



Quality of Higher Education in India: Issues, Challenges and Suggestions

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India's higher education system is the world's third largest in terms of students, after China and the United States. However, India has the advantage of English being the primary language of higher education and research. 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. 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. However, India has failed to produce world class universities like Harvard and Cambridge.

There is no Indian university in the rankings from 100 to 200. 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 semiurban 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 more universities with adequate research facilities in order to compete in the global market. The country lacks the critical mass in higher education. 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 (Gross Enrolment Ratio) set out by Government.

Former President Pratibha Patil said that India aspires to increase enrolment in higher education. She added that the country intends to raise gross enrolment ratio in higher education to 30 percent by the year 2020, which means almost tripling the enrolment from the present 14 million to about 40 million. Patil also said that higher education has



been accorded priority in our country. Further, she added that universities of the country, existing and the new ones, will be responsible for achieving this target. The overall scenario of higher education in India does not match with the global Quality standards. Hence, there is enough justification for an increased assessment of the Quality of the country's educational institutions. Traditionally, these institutions assumed that Quality could be determined by their internal resources, viz., faculty with an impressive set of degrees and experience detailed at the end of the institute's admission brochure, number of books and journals in the library, an ultra-modern campus, and size of the endowment, etc., or by its definable and assessable outputs, viz., efficient use of resources, producing uniquely educated, highly satisfied and employable graduates.

Critical appraisals undertaken by the governmental committees and independent academicians have highlighted the crisis confronting the system: 'increasing educated unemployment; weakening of student motivation; increasing unrest and indiscipline on the campuses; frequent collapse of administration; deterioration of standards; and above all, the demoralizing effect of the irrelevance and purposelessness of most of what is being done.' While the politicians and policy makers have often spoken about the need for radical reconstruction of the system, what has been achieved in reality is only moderate reformism. At present, the world-class institutions in India are mainly limited. Most of the Indian colleges and universities lack in high-end research facilities. Under-investment in libraries, information technology, laboratories and classrooms makes it very difficult to provide top quality instruction or engage in cutting-edge research. This gap has to be bridged if we want to speed up our path to development. The University Grant Commission of India is not only the lone grant giving agency in the country, but also responsible for coordinating, determining and maintaining the standards in institutions of higher education. The emergence of a worldwide economic order has immense consequences for higher education more so under the changes that have taken place in the recent past with regard to globalization, industrialization, information technology advancement and its impact on education. Added to these are the policy changes that have taken place at the UGC, All 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 developments and yet maintain quality standards in higher education. It is time for all those who are concerned with policymaking, planning, administration and implementation of Higher Education to revitalize the very thinking on the subject and put it on the right track.

India is now considered to be one of the most promising economies of the world. While, higher education gives India an edge in the world economy as evident from the availability of the skilled manpower, and research scholars working abroad, unemployment, illiteracy and relative poverty continue to be the major deterrents to realize her potential in human resources. The prospects and development in the higher education sector in India needs a critical



examination in a rapidly globalising world. Expansion, inclusion and excellence were the three objectives of higher education policy of Government of India. The government had taken many steps to increase student enrollment in higher education and quality improvement in higher educational institutions. While there is a need for an expansion of the higher education sector, resource constraint for both the Centre and the states poses challenge to ensure quality education even in the existing institutions.

The society is divided. While one section is opposed to commodification of education, the other section thinks that involving the private sector is the only way out. How would the higher education sector evolve in response to these challenges is a crucial issue for us to understand and anticipate. How is the sector contemplating changes to engage with the world? If India is to be a global economic powerhouse it is essential to nurture this higher education sector.

Quality of higher education in India : Critical issues

As India strives to compete in a globalised economy in areas that require highly trained professionals, the quality of higher education becomes increasingly important. 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 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. Knowledge is the base for overall growth and if the nation has to be competitive and to be at par with the globalization pace, we will have to respond to the market forces. Quality of education delivered in most institutions is very poor. While India has some institutions of global repute delivering quality education, such as (Indian Institute of Management) IIMs and (Indian Institute of Technology) IITs, we do not have enough of them. It has very narrow range of course options that are offered and education is a seller's market, where is no scope of incentive to provide quality education. There is clearly a lack of educated educators and teaching is not an attractive profession. It's a last choice in terms of career. Number of Ph.D.s produced each year is very low and those required by academia is far higher. In fact, at many institutions fresh graduates are employed to teach, leading to poor quality of classroom instruction. This Education system which is highly regulated by the government has been set up to benefit politicians. The growth of higher education in India has been largely guided by the serviceable prerequisite of the



economy. 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.

Present higher educational system in India: Challenges

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. Still we are facing lot of problems and challenges in our Education System. India recognises that the new global scenario poses unprecedented challenges for the higher education system.

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. Responding to these emerging needs, the UGC stated: "The University has a crucial role to play in promoting social change.

Hence, the management of higher education and the total networking of the system has become an important issue for effective management. 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.

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. Research in higher education institutions is at its lowest ebb.

There is an absence of a well-informed reform agenda for higher education in the country. A few efforts made now and then are not rooted in the new global realities based on competition and increased mobility of students and workforce. Some of the leading challenges before the higher education system are continuous upgradation of curriculum to keep in pace with rapid growth of science and technology; globalisation and the resultant challenges from the international universities; grooming of many private institutions without any method of ensuring maintenance of quality and standard; need for adequate funding to meet the demands of various novel innovative programmes; developing a meaningful and purposeful inter-face between the universities. There are so many people in various parts of country which are still out of reach. This is when we have emphasize more on our education programs and made our system reachable to all areas. 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. 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 which should cover all the aspect in the present scenario of education and we have to implement hard on them.

Suggestions for improving quality of higher education

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

Towards a Learning Society- As we move towards a learning society, every human activity will require contributions from experts, and this will place the entire sector of higher education in sharp focus. Measures will have to be taken to refine, diversify and upgrade higher education and research programmes.

Industry and Academia Connection- Skill building is really very crucial to ensure employability of academia to understand and make sure good jobs

(keeping in view knowledge + skills+ global professional skills = good jobs).

Incentives to Teachers and Researchers- 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.

Innovative Practices- The new technologies offer vast opportunities for progress in all walks of life. It offers opportunities for economic growth, improved health, better service delivery, improved learning and socio-cultural advances.



yet the efforts should be to build on the existing strengths in light of new understanding of the research innovation-growth linkage.

To mobilize resources- 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.

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.

International Cooperation- International cooperation is gaining importance as yet another function. With the increased development of transport and communication, the global village is 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 Provide Need Based Job-Oriented Courses- 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. Finally, one can lead interesting life doing satisfying job to do remarkable achievements in some field in the world.

Quality development- Quality depends on its all functions and activities: teaching and academic programs, research and scholarship, staffing, students, building, facilities, equipments, services to the community and the academic environment. The level of education and knowledge being imparted by many colleges...is not up to the mark. Instead of concentrating on quantity, these institutions should concentrate on quality. The approach of doctoral research in social sciences needs to be more analytical and comparative and be related to society, policy and economy.

Towards a New vision- India realizes, like other nations of the world, that humanity stands today at the head of a new age of a large synthesis of knowledge, and that the East and the West have to collaborate in bringing about concerted action for universal upliftment, and lasting peace and unity. In this new age, great cultural achievements of the past have to be recovered and enriched in the context of the contemporary advancement so that humanity can successfully meet the evolutionary and revolutionary challenges and bring about a new type of humanity and society marked by integrated powers of physical, emotional, dynamic, intellectual, ethical, aesthetic and spiritual potentialities.

Action Plan for Improving Quality- Academic and administrative audit should be conducted in colleges by external experts for ensuring quality in all aspects of academic activities. Universities and colleges should realise the need for quality education and come forward with action plan for improving quality in higher educational institutions.



World Class Education- India should aspire for the international standard in education. 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 should adopt uniform international syllabus in its educational institutions.

Student-Centred Education and Dynamic Methods- Student-centred education and employment of dynamic methods of education will require from teachers new attitudes and new skills. Methods of teaching through lectures will have to subordinate to the methods that will lay stress on self-study, personal consultation between teachers and pupils, and dynamic sessions of seminars and workshops.

Public Private Partnership- We have to be optimistic that private-public partnership and the Industry interface will take place in the field of education at all levels, and particularly in the backward regions, which is the need of the hour. To achieve excellence, we thus need to create a real partnership between government, educators and industry—Partnerships that can provide our high-tech industries with skilled workers who meet the standards of their industry.

Cross Culture Programmes- After education, tour to all 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, religions, technological developments and progress of human society in the world.

Individuality- Higher education is necessary for one to achieve excellence in the line one is best. But one should be selected for higher education on the basis of merit only. Further, fees for education in general should not be high; especially, the fees for higher studies should be within the reach of every class of people in the nation.

Privatization of Higher Education- In any nation education is the basic necessity for the socio-economic development of the individuals and the society. In reality only 20% of the population is educated in India. So, improved standard of education as first priority should be offered to the majority by the govt. authorities with sincere political will. Also, privatization of higher education is absolutely necessary in a vast country like India as government alone is helpless to do so.

Personality Development- Finally, education should be for the flowering of personality but not for the suppression of creativity or natural skill. In the globalized world opportunities for the educated people are naturally ample in scope.

Status of Academic Research Studies- If we see the number of researchers engaged in Research and Development activities as compared to other countries we find that we have much smaller researchers compared to other countries.

Stipends to Research Fellows- The number of Ph.Ds from Indian Universities should increase with proper standards. Meritorious doctoral students should be recognized through teaching assistantships with stipends over and above their research fellowships. Identifying talented, meritorious students and encouraging them through recognition is very important to attract students into research and teaching.

Fair Quality Assurance System- Colleges and Private institutes should set up Internal Quality Assurance Cell and must follow a minimum standard to give degrees. The quality assurance system must be independent of political and



institutional interaction and it must have a basis in the legislation. There is a need of an independent accreditation agency, They should be able to know whether a particular institution delivers value or not, then things can be under control to some extent.

To increase Universities- We need more universities because we are more in number and present number of universities is too less.

Examination Reforms- Examination reforms, gradually shifting from the terminal, annual and semester examinations to regular and continuous assessment of student's performance in learning should be implemented

High-tech Libraries- Our university libraries have a very good collection of books, but they are all in mess. A library must be online and conducive for serious study.

Conclusion

After independence, there has been tremendous increase in institutions of higher learning in all disciplines. 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. 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. We need an educational system that is modern, liberal and can adapt to the changing needs of a changing society, a changing economy and a changing world. The thrust of public policy for higher education in India has to be to address these challenges. However, one university can't make much difference. If the government welcomes more such initiatives, the future will be ours. We will be able to match and compete with other countries and the dream to be the world's greatest economy won't be difficult to achieve.

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