

A Conceptual Study on Higher Education in India: Issues and Challenges

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ABSTRACT

Education is one of the most powerful factors responsible for the development of any country. With the expansion of knowledge at global level, higher education has emerged throughout the world to meet the ever-increasing need of trained manpower for mounting economies of the world. The developed countries have adopted a target of providing higher professional education on mass scale to meet the ever increasing demand of professional education to millions of people. Education is seen as a driving force in shaping the civil society and also the catalyst for extraordinary economic growth and generation of employment opportunities for millions of young people. Thus, education is recognized as one of the critical elements of the national development efforts and higher education, in particular, is of vital importance for the nation, as it is a powerful tool to build knowledge based society of the 21st century. This paper aims to identify the issues and challenges in the field of higher education in India.

Keywords: *Challenges, Development, Education, Economy, Issues*

I. INTRODUCTION

The term 'education' has been interpreted by different people in different ways. Some people define it as formal schooling or lifelong learning. Some others refer to it as acquisition of knowledge, skills and attitudes. Some say that education is nothing, but training of people's mind in a particular direction to bring about desired changes. In the broader or wider sense, education is not limited to a classroom or a school only. It is considered to be a lifelong process, where all the experiences, knowledge and wisdom that an individual acquires at different stages of one's life through different channels viz., formally, informally and incidentally are termed as education. According to Swami Vivekananda, "education is the manifestation of perfection already in man. Like fire in a piece of flint, knowledge exists in the mind. Suggestion is the friction; which brings it out". The broader view considers education as an act or experience that has formative or additive effect on the personality of an individual. It is believed that education is not only an instrument of social change, but also an investment in national development. Such a view of education encompasses all life experiences, as there is a shift in emphasis

from individual development to national development. It is considered that education is a lifelong process that includes all experiences that the child receives in the school or at home, in the community and society through interactions of various sorts and activities.

II. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To analyze the importance of higher education.
- To study the issues related to higher education in India.
- To find out the challenges associated with higher education in India.
- To suggest solutions for overcoming problems and improving the quality of higher education in India.

III. METHODOLOGY

The present paper is based on secondary data collected from the published and unpublished records, reports and contributions of several institutions, organizations and individuals in India. Specifically, the secondary sources include Annual Reports of UGC, Planning Commission, Education Department of Ministry of Human Resource Development, Economic Survey and other journals, books and websites.

IV. HIGHER EDUCATION

Higher education is also referred to as post-secondary or tertiary education. It is the education given after secondary education in colleges of education, polytechnics and universities and in those institutions offering correspondence courses [1]. In order to define higher education in terms of the levels and functions of the educational experience offered, Bennett [2] identifies higher educational institutions as unique institutions which is differentiated from others in terms of research and its managers are designated as Provost, Rector, and Vicechancellor. World Bank [3] mentioned higher education as a fundamental instrument for the construction of a knowledge economy and the development of human capitals all over the world. Peretomode [4] stated, "higher education is the facilitator, the bed rock, the power house and the driving force for the strong socio-economic, political, cultural, healthier and industrial development of a nation as higher education institutions are key mechanisms increasingly recognized as wealth and human capital producing industries. According to Kors [5], only human capital can sustain growth. World Bank [6] argued that higher education is fundamental to all developing countries if they are to prosper in a world economy where knowledge has become a vital area of advantage. The quality of knowledge which is generated in institutions of higher learning is critical to national competitiveness. It is only quality education that can sharpen the minds of the individual and help transform the society economically, socially and politically. Countries can achieve sustainable development by improving through training in higher level, the skills of their human capitals. From a global perspective, higher level manpower training has been recognized as a primary tool for national development. Such high level educational provision enables the citizens to acquire skills and techniques which are ploughed into human productivity, creativity, competence, initiative, innovation and inventiveness [7].

V. HIGHER EDUCATION IN INDIA

The higher education system in India has grown in a remarkable way, particularly in the post-independence period, to become one of the largest systems of its kind in the world. Indian education ladder starts at 6 years of age. It comprise of 10 years of primary or elementary and secondary stages, 2 years of higher secondary stages, 3 years bachelor's degree, 2 years of masters degree and at least 3 years beyond masters degree for a Ph.D. According to NEP 1968, 1986 this is known as 10+2+3 system. The Post Higher Secondary Education is known as 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[8]. 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 and 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 five 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 [9]. The number of Universities has increased 34 times from 20 in 1950 to 677 in 2014 [8]. The Indian higher education system has undergone massive expansion to become the largest in the world enrolling over 70 million students by 2030 [10]. Despite such progress, 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.

VI. ISSUES IN INDIAN HIGHER EDUCATION

Some of the major issues faced by Indian higher education system are:

➤ *Teaching Quality*

The first issue that higher education in India is facing is decreasing teaching quality. Most of the teachers in India lack appropriate skills of teaching. They are not well trained and qualified for the job they are assigned to. Some colleges and universities recruit young graduates as assistant professors who have no experience of teaching. Therefore, leads to low quality teaching.

➤ *Inadequate Funding*

Inadequate funding is also an issue with higher education in India. No doubt India is spending good amount on higher education. Yet, it needs to spend more in order to improve the quality of education and meet the International benchmark. The problem of inadequate funding of education has been a bane to educational development in the country. Onokerrhoraye[11] maintained that a major constraint in attaining academic excellence is financial constraints which made many academics and non-academics to be working under difficult circumstances.

➤ **Privatization**

Privatization is also a big issue that higher education in India faces. Privatization of higher education in India started in the early 90s under the LPG (Liberalization, privatization and globalization) policy. The last two decades has witnessed an exponential growth in Indian higher education system. But there remain lots of challenges to privatization. Privatization of higher education has badly affected the poor, undermined equity, diversity and openness. Moreover, private providers, in the interest of maximizing profit, have every incentive to 'minimize costs' by compromising on the quality of education provided in their institutions.

➤ **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 persons from reserved categories even though they are not suitable are selected.

➤ **Inadequate facilities and infrastructure**

In India, many universities and colleges don't have adequate infrastructure or facilities to teach students effectively. Even many private universities and colleges are running courses without classrooms. Internet and Wi-Fi facility is still out of reach of many students.

VII. CHALLENGES IN INDIAN HIGHER EDUCATION

Although UGC is continuously working and focusing on quality education in higher education sector. Still India is facing lot of problems and challenges in education system. Some of the basic challenges in higher education system in India are:

➤ **Enrolment**

According to All India Higher Education Survey (AIHES), the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) of India in higher education is only 25.2% for the year 2016-2017 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 not able to meet the minimum requirements laid down by the

UGC and the universities of India are not in a position to mark its place among the top universities of the world.

➤ ***Political interference***

Most of the educational Institutions are owned by the political leaders, who are playing key role in governing bodies of the Universities. They are using the innocent students for their selfish means. Students organise campaigns, forget their own objectives and begin to develop their careers in politics.

➤ ***Faculty***

Faculty shortages and the inability of the state educational system to attract and retain well qualified teachers have been posing challenges to quality education for many years. Large numbers of NET/ Ph.D. candidates are unemployed even there are lot of vacancies in higher education, these deserving candidates are then applying in other departments which is a biggest blow to the higher education system.

➤ ***Accreditation***

As per the data provided by the NAAC, less than 50% of the total higher education institutions in the country were accredited. And among those accredited, only few of the universities and colleges were found to be of quality to be ranked at 'A' level".

➤ ***Research and Innovation***

There are very nominal scholars in our country whose writings are cited. There is inadequate focus on research in higher education institutes. There are insufficient resources and facilities, as well as, limited numbers of quality faculty to advise students. Most of the research scholars are without fellowships or not getting their fellowships on time which directly or indirectly affects their research. Moreover, Indian higher education institutions are poorly connected to research centers. So, this is another area of challenge to the higher education in India.

➤ ***Structure of higher education***

Management of the Indian education faces challenges of over-centralisation, bureaucratic structures and lack of accountability, transparency, and professionalism. As a result of increase in number of affiliated colleges and students, the burden of administrative functions of universities has significantly increased and the core focus on academics and research is diluted.

VIII. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

While concluding, it can be said that over the period of time, growth has been taking place in higher education in terms of institutions, enrolments etc. but it is not sufficient. Indian economy is facing various challenges regarding higher education, which need to overcome through appropriate policy formation and their effective implementation. To address the challenges of quality in higher education in India, the following are recommended:

- 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.
- Government of India should provide adequate funds to revitalize the higher education system.
- Enabling environment should be created for staff through improved conditions of service, provision of basic infrastructures, virtual libraries and information communication technologies and internet connectivity.
- Institutions of higher learning in India should set up internal quality assurance and monitoring of lecture units to enhance good quality delivery.
- Reform in existing higher education institutions in India can be promoted through deliberate collaborative efforts by government, business sectors, civil society and the academia. This could help to reinvent Indian higher education system for better quality delivery in research, teaching and community services.
- Government must promote collaboration between Indian higher education institutes and International institutes and also generate linkage between national research laboratories and research centers of top institutions for better quality and collaborative research.
- To improve quality, teaching and non-teaching staff should be motivated to make them more dedicated, devoted, committed and effective in their jobs.
- Institutions of higher learning in India should employ more teaching faculty to meet the student population.
- Institutional policies should be revised to ensure that more emphasis is paid on teaching effectiveness for better quality education.

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