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# HIGHER EDUCATION SECTOR IN INDIA: CHALLENGES OF SUSTAINABILITY

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**Abstract:** Higher education is a powerful tool to build knowledge based society for any country. With growing size of higher education in field of management and technical courses, it has become utmost important to build a efficient database on higher education. Higher education has witnessed tremendous changes in education system. This is the right time to build excellent system in field of education and research. 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. When India can provide skilled people to other countries then why not India must progress from developing to developed country. 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 also highlighted some problems and prospects of Indian higher education. Finally the paper discussed here is need of plans requires for combine employers and youth need of Expectations of from various stakeholders Students, Industry, Educational Institutions, Parents and Government.

**Key words:** Gross Enrollment Ratio (G.E.R), Human Resource, Quality Education.

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## INTRODUCTION

Change at the scale we will see in the next ten years in education in India is unprecedented in human history - Prof Pankaj Chandra, Director IIM, Bangalore.

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. Higher education being the highest point of education provides quality researchers, teachers and professors for better education system. 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.

Quality education is mandatory for economic growth. Higher education system adds value to the human resource and provides leaders in all fields like management, business, politics.

Administration etc. Importance of higher education is unavoidable for developing countries like India. Higher education system has witnessed significant expansion in last few years, both in terms of the number of institutions and colleges as well as the student enrollment in various courses. India has more than 600 universities and over 30,000 colleges with 285.63 million students till end of 2013.

Some Indian institutes, such as Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs) and Indian Institute of Management (IIMs), have been globally recognized for their education standards. The IITs enroll near about 8000 students annually and pass out students contributed to both the growth of the private sector and the public sectors of India. However no Indian University or college is known for world class education like Cambridge and Harvard. According to the London Times Higher Education (2009)- Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) World University rankings - There was no Indian university in Top 100 universities but many other Asian Universities were included . Hong Kong has three universities in top 100, ranked at 24, 35 and 46; Singapore has two ranked at 30 and 73; South Korea also have two ranked at 47 and 69 and Taiwan one in the 95th position. China also managed to get two universities ranked at 49 and 52. There is no Indian Institute till 200. Only the IIT, Kanpur and Madras and Delhi University got rank 237, 284 and 291 respectively.

Shanghai University conducted a research on universities and institutes all over the world. Its research shows that there is no single indian university in top 300 universities while China has six universities. The first institute to

make its appearance in top 400 is the Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore. The IIT, Khargpur is also counted in top 500. India also has some fine universities but besides that we also have many universities those are established only for making money. Many universities in India are running their own courses without affiliation or recognition. Students from semi-urban and rural areas often fall prey to these institutes and colleges. UGC and other Regulatory authorities have been trying very hard to extirpate the menace of private universities but till now they didn't succeed.

In 21st century, Knowledge is power. The more knowledge power one has, the more empowered one is. According to the University Grants Commission (UGC), India needs more than 1500 universities with adequate facilities by the end of the year 2015 in order to compete in the global market. India lacks the critical mass in higher education. Its GER (gross enrolment ratio) is a mere 11 per cent as compared to China's 20 per cent, the USA has 83 per cent and South Korea's is 91 per cent. If we conclude this GER then China has double the number of students pursuing higher education than India.

The higher education scenario of India does not match with the global education quality standards. Hence, there is enough justification for an increased assessment of the Quality of the country's educational institutions. Traditionally, these institutions or universities assumed that education quality could be determined by their internal resources, viz., experienced faculty with an impressive set of degrees, good and impressive records for broacher, number of books and journals in the library, an ultra-modern and advance campus with WIFI, and size of the endowment, etc., or by its definable and assessable outputs, viz., highly satisfied and employable graduates, efficient use of resources, producing uniquely educated students. The governmental committees and many independent academicians have highlighted the crisis confronting the education system: ' increasing unrest and indiscipline on the campuses; increasing educated unemployment; weakening of student motivation; 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 policy makers and authorities have often spoken about the need for radical reconstruction of the education system, what has been achieved in reality is only moderate reformism.

The universities of institutes with world class facilities in India are limited. Most of our Indian institutes, colleges and universities lack in providing high-end research facilities. Lack of the grants and money issued in education sector makes it very difficult to provide top quality facilities or engage in cutting-edge research. This gap has to be bridged if we want to speed

up our path toward development. The University Grant Commission of India is not only the lone grant giving agency in India, but also responsible for coordinating, directing, determining and maintaining the standards in institutions of higher education.

## OBJECTIVES

To analyze the current scenario of higher education system in India

To identify the key issues faced by higher education system

## ACCREDATION OF ACEDEMIC INSTITUTIONS

There are two primary accreditation bodies involved in the accreditation of academics programs. AICTE (All India Council for Technical Education) has established a board National Accreditation Board (NAB). NAB was set up to conduct evaluation of Technical Institutions on the basis of guidelines, Standards and Norms specified by AICTE and to give details to AICTE or to the Commission or to the other bodies, regarding recognition or de-recognition of the institution or college. AICTE is the only one authorized body for approving technical programs.

Except of UGC there are other regulatory bodies like AICTE, Bar council, Medical Council etc. Below is the full composition of all those bodies which rums complete education system in India.

| | **Formal Education** | **Technical And Professional Education** | **Skill Development** | **Vocational Training** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Composition | Universities<br>Colleges<br>Polytechnics<br>Institute of national importance | Engineering colleges<br>Management school<br>Law, Medical, Pharmacy etc. | ITSs<br>ITCs<br>Private skill development centers | Finishing schools<br>English Training Air hostess training |
| Key Regulators | UGC<br>State Government<br>IGNOU | AICTE<br>Bar Council of India<br>ICAI<br>Medical Council of India | DGET for ITIs & ITCs<br>Unregulated for others | No Regulator |
| Accreditation Bodies | NAAC | NBA | None | None |
| Key Players | IITs<br>IIMs<br>SRCC | Universities<br>Colleges | ITIs<br>ITCs<br>Private Centers | VETA<br>Frankfinn |

NAAC (The National Assessment and Accreditation Council) is an autonomous body, which was established by the University Grants Commission (UGC) of India to assess and accredit institutions/ colleges/universities of higher education in the country. It was set up on recommendations of the National Policy in Education (1986) that laid special emphasis on upholding the quality of higher education in India.

Many educational regulatory bodies like UGC, All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE), Bar Council of India (BCI), Distance Education Council (DEC), Dentist Council of India (DCI), Indian Council for

Agriculture Research (ICAR), 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), Central Council of Homeopathy (CCH), the Central Council of Indian Medicine (CCIM) and such other regulatory bodies are trying to cope up with the growing population and rapidly changing trends. 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.

## HIGHER EDUCATION - STASTICAL OVERVIEW

At the end of 2013, there were 642 government-recognized Universities and 34908 colleges in India. But still we need more than 1500 universities to cater the demand. According to all india survey on higher education India has 642 colleges at the end of 2013.

| No. of Institutions/Enrollment | 2010-11 | 2011-12 |
|---|---|---|
| Universities | 621 | 642 (up to dec.2013) |
| Colleges | 32974 | 34908 |
| Enrolment (in Lakhs) | 275.00 | 285.63 |
| Enrolment in Distance mode (In lakhs) | 33.14 | 35.60 |

The above statstics shows that our education system is improving not only in number of colleges and universities but also in enrollment. There were 32974 colleges in 2010-11 and this figure increased to 34908 in 2011-12. The enrollment figure in distance education programme also shows positive signs. Most of these universities have affiliated colleges where undergraduate courses are approved and taught. But still, if we compare this improving stat with increasing population, then we have to rethink, is it still improving.

If we talk about the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in higher education then we will find positive increase. Below statistic support this.

| | 2010-11 | 2011-12 |
|---|---|---|
| Male | 20.8 | 21.6 |
| Female | 17.9 | 18.9 |
| Total | 19.4 | 20.4 |

However gross enrolment ration increased over past few years but still it is not satisfactory. Gross enrolment Ratio has increased to 20.4 in 2011- 12 from 19.4 in 2010-11 showing growth of 5.15 percentage point during that period. It may be seen that GER for male population is marginally higher which clearly indicates that women

is also pursuing higher education and posing a challenge to male dominated society which is overall a healthy sign for Indian society.

In India categorization or distribution of colleges and universities is also not balance. As shown in the below figure most of the share is occupied by the Un-Aid private colleges. After that aided colleges are very less near to 14%. Even than the most of the colleges runs only undergraduates programme specially the private colleges. The data in below Graphical representation show that highest numbers of student are enrolled at under graduate level followed by post graduate and diploma.

In higher education in India, about 79 per cent of students enrolled at undergraduate level and only about 11.8 per cent are enrolled at post graduate level. Surprisingly, diploma and certificate courses has a meagre 1 per cent enrolment as it is considered as an available provision for those who are not able to make it in the mainstream higher education. Unfortunately, for a nation aspiring to become a knowledge economy, a trivial 1 per cent enrolment in research study would not be praiseworthy (UGC, 2012).

It has been observed that the share of enrolment in traditional courses viz., humanities, social sciences and pure/natural sciences has declined during the last one decade and the same trend is likely to continue in near future. The inclination for professional courses and thereby enhanced enrolment is favoured by increased private providers and other stakeholders, who anticipate better job prospects. This is likely to hamper the basic research output. The contribution of India in research publication has increased during last one decade but compared to its contemporary developing nations its growth has not been appreciable (DST,

2012). Further the Distance education accounts for 26 per cent of the total students' enrolments and the remaining 74 per cent is the share of classroom teaching in higher education (FICCI, 2011). Figure 1 shows a more detailed bifurcation of the faculty-wise enrolments.

## BUDGET ANALYSIS 2013-14

The budget of 2013-14 proposes a fund outflow of Rs 65,867 crore for education, against Rs.

61,427 crore in 2012-13. If we compare then there is only 17% increase from the current fiscal's estimates against 18% hike in the budget spending that was last year and 24 % in the year 2011-12.

The Department of Higher Education has been allocated Rs. 16,210 crore against Rs. 13,479 last year with increase of 20.26%. This amount is also includes provision for various higher and technical institutions.

UGC has been allocated Rs 5,769.00 crore, which is inclusive of allocation for Central

Universities and Deemed Universities.

For the "National Mission for Education through ICT", has been provided Rs. 400.00 crore has been made.

IGNOU, which has been in the forefront of distance education mode, has made a provision of Rs.125.00 crore

For technical education, There is a provision of Rs. 7,299 crore . It includes assistance to IITs, NITs, IIMs, etc. Out of this, Rs. 1,300.00 crore for NITs, Rs. 2,400.00 crore for IITs and Rs. 350.00 crore for IIMs - this allocation is including new ones. Indian Institutes of Science Education and Research (including IIS, Bangalore) has been provided Rs. 859.50 crore. Apart from the provisions for various ongoing schemes in the Technical Education sector, a provision of Rs. 700 crore has been provided for Polytechnics in the States.

## CHALLENGES & ISSUES

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.

**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.

India can no longer continue with these issues. Rather, it requires major investment in disciplines of tourism, humanities, social sciences, natural sciences and commerce and provides them adequate field based experience to enhance knowledge with skills and develop appropriate attitudes

## SUGGESTION AND RCOMMENDATION

The syllabus or curriculum for higher education is outdated in most cases. Its syllabus contain matters that the world has moved on with. To compete with global education, you need the curriculum to be progressive in nature. Students need to be given choices for enrolment in multiple courses and allowed to choose their favorite after 1st or 2nd semester. The syllabus must contain more practical applications that the theoretical part. The curriculum must not be exams driven, it must be industry driven. Exams should be complimented with incentives for innovation and creative works. Students should have choice to switch to another stream if they justify some basic criteria. But in switching stream like from engineering to commerce, it would be gifficult so for that you need young and dynamic faculty.

The next issue pops up in the curriculum board, in most cases board in filled with older people above 60's or 70's. I strongly recommend that these boards must have young professors and teachers to have a mix of experience and youth in system. The younger ones are more updated with the technological changes and the new age needs of the students.

The quality teachers are also hard to find out, who only works for the sake of the education. The fact is that most of the younger professors are doing jobs because they have nothing better to do. The point is very simple; they are paid much less in comparison with rest. A graduated student earns more in corporate world that what a lecturer or a Assistant Professor earn. Despite the 6th pay commission the salary in teaching is much less to attract quality faculty. Once you start paying worth the caliber, you get the people who actually want to teach.

This might sound like a ridiculous suggestion but if you think about it, it might make some sense. We all know that private colleges and many universities make money and they are run as large businesses and even build up educational organisation. The solution, I feel is that make them competitive. Make them under direct competition rather than indirect. Let them fight out openly rather that doing so under the carpet. Education has become a business in some form, the more we hide behind it, and the more corruption would step in. If Educational institutes/colleges are using this business to improve their education system, then let them do it, that's how world class universities work and that's how we should work if we follow the colonial system. The best way forward is to make them

for profit, taxable and it would increase capital for them and revenue for government as well as increase transparency for us.

The interaction of industry players with the educational system can improve the level of education. Industries could play a major role in changing the current education system.

Companies should be seeking out for such interactions, if they don't agree to it, then the universities should use their advantage. When companies or industry players come for placements, there should be basic qualification criteria for their eligibility for the placements. Companies must be asking to donate money for university research and development. Most of the companies would fall in line automatically since for them human capital is much more important than these meager sums of money. Many companies are giving lakhs to recruiting agencies than why wouldn't they give this money to universities.

One of the most underrated potentials is the power of the Alumni in Indian education system. Barring the IIT's and few other top institutes, the concept of Alumni networking is nonexistent or not used by the many institutions. Graduated alumni are earning somewhere, alumni networks need to be very well intertwined with the university affairs. Alumni are very eager to give assistance to their institutions. Once you establish a credible network which is transparent, it would give the avenue as well as the confidence for the alumni to contribute in terms of money or academic expertise. Above points are just few suggestions to tackle issues faced by Indian higher education system.

In brief stop spending money on non performing institutions and universities. Reduce spending on non valuable projects, which don't have future implications. There must be some minimum guideline, which must be followed by each institute. Provide opportunities to rural students in form of scholarships, hostels, fellowship and transportation.

## 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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