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Higher Education System in India: Emerging Issues and Prospects

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Abstract: Education is one of the significant factors instrumental to the development of a country. It should be transformed to the needs of the time and changing scenario of the world. It provides an opportunity to critically reflect upon the social, economic, cultural, moral and spiritual issues facing humanity. India needs more efficient and educated people to drive our economy forward. There are many Indian around the corner who known for their capabilities and skills. To develop India as an education hub or to become a prosperous partner in global economy, India has to qualitatively strengthen education in general and higher education with research and development in particular. This paper is mainly focused on the overall performance of higher education system in India. We try to find out the initiatives taken by the government to raise level of education system. This paper aims to identify emerging issues and challenges in the field of Higher Education in India. Finally the paper concludes here is need of plans requires solutions that combine, employers and youth need of expectations of from various stakeholders Students, Industry, Educational Institutions, Parents and Government.

Keywords: Primary Education, Higher Education, challenges, colleges, universities.

1. Introduction

Higher education is very important for a developing country like India and it is encouraging to increasing human development. Higher education in India 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 our industrial and technological capacity, because of the significant contribution of manpower and tools provided by higher education, especially, technical education. India has already entered into the era of knowledge explosion. It has proved its tremendous potential by its performance in nuclear and space domains. In the coming few decades will be heralded by space craft, satellites, internets and others offshoots of scientific enquires. Higher Education provides opportunities to the people to reflect on the critical social, cultural, moral, economic and spiritual issues facing humanity. Higher education provides specialized knowledge and skilled persons for national development. In next few decades, India will have world's largest set of young people. While the correlation between people and higher education is not up to the mark. The increasing youth population can be a great asset if potential employability is brought to fruition. Conversely, if we fail to provide education and employment then it will open a downside gate for Indian economy. Education is an essential tool for achieving sustainability. The Education Commission 1964-66 described the role of education in social and economic transformation through a statement- the density of a nation is shaped in its class rooms. Education creates human capital which is the core of economic progress and assumes that the externalities generated by human capital are the source of self-sustaining economic process.

2. Higher Education vs. Primary Education

Before we debate about issues and challenges related to higher education we need to understand primary education is more important than higher education. India's number one challenge is poverty, we have to lift millions of people out of poverty and we can't do it unless we focus on primary education. Primary education starts from Class 1st when child is 5 years old. Primary education does not only mean a classroom, books and a teacher (that is bare minimum) but nutrition, clothes and creating an environment where a child can learn new things every day, an environment that can help in bringing out best within a child. Infrastructure like chair, table, books, stationery, a classroom and teachers is bare minimum that any government could provide. They need to do more than that like teaching children how they can imagine and bring out their inner talent that they can use later in their life. If we have to bring people out of poverty then we need social mobility and social mobility can't be achieved unless we focus on primary education and health.

However on the other hand higher education does not solve this problem. Higher education starts when you come out of high school or 10+2. So if child is 5 years old and live in a family which is below poverty line then the child needs primary education not higher education. Therefore if government is spending only on higher education that is not going to change the status of child because higher education is all about colleges. And by the time the child living in a family below poverty line reaches the age of 16 his or her mind has already been shaped. So it is of no use if the government is spending on higher education. That is the difference between higher and primary education.

3. Scenario of Higher Education in India

India's higher education system is the world's third largest in terms of students, next to China and the United States. In future, India will be one of the largest education hubs. India's Higher Education sector has witnessed a tremendous increase in the number of

Universities/University level Institutions & Colleges since independence. The 'Right to Education Act' which stipulates compulsory and free education to all children within the age groups of 6-14 years, has brought about a revolution in the education system of the country with statistics revealing a staggering enrolment in schools over the last four years. The involvement of private sector in higher education has seen drastic changes in the field. Today over 60% of higher education institutions in India are promoted by the private sector. This has accelerated establishment of institutes which have originated over the last decade making India home to the largest number of Higher Education institutions in the world, with student enrolments at the second highest. The number of Universities has increased 34 times from 20 in 1950 to 677 in 2014. Despite these numbers, international education rating agencies have not placed many of these institutions within the best of the world ranking. Also, India has failed to produce world class universities. Today, Knowledge is power. The more knowledge one has, the more empowered one is. However, India continues to face stern challenges. Despite growing investment in education, 25 per cent of its population is still illiterate; only 15 per cent of Indian students reach high school, and just 7 per cent graduate. The quality of education in India whether at primary or higher education is significantly poor as compared to major developing nations of the world. As of 2008, India's post-secondary institutions offer only enough seats for 7 per cent of India's college-age population, 25 per cent of teaching positions nationwide are vacant, and 57 per cent of college professors lack either a master's or PhD degree (Newsweek, 2011). As of 2011, there are 1522 degree-granting engineering colleges in India with an annual student intake of 582,000 (Science and Technology Education, 2009) plus 1,244 polytechnics with an annual intake of 265,000. However, these institutions face shortage of faculty and concerns have been raised over the quality of education. Despite these challenges higher education system of India equally have lot of opportunities to overcome these challenges and have the capability to make its identity at international level. However, it needs greater transparency and accountability, the role of universities and colleges in the new millennium, and emerging scientific research on how people learn is of utmost important. India provides highly skilled people to other countries therefore; it is very easy for India to transfer our country from a developing nation to a developed nation. State of Higher education in India is in between good and bad. I mean in a nutshell to say neither it is good nor it is that bad. So in this paragraph we shall talk about number of universities, colleges, number of teachers & professors and students enrolled. In the year 2014 India has over 677 universities, at least 38,000 colleges, 817000 professors and teachers and over 28000,000 students enrolled. There is growth in numbers of colleges, universities, students and teachers year after year. Different students apply for different courses. Like there are over 14,000,000 students applied for graduates courses all over the country. For post graduate there are over 20490000 students enrolled. For research around 1370000 and for diploma over 1710000 students enrolled in the year 2014. Now we should also look at the budget issue. How much government of India is allocating for education. In the year 2014 the government of India spent over Rs 65,000 Crore. This amount is 17% more than the last in 2013. The department of Higher education has allocated Over Rs 16,000 crore which is 20% hike from last year. Similarly government has allocated Rs 24,00 Crore for IITs, Rs 1300 for NIT's, and Rs 350 Crore to IIM's this year.

4. Emerging Issues and Challenges

Since independence we are facing challenges to establish a good and strong education system. Various governments tried to establish new and effective education policies in the system but they were not sufficient for our country. Still Indians are facing lot of problems in our Education System. Indian government recognizes that the new global scenario poses unrivalled challenges for the higher education system. The UGC stated that a whole range of skills will be demanded from the graduates of commerce, humanities, natural sciences and social science, as well as from the various professional disciplines such as hospitality, tourism, agriculture, law, management, medicine or engineering.

There are many basic problems faced by higher education system in India. These include inadequate infrastructure and facilities, vacant seats in academic field and poor faculty thereof, low student enrolment rate, out dated and old teaching methods, declining research standards, unmotivated students, overcrowded and small classrooms and widespread geographic, income, gender, and ethnic imbalances. Apart from these concerns relating to deteriorating standards and lack of facilities, there is reported exploitation of rural area students by many private education providers.

- **The demand-supply gap:** India has a very low rate of enrolment in higher education (18%) as compared China (26%) and 36% in Brazil. There is huge demand-supply gap. By 2020, the Indian government aims to achieve 30% gross enrolment in higher education, which mean providing 40 million university places with an increase of 14 million in six years.
- **Inadequate facilities and infrastructure:** In India, many of the universities don't have adequate infrastructure or facilities to teach students. Even many private universities are running courses without classrooms. Internet and Wi-Fi facility is still out of reach of many students.
- **Lower level of teaching quality:** Our education system is torture by issues of quality in many of its institutions and universities. Many of the issues like shortage of faculty, poor quality teaching, Traditional teaching methods, outdated and rigid curricula and pedagogy, lack of accountability and quality assurance and separation of research and teaching are raising questions on Indian education system.
- **Research constraints:** India has a very low level of PhD enrolment. India does not have enough high quality researchers. In Indian education system there is a lack of early stage research experience; a weak ecosystem for creativity and innovation, and low levels of industry engagement.

- **Uneven growth and access to opportunity:** In India, access to higher education is uneven in enrolment across population groups and geographies. This uneven growth of higher education is major challenge for India. India has the largest number of out-of-school students in the world, more than the whole of sub-Saharan Africa, and also 69% of India's population still lives on less than 2 dollar per day. The World Bank categorises India as "an extreme dual economy".
- **More concentrated on theories and rather than practical knowledge:** Indian education system is more focused on theoretical knowledge rather than practical knowledge. In many jobs there is also a minimum requirement of percentage which is high.
- **Lack of involvement in and control of educational matters by Professors:** Most of the professors or higher authorities do not like to take part in education related activities. They stick to their own growth.
- **Traditional methods of teaching:** Professors still stick to those old methods of teaching like board, marker. They don't like to use audio visual aids in teaching. Also they are not up to date with the information available and what global industry demands.
- **Abroad settlement after education:** Many students after doing IITs and IIM try to search opportunities in foreign countries like Australia, USA, and Canada etc. They look forward for MNCs and get settled abroad. There must be a fix criteria that students after higher education have serve his country first.
- **Security and Confidentiality :** Collages have to Increased security and confidentiality with role-based permissions to users . there will be proper record of time and attendance system of students and as well as teachers.
- **Quota system:** Bringing the reservation and quota system for different categories in education lost its quality. Even deserving candidates of general categories are ignored and on quota we have to select other person from reserved category even though he is not suitable.
- **Quality - Reflecting on:** National Assessment and Accreditation Council gave a report in which the concern was over the fact that two thirds (68%) of the country's universities and 90% of its colleges are "of middling or poor quality" and that well over half of the teaching faculty in India's colleges does not have the appropriate degree qualifications.
- **Enrolment:** The Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) of India in higher education is only 15% which is quite low as compared to the developed as well as, other developing countries. With the increase of enrolments at school level, the supply of higher education institutes is insufficient to meet the growing demand in the country.
- **Equity:** There is no equity in GER among different sects of the society. According to previous studies the GER in higher education in India among male and female varies to a greater extent. There are regional variations too some states have high GER while as some is quite behind the national GER which reflect a significant imbalances within the higher education system.
- **Quality:** Quality in higher education is a multi-dimensional, multilevel, and a dynamic concept. Ensuring quality in higher education is amongst the foremost challenges being faced in India today. However, Government is continuously focusing on the quality education. Still Large number of colleges and universities in India are unable to meet the minimum requirements laid down by the UGC and our universities are not in a position to mark its place among the top universities of the world.
- **Infrastructure:** Poor infrastructure is another challenge to the higher education system of India particularly the institutes run by the public sector suffer from poor physical facilities and infrastructure. There are large number of colleges which are functioning on second or third floor of the building on ground or first floor there exists readymade hosieries or photocopy shops.

5. Suggestions

There are some suggestions and Expectations from Government, Industry, Educational Institutions, Parents and Students for improving quality of higher education. There is a need to implement innovative and transformational approach form primary to higher education level to make Indian educational system globally more relevant and competitive. Higher educational institutes need to improve quality and reputation. There should be a good infrastructure of colleges and universities which may attract the students. 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. Universities and colleges in both public private must be away from the political affiliations, Favouritism, money making process should be out of education system etc. There should be a multidisciplinary approach in higher education so that students knowledge may not be restricted only upto his own subjects.

- **Student-Centred Education and Dynamic Methods-** Methods of higher education also have to be appropriate to the needs of learning to learn, learning to do, learning to be and learning to become. 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. Methods of distance education will have to be employed on a vast scale.

- **Examination Reforms-** Examination reforms, gradually shifting from the terminal, annual and semester examinations to regular and continuous assessment of student's performance in learning must be implemented. 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. 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 increase Quantity of Universities-** We need more universities because we are more in number and present number of universities is too less. On 13th June, 2005 Government of India constituted a high level advisory body known as National Knowledge Commission (NKC) to advise the PM about the state of education in India and measures needed to reform this sector. It was headed by Sam Pitroda and submitted its report in November 2007. NKC has recommended setting up of 1500 universities by 2015 so that gross enrolment ratio increases to 15 percent. It has also called for establishing an Independent Regulatory Authority for Higher Education (IRAHE) to monitor the quality of overall higher education in India.
- **Cross Culture Programmes-** After education, tour to every 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.
- **Action Plan for Improving Quality-** Academic and administrative audit must be conducted once in three years in colleges by external experts for ensuring quality in all aspects of academic activities. The self-finance colleges must come forward for accreditation and fulfil the requirements of accreditation. 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-** Indian government is not giving priority to the development of Standard in education. India must aspire for the international standard in education. Many national universities like in the USA, UK, Australia, etc. allow studies in higher education for foreign students in their countries and through correspondence courses as well. In the same way India 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 must adopt uniform international syllabus in its educational institutions.
- **Personality Development-** Finally, education must be for the flowering of personality but not for the suppression of creativity or natural skill. In the globalized world opportunity for the educated people are naturally ample in scope. As a result business process outsourcing (BPO) activities have increased competition in the world trade leading towards the production of quality goods and their easy availability everywhere in the world market. That is the way the world can be developed for peace, prosperity and progress by able and skilful men.
- **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. Indian universities should concentrate more on providing quality education which is comparable to that of international standards[4].

6. Conclusion

After independence, there has been tremendous increase in higher education institutions of learning in all disciplines. But still India is way behind in providing world class education. Today, India is one of the fastest growing 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 with quality education. To achieve and reach the future requirements there is an urgent need to relook at the Financial Resources, Education Policies, Access and Equity, Quality Standards, Relevance and at the end the Responsiveness. To attain and sustain international quality, certain components are particularly relevant. There must be careful selection of staff and continuous staff development, in particular through the promotion of appropriate programs for academic development, including learning methodology or teaching. We must focus on mobility between countries, between higher education institutions and the world of work, as well as student mobility within and between countries. So that they can learn about working environment. Internal self-evaluation and external review must be conducted openly and periodically by independent specialists, if possible with international experts. If we are talk about India, we are providing skilled and educated people to world. Why we are unable to utilize their potential to covert our country from developing to developed country. We must create some parameters, to indulge educated people for driving our economy forward. We are moving towards an era which would be defined by the parameters of knowledge. We need an educational system that is modern/advanced, liberal and can adapt to the changing demands of a changing society, a changing economy and a changing global world. Indian higher education system and regulatory bodies must identify the key issues and quickly make policies to remove those hurdles. Only one or two universities can't make much difference. If the government welcomes such initiatives which drive our education system forward, then 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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