

Review Article

INDIAN HIGHER EDUCATION: ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

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Abstract

The Success story of the post – independent India turns out bleak when the question of quality is raised. Higher Education has been finding it difficult to meet the issues of unplanned expansion, educated unemployment, uneven growth, commercialization of education, financial crises, teacher burn out and the digital divide of quantity Vs quality, equity Vs excellence, creativity Vs conformity are posing continuous threats to higher education. At this juncture, the new education must be taught every individual how to classify and reclassify information, how to look at problems from new direction and finally how to teach himself/herself. Teachers are the best trained manpower for a nation. Because, they produce Technologists, Scientists, Doctors, Engineers, Policy makers, Businessmen and Teachers. Therefore through quality assured training programs it has become necessary to produce, competent, professionals to meet the ever – growing demands of liberalization and globalization. Hence, the emerging Indian society needs to make the system of education most innovative and futuristic in order to the changing demands of the modern Indian Society. The existing education should be improved according to the needs of the time. It has to fulfill the demands of one's own country and the changing scenario of the world. It must be competitive and co – operative. Looking into these factors the education from primary to higher and even technical education needs to be improved from time to time, to transform the capacity of the people's vision for society. Every system of education aims at moulding the individuals to play their roles in the society most effectively.

Key words: Indian Higher Education; issues; regulatory reforms; quality; collaboration; investment; globalization; trained manpower; opportunities

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INTRODUCTION

Indian Higher education has experienced phenomenal expansion since independence. India has produced scientists, engineers, technologists, doctors, teachers and managers who are in great demand all over the world. Now it is one of the top ten countries in the industrial and technological capacity, because of the significant contribution of manpower and tools provided by higher education, especially, technical education. Methods of higher education also have to be appropriate to the needs of four pillars of education, learning to learn, learning to do, learning to be and learning to become. Student - centered education and the employment of dynamic method of education will provide more opportunities. The Indian higher education must teach every individual how to classify and reclassify information, how to look at problems from new direction and finally how to teach himself/herself. Teachers are the best trained manpower for a nation. Because, they produce technologists, scientists, doctors, engineers, policy makers, businessmen and teachers. Therefore through quality assured training programs it has become necessary to produce, competent, professionals to meet the ever – growing demands of liberalization and globalization. Every system of education aims at moulding the individuals to play their roles in the society most effectively. Simultaneously, efforts are being made to create a robust and vast system of higher and technical education. Building upon the existing capacities and recognizing the immense contribution to nation building that the large network of educational institutions has made in the post independent India; the country has embarked upon a second phase of expansion and establishment of centers of excellence in higher education. It is envisioned that strengthening the two ends of the spectrum, namely,

elementary education and higher/technical education would help in meeting the objectives of expansion, inclusion and excellence in education.

Issues in Indian Higher Education

The Report of National Commission of Excellence in Education (1983) in the United States warns that the “educational foundations of our society are presently being eroded by a rising tide of mediocrity that threatens the very future of a nation and a people”. In the context of multinational entering into the field of education, quality assurance has become a necessity. India will have to decide on what knowledge and /or skills would be most helpful to prepare students for encountering the continuing change. The student of today learning a specific content of information will find to his amazement that he is not prepared to face the life which he has to live for the next five decades because the knowledge furnished with, has become outdated long back. The coming few decades will be miracles in space craft, satellites, internets and others offshoots of scientific enquires. The recent developments in communication technologies have helped to cross the barriers of time and distance and those borders have become porous and the sky open. The methods of teaching through lectures will have to be supplemented with the methods that will focus on self study, personal consultation between teachers and students and informative sessions of seminars and workshops. In engineering Indian society, knowledge creation, exchange, networking and highest utilization have become most vital for the advancement of higher education. India needs to make the system of education innovative and futuristic in order to respond to the changing demands of the modern society.

Higher education has been finding it difficult to meet the challenges of unplanned expansion, educated unemployment, uneven growth, commercialization of education, financial crises, and the digital divide of quantity versus quality, equity versus excellence, and creativity versus conformity which are posing continuous threats to the higher education.

Status quo of Indian Higher Education

In Indian higher education institutions, a student needs to get through senior secondary examination conducted by the states or the central board of school education. The duration of the first degree is of three years in general education in Arts, Science, and Commerce followed by two years of masters degree level courses and three to five years of doctoral degree in the interested field. As far as recent Statistics is concerned, 37% of students are studying in the field of Arts, 19% of the students in Science, 18% of students in the Commerce and 61% of students in the field of Engineering. This is a significant improvement in the field of higher education compared to other developing countries. The system of Indian higher education has experienced an enormous success after independence and emerged the largest in the world. According to the recent survey of MHRD, India, it is found that more than 25 million of students are pursuing their higher studies in around 900 universities. Apart from that, there is degree awarding 40026 colleges. Of them 1800 colleges are exclusively for women. There are around 10 state universities for women. There are around 11669 standalone institutions. This is a huge potentiality for the rapid development and research for the country.

Regulatory Reforms

The public private partnership is mostly encouraged in the rarest fields of space and the like, and used for the development of higher education in the background regions. The government can come forward provide some benefits to the private industries and institutions to implement the projects of Public Private Partnership. In improving the quality of higher the reshaping and reforming higher education should be given a prominent place regularly. The quality of education provided by the state, central and private institutions should be motivated and the changes be implemented by a quality assurance body of UGC. Hence, the government and the private education institutions have moved to some levels. The co-operation needs to be intensified with appropriate attention to all the aspects related in order to prepare quality and sufficient number of educational staff. Such efforts need a very serious structuring for the research base institutions. Public Private partnership is imperative to bring quality in the higher education system. The Government of India can bring public private partnership through an appropriate policy. University Grants Commission and Ministry of Human Resource Development should play a major role in developing a purposeful interface among the Universities, Industries and National Research Laboratories for the involvement of institutions of higher education engaged in research activities to facilitate availability of latest sophisticated equipment to the researchers.

ICT for Enlightenment

The content, pedagogical modalities and assessment of degrees should be redefined to meet the demands in the ICT era. The world has entered into an information age and developments in communication, information and technology opened 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. Knowledge which is at the heart of higher education is a crucial resource in the development of political democracy in the struggle for social justice and progress towards individual enlightenment. In this context, the education should be oriented to meet the challenges and the need of the people who are exploiting the tools of ICT in their walks of life. A number of initiatives have been taken by the MHRD to promote digital education literacy in the country.

With the use of information and communication technology (ICT), SWAYAM is designed to provide one integrated platform and portal for online courses to cover all higher education subjects and skill sector courses. More than 28 lakhs learners so far have been enrolled in 1000+ MOOCs courses that run through SWAYAM. SWAYAM Prabha is designed to provide 32 high quality educational channels through DTH (Direct to Home) across the length and breadth of the country on 24X7 basis. **National Digital Library** is another initiative of the government to develop a framework of virtual repository of learning resources with a single-window search facility. So far, about 1.5 crore e-books and documents are available on NDL, contributed by 160 content contributors and over 30 lakh users from 9 thousand educational institutions were registered on the NDL. **e-Shodh Sindhu** is the project of the government aims at providing access to quality electronic resources including full-text, bibliographic and factual databases to academic institutions at a lower rates of subscription. The MHRD has designed this project by merging three consortia initiatives such as UGC-INFONET Digital Library Consortium, NLIST and INDEST-AICTE Consortium. **FOSSEE** is Designed by the MHRD, the Free and Open Source Software for Education (FOSSEE) project aims at promoting use of open source software in educational institutions to improve the quality of education, reducing dependency on proprietary software. This project is part of the National Mission on Education through Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and MHRD. The Virtual Lab aims at providing remote-access to laboratories in various disciplines of Science and Engineering for students at all levels from under-graduate to research. This project also plans to develop a complete Learning Management System where students can avail various tools for learning, including additional web-resources, video-lectures, animated demonstrations and self-evaluation.

International Collaborations

Universities in India have been a primary source for the advancement and transmission of knowledge through traditional functions such as research, innovation, teaching, human resource development and continuing education. Education is emerging to be one of the top focuses of all the developing nations around the world. **Study in India**, a unique initiative of the Government of India will help facilitate the student fraternity from all across the globe to come and experience the best of academic learning from the top institutions in India which would help accommodate the growing quality educational needs of students across the world. Under the umbrella of Study in India, **about 150 select** educational institutes from public, private and deemed universities are offering an array of options including courses ranging from engineering, management, commerce, photonics to yoga, Ayurveda, athletics and languages. The Government of India is inviting aspiring candidates from all over the world to pursue education in desired field from the top ranked institutions in India as per the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) which is an organisation that assesses and accredits higher education Institutions in India and the National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF) both under the aegis of the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD), Government of India). Launched in April, 2018 the initiative is helmed by EdCIL (Educational Consultants of India), a Central Public Sector Enterprises (CPSE) under the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD), Government of India, the Study in India, initiative aims to make India a preferred education hub for students all across the globe, by elevating its position in the global educational landscape. This portal is a one-stop shop for foreign students seek to study in India. It provides all the information one needs on Indian education institutions in India, how to plan studies, how to stay in India, what kind of events are planned, application process among others. The website also has a helpline number to address queries from students. 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 problems to find solutions in higher education. The International communities can share their experience and experts in approaching the problems in higher education.

Investment for Higher Education

The opportunities for higher education has been recently increased many fold due to the private participation. As soon as India signed GATs foreign universities started to enter the country and now there are more than 100 western universities established in the country. Recently our Indian Prime Minister has announced that within 2022, 1 lakh crore rupees will be invested for education. Similarly, India is in the process of setting Indian universities in the foreign lands. The higher investment in education is really a boast to the social, economic and technological development of the country. The growth of higher education has led to the higher investment in higher education. A large number of private colleges and universities cropped up and are in the recent years providing quality higher education from degree to doctoral degree in variety of fields. The MHRD has taken several initiatives to ensure that the benefit of the scheme is availed by all the deserving students. As a result of various initiative including inviting of online application, online counseling and online allotment of seats, creation of supernumerary quota seats in Engineering, Medical, Architecture, Agriculture, Pharmacy and Nursing institutions, more number of students are taking admissions in professional courses and thereby improving their employability.

Ensuring the Quality of Higher Education

Built on centuries of values, the Indian Education system is the world's third largest higher education system, having a rich mix of premier Government and private institutes with a network of 38000 colleges and 800 universities. Higher Institutions in India offers degrees that are competitive in the world market in terms of quality but are delivered at 1/4th the cost hence guaranteeing value for money. India offers quality education and research, and students will earn internationally renowned degree. Students will have a range of courses to choose from the latest advancements of science and technology like Virtual and Augmented Reality, Artificial Intelligence and Cognitive Computing to traditional subjects. For quality improvement In order to extend the vision of India is a hub for higher education, the enrolment and bureaucratic systems in universities should be simplified. The foreign students should be given various concessions and scholarship to increase the intake of foreign students. In this line UGC has work with other countries in getting more students to Indian universities. The quality society can be produced only through quality education. In this line, the higher education of India needs mechanisms to improve the quality of education provided through universities and other degree awarding institutions. The mechanism should pay attention on refining, diversifying, and upgrading higher present education and research programmes.

Catering Global Needs

National Knowledge Commission (2006) Report on higher education supports a strong reform agenda through public investment. Recently, the report of the committee on renovation and rejuvenation of higher education (Yashpal Committee) has recommended protecting the intellectual autonomy of educational institutions and the creation of an all-encompassing National Commission for Higher Education and Research (NCHER) to replace or subsume the existing regulatory bodies. The report talks about the concept of a university as a place where research and teaching become two important pillars of the creation of knowledge and should go together. It should provide practical training to the people that should be based on new knowledge and in response to social and personal needs. Most importantly, universities should allow for the diverse growth of knowledge and should not lead to fragmentation of knowledge. It is, therefore, recommended that normally, no single discipline or specialized university should be created. There is also an idea that undergraduate

programs should be restructured to enable students to have opportunities to access all curricular areas with fair degree of mobility. Indian higher education has more potentialities to cater to the need of growing global demand of higher education. In this backdrop, UGC has to encourage private participation in awarding quality and inexpensive higher degrees in the multi-disciplinary domains to attract even more foreign students and work on establishing world class schools of higher education to prevent the students, the younger generation in particular, from being attracted by foreign institutions. The unconditional co-operation in curriculum development, preparation of instructional materials, implementation of innovative practices, use of new technologies, exchange of experts and promotion of collaborative research are the need of the hour. India is attracting a large number of foreign students to their central, state and private universities and colleges from several parts of the world. Asian and western students find India a place of higher education hub due to the fact that the education provided here is inexpensive, higher quality and in the learner friendly environment.

CONCLUSION

In finding solution to the issues in higher education, the co-operation of international communities should be sought to share their experiences. Moreover higher education provided in Indian universities and colleges must suit the need of the education in ICT Era. There will be meaningless to give out date education. On the part of the Indian government a lot of changes were brought to the curriculum of higher education absorbing the global demand for receiving skilled manpower. Similarly, the present quality of higher education should be improved on par with global standard. Broadening the concept of making India a global hub for higher education is the need of the hour and the systems, procedure must be simplified to attract more foreign students to Indian institutions. By and large, there are more future prospects for the Indian higher education in the years ahead. The students of all categories have more opportunities for the latest and modern education. After independence, there has been tremendous increase in institutions of higher learning in all disciplines. India today, is one of the fastest developing countries of the world. However, it has to create more opportunities for increasing the number of institutes and the quality of higher education to achieve the future requirements. Given the present situation of Higher education, there has been significant improvement in the recent years. The investment in higher education, which has more potentiality, should be motivated to provide better higher education in the country.

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