



Indian higher education: The contemporary issues

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Abstract

Although there have been challenges to higher education in the past, these most recent calls for reform may provoke a fundamental change in higher education. This change may not occur as a direct response to calls for greater transparency and accountability, but rather because of the opportunity to reflect on the purpose of higher education, the role of colleges and universities in the new millennium, and emerging scientific research on how people learn. These disparate literatures have not been tied together in a way that would examine the impact of fundamental change from the policy level to the institutional level and to the everyday lives of college and university administrators, faculty and students.

Indian higher education system is the third largest in the world, next to the United States and China. Since independence, India as a developing nation is contentiously progressing in the education field. Although there have been lot of challenges to higher education system of India but equally have lot of opportunities to overcome these challenges and to make higher education system much better. It needs greater transparency and accountability, the role of colleges and universities in the new millennium, and emerging scientific research on how people learn is of utmost important. India need well skilled and highly educated people who can drive our economy forward. 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. This study aims at highlighting the challenges and to point out the opportunities in higher education system in India.

Keywords: higher education, emerging scientific

1. Introduction

India holds an important place in the global education industry. The country has more than 1.4 million schools with over 227 million students enrolled and more than 36,000 higher education institutes. India has one of the largest higher education systems in the world. However, there is still a lot of potential for further development in the education system. The main purpose of this paper is to show the role of education in economic development and the effect of education on labour productivity, poverty, trade, technology, health, income distribution and family structure. Education provides a foundation for development, the ground work on which much of our economic and social well-being is built. It is the key to increasing economic efficiency and social consistency. By increasing the value and efficiency of their labor, it helps to raise the poor from poverty. It increases the overall productivity and intellectual flexibility of the labor force. It helps to ensure that a country is competitive in world markets now characterized by changing technologies and production methods. This paper discusses the various issues which need to be addressed urgently if India has to make rapid strides in the field of education. The data was collected from secondary sources for analysis and study. The data shows that the amount of spending in this sector has not increased commensurate with the global standards and needs.

The objective of the paper is to study the problems in higher education in India, especially after globalization and the entry of the private sector in higher education and examine some plausible solutions to improve the quality, affordability and

availability to those who deserve it. The requirements of higher education cannot be wholly be met by the Government. However, the Government's presence is very crucial to facilitate the implementation of the equity and inclusive growth principles. An increased and active role of the private sector is inevitable, it is necessary to encourage research, vocational courses and provide high-quality education. It is necessary to expedite steps to make teaching an attractive career in order to attract the best talent. It is equally important to improve the quality of college education at the undergraduate level, which will have a direct impact on the quality and caliber of students opting for entry into institutions of excellence in higher education.

2. The importance of education in economic development

- Education sector has seen a host of reforms and improved financial outlays in recent years that could possibly transform the country into a knowledge haven. With human resource increasingly gaining significance in the overall development of the country, development of education infrastructure is expected to remain the key focus in the current decade. In this scenario, infrastructure investment in the education sector is likely to see a considerable increase in the current decade. Moreover, availability of English speaking tech-educated talent, democratic governance and a strong legal and intellectual property protection framework are enablers for world class product development, as per Mr. Amit Phadnis, President-Engineering and Site Leader for Cisco (India).

- The Government of India has taken several steps including opening of IIT's and IIM's in new locations as well as allocating educational grants for research scholars in most government institutions. Furthermore, with online modes of education being used by several educational organizations, the higher education sector in India is set for some major changes and developments in the years to come.
- Prior to the nineteenth century, systematic investment in human capital was not considered especially important in any country. Expenditures on schooling, on-the-job training, and other similar forms of investment were quite small. This began to change radically during this century with the application of science to the development of new goods and more efficient methods of production, first in Great Britain, and then gradually in other countries.
- Many countries are now on the brink of a further increase in access to secondary and higher education and in effecting spectacular improvements in the quality of education offered at all levels. As increasing numbers of students complete their basic education, their demand for education at higher levels is similarly increasing. Educating girls and women is probably the single most effective investment a developing country can make, whether or not women work outside the home. It creates a multitude of positive remunerations for families including better family health and nutrition, improved birth spacing, lower infant and child mortality, and enhanced educational attainment of children.

3. Opportunities in higher education

India now boasts of having more than 33,000 colleges and 659 universities, which has been quite a remarkable growth during the last six decades. The year 2012 witnessed 21.4 million enrolments, which makes India the 3rd largest educational system in the world. Unfortunately, the educational infrastructure of India is inadequate to handle such huge volumes. In spite all the government spending in the educational sector, it is just too insufficient to meet the growing requirements. Therefore, higher Education sector has now been identified as one of the promising areas for private and foreign investments. It offers immense investment opportunities in both non-regulated and regulated segments (Nexus Novus, 26 July, 2013).

Indian higher education system is growing very fast irrespective of various challenges but there is no reason that these Challenges cannot be overcome. Equality of educational opportunity in higher education is considered essential because higher education is a powerful tool for reducing or eliminating income and wealth disparities. The need to enhance the employability of graduates is presenting entry points for collaboration in enterprise education and entrepreneurship, links with industry, research skills and the wide range of transferable skills, including English. The emerging interest in Indian higher education institutions in the vocational skills market provides areas for potential engagement with international partners. There is a need to build stronger relationships and increase mutual understanding in higher education by increasing support and participation in platforms (conferences, workshops, seminars) which enable

debate and dialogue with other countries of the world.(British Council, 2014).

4. Challenges in higher education in India

It is our 69th year of independence still our education system has not been developed fully. We are not able to list a single university in top 100 universities of the world. Various governments changed during these six decades. They tried to boost the education system and implemented various education policies but they were not sufficient to put an example for the universe. UGC is continuously working and focusing on quality education in higher education sector. Still we are facing lot of problems and challenges in our education system. Some of the basic challenges in higher education system in India are discussed below:

- **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.
- **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 / PhD 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, as of June 2010, "not even 25% of the total higher education institutions in the country were accredited. And among those accredited, only 30% of the universities and 45% of the colleges were found to be of quality to be ranked at 'A' level".

5. 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. Although the priorities, which are being assigned today to the task of Education for All, will continue to be preponderant, the country will have to prepare itself to invest more and more on higher education and, simultaneously, measures will have to be taken to refine, diversify and upgrade higher education and research programmes.

- **Incentives to teachers and researchers:** Industry and students are expecting specialized courses to be offered so that they get the latest and best in education and they are also industry ready and employable. 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. Though efforts are required to improve the country's innovative capacity, yet the efforts should be to build on the existing strengths in light of new understanding of the research innovation- growth linkage.
- **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.
- **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.
- **Action plan for improving quality:** Academic and administrative audit should be conducted once in three years in colleges by external experts for ensuring quality in all aspects of academic activities. The self-finance colleges should come forward for accreditation and fulfill 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.
- **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.

6. Conclusion

In the part of conclusion a Higher education can be thought of as being regulated by market rules. In such an economic view, there is a demand for training and expertise, and universities and other higher education institutions are suppliers in the market in which this demand is voiced. They fund themselves by asking a price for the commodity they offer, and they cater to those who cherish the commodity and are able to pay the price. There is a pressure on higher education institutions to gain at least some of their earnings through selling their product. The relation of such trends to globalizations is clear: this is a case of economic globalization driven by market imperatives. The prevailing system of higher education in India is not capable of starting a new era and is not competitive at the international level with the exception of few institutes. This system needs a major renovation to stand competitively in this era of globalization.

India is today one of the fastest developing 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 and also the quality of higher education in India. 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.

7. References

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