature.

#### EDUCATIONAL REGULARITY BODIES OF INDIA

India Council for Technical Education (AICTE), Distance Education Council (DEC), Indian Council for Agriculture Research (ICAR), Bar Council of India (BCI), National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE) Rehabilitation Council of India (RCI), Medical Council of India (MCI), Pharmacy Council of India (PCI), Indian Nursing Council (INC), Dentist Council of India (DCI), Central Council of Homeopathy (CCH), the Central Council of Indian Medicine (CCIM) and such other regulatory bodies from time to time to accommodate these development and yet maintain quality students in higher education. The taskforce constituted by World Bank and UNESCO during 2000 has also observed that higher education helps increase wages and productivity that directly enrich individuals and society. The prospects and development in the higher education sector in

India needs a critical examination in a rapidly globalising world.

#### CRITICAL ISSUES OF 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. 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 21<sup>st</sup> century.

#### CHALLENGES OF PRESENT HIGHER EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM IN INDIA

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. 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 qualified teachers. But there are many challenges always faced by the government. 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. 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. At the same those states which are poor in nature, the standard of education is abysmal in standard. 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. Our governments trying for various challenges faced but no one is doing well for that. New Government comes 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 notes and delivering lecturers. 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.

#### STRATEGIES AND VISIONS FOR IMPROVING QUALITY OF HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM IN INDIA

There are some suggestions and Expectations from Government, Industry, Educational Institutions, Parents and Students for improving quality of higher education-

1. Give adequate weight age to industry experienced people while recruiting faculty: This will encourage industry professionals to take up faculty positions. At the same time this helps the students to get the actual knowledge of the working conditions. If the Industry Professionals are not agreed to take up full time job, they will be allowed to take up part-time or guest faculty assignments. If possible educational institutions or government must hire the best talent from overseas and provide compensatory benefits to those professionals who relocate.
2. Academic Institutions should introduce faculty development and exchange programs with top-end institutions: In this model, the faculty members of institutions in a region can participate in development programs conducted by the best faculty in the top institutions in the region. For example, faculty members from IIT Kharagpur and Bangalore Technological Institutes can conduct faculty development programs for other engineering colleges in the State Capital Regions. This will benefit the students to acquire new knowledge.
3. Mandatory Training Programs and Faculty Development Programs must be organised: Compulsory Training Programs must be organised for the Teaching faculty, so that teaching faculty can update their knowledge. Government must support higher education institutions to organize workshops conducted by leading international resource persons and researchers; this will definitely enhance the effectiveness of their teaching skills. Colleges must be willing to send their faculty members for special training centers once in a year to sharpen their subject, teaching, and English delivery knowledge.
4. 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.

5. Ensure fast and Uninterrupted Internet Connectivity: Internet actually opened a new world of knowledge. Websites like INFLIB-NET are boon to the Teaching faculties and to the students. Unknown facts and subject matters, books are revealed in split of seconds. To acquire more knowledge both the students and teachers are accessible to 365 x 7 fast Internet Facilities. Ensure active participation by best-in-class faculty from top-tier institutions to be 'hubs' for training and development of junior and mid-level faculty members from other institutions. Emphasize faculty development to improve the quality of teaching in higher education institutions.
6. 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. There is also a need to relate the fee structure to the student's capacity to pay for the cost. So that, students at lower economic levels can be given highly subsidised and fully subsidised education.
7. Public Private Partnership- PPP is most essential to bring in quality in the higher education system. Governments must introduce a new policy of PPP through an appropriate measure. In other words we can say that private parties must involve in the dissemination of knowledge. Normally private parties will be having huge amount of resources. They have to invest the same in the public educational institutions. When the students complete their education, they can serve the private companies who have invested during their educational days. To achieve excellence, we thus need to create a real partnership between government, educators, and industry.
8. 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.
9. 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.
10. Expand scale of existing higher education institutions: Government must ensure that higher education institutions must expand their institutions in educationally deficient geographies areas. Setting up education institutions in well developed areas will help only the urbanite students. If the enrolment of the rural students has to be increased, then the government must establish in geographically non-friendly remote areas.
11. High-tech Libraries- Our university libraries have a very good collection of books, but they are all in mess. Huge amount of books are lying in a haphazard manner. When students and teachers are becoming tech friendly or cyber friendly, 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.
12. Encourage alumni funding: Alumni are the real heroes for the educational institutions. Those students who are highly caliber will naturally secure high paid jobs. When these alumni students shoulder some responsibility of the college, their contribution can do wonders for the college infrastructure facilities. Examples of alumni funding to some of the top global universities Charles B. Johnson contributed whopping amount of US\$250 million for the Yale University expansion. Ratan Tata donated huge amount US\$50 million for the development of the HBS campus in Boston University. Anand Mahindra gifted away US\$10 million for the development of humanities Center in Stanford University. This shows that top tier institutions with a strong alumni base should encourage their alumni to provide funding to achieve specific objectives of their respective colleges.

## CONCLUSION

After independence, there has been tremendous increase in institutions of higher learning in all disciplines. Even though India is facing lots of challenges and deficiencies in educational sectors, India still 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. 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, between higher education institutions and the world of work, as well as student mobility within and between countries. Internal self-evaluation and external review must be conducted openly by independent specialists, if possible, with international experts. Report of the National Knowledge Commission if implemented can help boost education sector in India. 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 to be to address these challenges. By giving quality education to the millions of Indians, we can transform India's population into a boon. However, one university cannot make much difference. If the government welcomes more such initiatives, the future will be ours.

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