



A study about Challenges Higher Education in India and Suggestions

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Abstract: Although there have been challenges to higher education in the past, these most recent calls for reform may provoke a fundamental change in higher education. This change may not occur as a direct response to calls for greater transparency and accountability, but rather because of the opportunity to reflect on the purpose of higher education, the role of colleges and universities in the new millennium, and emerging scientific research on how people learn. These disparate literatures have not been tied together in a way that would examine the impact of fundamental change from the policy level to the institutional level and to the everyday lives of college and university administrators, faculty and students. Now the time has come to create a second wave of institution building and of excellence in the fields of education, research and capability building. 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.

Keywords—Higher education, Opportunities and challenges, Enrolment, Privatization,

Definition of higher education: Higher education comprises all post-secondary education, training and research guidance at education institutions such as universities that are authorized as institutions of higher education by state authorities.¹ It includes all the activities a given country deems to be higher education - not only those that take place within ordinary universities and graduate schools, but shorter term education and training courses (polytechnics, junior colleges, and various forms of technical specialty schools) that are 2-3 years in length, and even correspondence courses that make use of information technology and are targeted at a broad population of students.¹

Introduction: India is developing the country and to achieve our goal we have to strengthen our higher education system. The continuing growth of the middle class in India (approximately 200 million people) has led to increased demand for higher education and we know that this demand cannot be met by the Indian Higher Education system.² Although the Indian government is planning to establish new universities and colleges in the near future, these will not be enough to provide places for all students who seek higher education. If we think that what will India be like 25 years from now? Then we can find in some areas we can estimate quantitatively with a fair degree of confidence. In some others, we know the broad direction but are unable to reasonably put numbers to the country's likely accomplishment. Here we can indicate what would be most desirable and point out the opportunities and obstacles that will arise along the way. The main objective of the study is to identify issues and challenges in the field of higher education in India.³

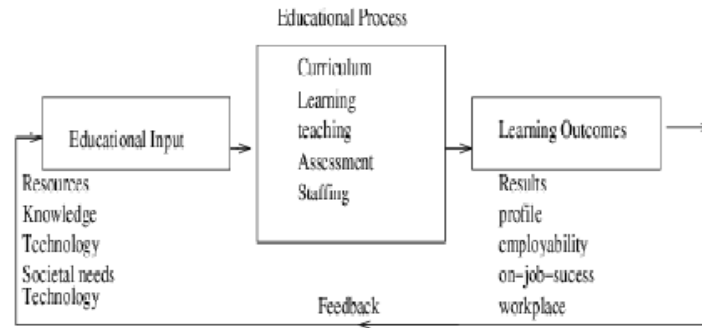
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¹ In the World Declaration on Higher Education adopted by the World Conference on Higher Education in 1998, higher education was defined as: “all types of studies, training or training for research at the post-secondary level, provided by universities or other educational establishments that are approved as institutions of higher education by the competent state authorities.” UNESCO, the World Bank, UNDP and others use this same basic definition.

² Barnett, R. (1992). *Improving Higher Education: Total Quality Core*, Buckingham: SRHE&OU.

³ Agarwal, P. (2006). “Higher Education in India: The Need for Change.” ICRIER Working Paper, Indian Council for Research on International Economic Relations: No. 180.



Higher education

According to Kemp (2007),⁴ “The Indian 11th Five Year plan requires an additional seven million new places in higher education by 2012 and a total of 16 million additional places in higher education by 2020.” There are already many private higher education providers in India, such as Manipal University, NIIT, Birla, the Vedanta University, and many wealthy business groups in India are investing in education – some with a background in education, others with business backgrounds in other sectors (such as Birla). The higher education sector in India had 9.84 million enrolments in 2006, and with a burgeoning middle class of approximately 200 million people, there is a strong demand for higher education places which the public education system cannot meet.⁵

Higher education in India: Next to China and United States India has the third largest higher education system in the world in terms of size and its diversity and largest in the world in terms of number of educational institutions. After independence Indian higher education attain a massive growth. In the Indian system, higher (tertiary) education starts after the 10+2 (i.e. ten years of primary and secondary education flowered by two years of senior secondary education).⁶ Framework of higher education in India is very complex.⁷ It includes various type of institutions like universities, colleges, institutes of national importance, polytechnics etc. Universities are also of different types like central universities which are formed by government of India, by an act of parliament which are responsible for arranging and distributing resources required by university grant commission(UGC), State universities, Deemed universities (aided and unaided) and Private universities. India has a federal set-up and the Indian constitution places education as a concurrent responsibility of both the centre and state. While the centre co-ordinates and fixed standards in higher and technical education, school education is the responsibility of state. Under the department of higher education there are several regulatory bodies and research councils which are responsible for the higher education in India.⁸

Regulatory bodies:

- University Grant Commission (UGC)
- All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE)
- Council of Architecture (COA)
- Research Councils: Indian Council of Historical Research (ICHR)
- Indian Council of Social Sciences Research (ICSSR)
- Indian Council of Philosophical Research (ICPR)

⁴ PWC report on “India-Higher education system: Opportunities for Private Participation, 2012.

⁵ Sanat Kaul, “Higher Education in India: seizing the opportunity”, Working paper no. 179, 2006.

⁶ British Council, Understanding India: The Future of higher education and opportunities for international cooperation, 2014.

⁷ Altbach, Philip G. (2006) the Private Higher Education Revolution: An Introduction. University News. January 2-8, 2006. Vol. 44 No.01.

⁸ Anandakrishnan, M. (2006) Privatization of higher education: Opportunities and anomalies. ‘Privatization and commercialization of higher education’ organized by NIEPA , May 2, 2006., New Delhi.



- National Council of Rural Institute (NCRI)
- Project of History of Indian Science Philosophy and Culture (PHISPC)⁹

Challenges of Higher Education System in India:

- Gap between the Supply and demand: In higher education, India has a low rate of enrolment i.e. gross enrolment ratio (GER), at only 19%. If we compared to china and Brazil GER is 26% and 36% respectively.
- Lack of Quality Research work: There is no shortage of funding for the top Indian Institutions such as IITs, IIMs and other institutes of national importance. However, budget for the Research is not under spent due to the insufficient good quality research work. Due to the limited focus on Research and Internationalization, very few Indian higher educational institutes are globally recognized.
- Number of Research papers published in India has increased continuously for the past few decades but reflected in low citation impact if compared with other countries like Germany, United States, France and China.
- Indian higher education is facing with the problem of poor quality of curriculum. In most of the higher educational institutes curriculum is out-dated and irrelevant.
- Shortage of Faculty and High Student-Faculty Ratio: In most of the state and central universities more than 30% of faculty positions are lying vacant. While the student enrolment in higher education is growing with faster rate in the last few years.
- Inadequate Infrastructure and Facilities: Apart from the highly recognized higher educational institutes in India most of the colleges and universities lack in the basic and high-end research facilities. Many institutes are running without proper infrastructure and basic facilities like library, hostels, transport, sports facility etc. which is desirable to rank the quality institution.
- Presently there is a very less collaboration of higher educational institutes with industries.
- Low employability of graduates is one of the major problems in India. Only a small proportion of Indian graduates are considered employable. Placement outcome also drop significantly as we move away from the top institutes.¹⁰

Initiatives taken by the government in the area of human resource development:

- A project has been taken up to made a national digital library of eBooks on various subjects and topics and another set up through which highly qualified faculty of centrally sponsored institutions like IITs, IIMs and central universities would offer online courses free of cost.
- Another special scheme called “Udaan” for girl students has launched by the Central government. Under this scheme mentoring and scholarship will be provided to enable meritorious girl students to transit from schools to technical education without any difficulty and also to promote teaching and learning of mathematics and science at senior secondary school level by providing free resources.
- The focus of the project is to overcome the low enrolment ratio of girl students in prestigious technical institutions and enable them to receive special incentives and support so that they can join these institutions and go on to takes leadership roles in the future.
- Another interesting step is the launching of a mission named after freedom fighter and educationist Pandit Madan Mohan Malviya to build a strong professional cadre of teachers by addressing all the issues related to teachers, teaching, teacher preparation, professional development, curriculum design, design and development of more effective pedagogy and better assessment and evaluation methodologies.

⁹ Delors, Jacques (1996) Learning the treasure within. Report to UNESCO of the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century. UNSECO Publishing, Paris.

¹⁰ Planning Commission (1999) Approach paper to the Tenth Five-year Plan (2002- 2007). Planning Commission. New Delhi.



- The Central Government has also launched a scheme called Unnat Bharat Abhiyan for the promotion of technologies from the laboratory to the ground. Under the scheme, higher educational institutes would connect with villages in their neighbourhood and address the various problems faced by them. The scheme would particularly looking for the solutions for water management, organic farming, renewable energy, infrastructure and livelihood. IIT, Delhi is the coordinating institute of this scheme. About 130 villages have so far been adopted by IITs, NITs across the country under the scheme.
- Rashtriya Avishkar Abhiyan has launched to revive interest in the technology among youth through support for innovative learning based on observations and experimentation. The focus would be on learning outside the classroom through direct interaction with the environment around the educational institutions.
- Under the Global Initiative of Academic Networks (GIAN) programme, India's ministry of human resource development and department of science and technology will "create a channel for US professors in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics to teach in Indian academic and research institutions on short-term exchanges", as per the website of the US Department of State.

Suggestions for Improving the System of Higher Education:

- There is a need to implement innovative and transformational approach from primary to higher education level to make Indian educational system globally more relevant and competitive.
- In higher educational institutes Industrial co-operation must be there for the development of curriculum, organizing expert lectures, internships, live projects, career counseling and placements.
- Higher educational institutes need to improve quality, reputation and establish credibility through student exchange, faculty exchange programs, and other collaborations with high- quality national and international higher educational institutes.
- Government must promote collaboration between Indian higher education institutes and top International institutes and also generates linkage between national research laboratories and research centers of top institutions for better quality and collaborative research.
- There is a need to focus on the graduate students by providing them such courses in which they can achieve excellence, gain deeper knowledge of subject so that they will get jobs after recruitment in the companies which would reduce unnecessary rush to the higher education.¹¹

Conclusion: The needs of higher education cannot be met by the Government alone. It needs the participation of the Government, the private providers and perhaps selectively participation of foreign universities. We have to free ourselves from the mindset and take a realistic attitude, taking into consideration the fact that a major revolution is taking place in higher education in the world. We have to take certain steps for improvement of our higher education system.

Reference:

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¹¹ World Bank (2004) 'Measuring Trade in Services Liberalization and its Impact on Economic Growth: an illustration', World Bank Group Working Paper, downloadable from http://econ.worldbank.org/files/2373_wps2655.pdf



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