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HIGHER EDUCATION IN INDIA - CHALLENGES

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ABSTRACT

Higher Education in India: Challenges endeavors to probe into the problems of higher education in India in the context of globalization. The paper discusses the various issues which need to be addressed urgently if India has to make rapid strides in the field of education. Education system of India is full of intricacies of different nature. Every ladder of education has its own problems and prospects. However, attempts have been taken to lessen complexities. From ages, time to time commissions have been constituted to improve and remove the anomalies of Indian education system especially, ensuring quality and uniformity in India education system. Idea of Quality assurance cell has not only been mooted out but also implemented across the national level. The world has realized that the economic success of the states is directly determined by their education systems. Education is a Nation's Strength. A developed nation is inevitably an educated nation. 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. The current study aims to highlight the challenges and to point out the opportunities in higher education system in India.

Keywords: Higher Education, Opportunities, Challenges, Colleges, Universities MHRD, UGC

INTRODUCTION:

India's higher education system is the third largest in the world, next to the **United States** and China. The main governing body at the tertiary level is the University Grants Commission, which enforces its standards, advises the government, and helps

coordinate between the centre and the state. Accreditation for higher learning is overseen by 15 autonomous institutions established

By the University Grants Commission (UGC).

The Indian higher education system faces a raft of challenges, among which the issue of access and quality rank near the top. The government has set a goal of increasing the enrollment ratio among Indians of college age (gross enrollment ratio- GER) to 30 percent by 2020, from a current rate of just under 20 percent. In doing so, the government hopes to bring the nation's GER broadly into line with the projected 2020 global average. It also recognizes that quality standards need to be improved in tandem with access if the GER goals are to have a measurable impact on the broader Indian economy.

In concert with plans to broaden access to tertiary study opportunities, the 12th Five-Year Plan also discusses the need for a deepening of academic reforms, with institutions being asked to shift their instructional emphasis from an "input-centric and credential-focused" approach to a more "learner-centric" approach. This is to be achieved through: regular revisions to curricula, the implementation of a choice-based credit system, the introduction of continuous and comprehensive student evaluations, a cumulative grade point system, and new marking and grading schemes. Learner-centric curriculum reforms include the introduction of credit requirements for non-major elective courses and the creation of syllabi and programs based on learning outcomes relevant to the labor market. The RUSA reforms are aimed primarily at improving funding for the state university system where 94 percent of university students (state universities, affiliated colleges private and public) are

enrolled. Currently, state universities are so heavily reliant on the affiliation fees they receive from affiliated colleges that they operate primarily as administrative and exam conducting centers rather than as multi-dimensional institutions that also promote teaching, research and faculty development.

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As per the latest 2011 Census, about 8.15% (68 millions) of Indians are graduates, with Union

Territories of Chandigarh and Delhi topping the list with 24.65% and 22.56% of their population being graduates respectively. Indian higher education system has expanded at a fast pace by adding nearly 20,000 colleges and more than 8 million students in a decade from 2000–01 to 2010–11. As of 2016, India has 799 universities, with a break up of 44 central universities, 540 state universities, 122 deemed universities, 90 private universities, 5 institutions established and functioning under the State Act, and 75 Institutes of National Importance which include AIIMS, IIT's and NIT's among others. Other institutions include 39,071 colleges as Government Degree Colleges and Private

Degree Colleges, including 1800 exclusive women's colleges, functioning under these universities and institutions as reported by the UGC in 2016. Colleges may be Autonomous, i.e. empowered to examine their own degrees, up to PhD level in some cases, or non-autonomous, in which case their examinations are under the supervision of the university to which they are affiliated; in either case, however, degrees are awarded in the name of the university rather than the college.

The emphasis in the tertiary level of education lies on science and technology Indian educational institutions by 2004 consisted of a large number of technology institutes. Distance learning and open education is also a feature of the Indian higher education system, and is looked after by the Distance Education Council. Indira Gandhi National Open University is the largest university in the world by number of students, having approximately 3.5 million students across the globe.

Indian higher education is in need of radical reforms. A focus on enforcing higher standards of transparency, strengthening of the vocational and doctoral education pipeline, and professionalization of the sector through stronger institutional responsibility would help in reprioritizing efforts and working around the complexities. The rise of IT sector and engineering education in India has boxed students into linear path without giving them a chance to explore and discover their passions. Concerted and collaborative efforts are needed in broaden student choices through liberal arts education.

CHALLENGES

The education system in India has struggled for a long time. With the country set to become one of the youngest nations in the world by 2030 – around 140 million people will be in the college-age group – can the country live up to its aims of delivering a world-class higher education system?

To coincide with our latest report on Indian international student mobility, we look at the efforts being made to improve the country's home-grown institutions. Despite strong ambitions, the higher education system in India still lags behind the standards of the world's best universities. In the QS World University Ranking 2015/16, only two Indian universities were featured in the top 200, while just 10 made it into the top 700.

Driven by market opportunities and entrepreneurial zeal, many institutions are taking advantage of the lax regulatory environment to offer 'degrees' not approved by Indian authorities, and many institutions are functioning as pseudo non-profit organisations, developing sophisticated financial methods to siphon off the 'profits'. Regulatory authorities like UGC and AICTE have been trying to extirpate private universities that run courses with no affiliation or recognition. Students from rural and semi-urban background often fall prey to these institutes and colleges. One of the fundamental weaknesses of the system is lack of transparency and recommendations have been made to mandate high standards of data disclosures by institutions on performance. Other problem was on the excessive obsession of having Indian

universities among top global college and university rankings, at times originating from government's inconsistent priorities, indicating a showcasing mentality of Indian higher education in the world stage while pathetic ignorance towards primary and secondary educations continued. The argument has been that the whole model of ignoring primary and secondary education, while focusing on ranking of a few universities and institutes, is not a sustainable model for the nation.

Recommendations:

- The Governmental control in the Universities must be reduced, so that the University autonomy and accountability are strengthened and academic decisions are taken on merit.
- 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.
- 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, Favoritism, 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. While restructuring the syllabi and courses, efforts should be made to develop an optimal combination of acquisition of theoretical and practical skills.
- The courses should be so designed that critical reading and interpretation of classics, practical field work wherever relevant, and application of readings and other skills are given importance;.
- Quality of higher education can improve considerably through an extensive and optimal use of audio-visual technologies and Internet. The

courses should be so designed to make good use of these modern developments;

- In restructuring of syllabi, all stakeholders such as students, teachers and users of services should be involved. However, teachers should be given flexibility within the norms and benchmarks decided by the stakeholders;
- Examination reforms, gradually shifting from the terminal, annual and semester examinations to regular and continuous assessment of student's performance in learning should be implemented.
- Quality of higher education can also be improved by inducting quality oriented objectivity in merit promotions of teaching faculty. Specification of weightages for teaching, research publications/ supervision would help in making this transparent and credible;.
- Re-organization and integration of various faculties, particularly in social sciences, around interdisciplinary and multi-disciplinary courses can also help in quality improvement in teaching, research and consultancy. UGC, ICSSR and other research funding bodies should encourage interdisciplinary/ multi-disciplinary Seminars/ Conferences/ Research projects. These bodies could allocate at least 50 percent of their research funds for inter-

disciplinary activities. UGC could also take initiatives to open Centres/ Schools for promoting multi-disciplinary teaching and research.

- Basic Parameters of Academic Merit need to be developed for bringing transparency and credibility in the process of granting promotions under the Career Advancement Scheme. There should be no disparity between Readers/Professors appointed through open selections and those promoted on the basis of the Career Advancement Scheme.
- A critical review of activities of higher educational institutions as well as their budgets needs to be conducted to phase out obsolete activities and create the necessary space for new activities. The shifting from traditional incremental budgeting to performance based one is now necessary to arrest the erosion in quality in spite of the resource crunch.

Conclusion

Education is a process by which a person's body, mind and character are formed and strengthened. It is bringing of head, heart and mind together and thus enabling a person to develop an all round personality identifying the best in him or her. Higher education in India has expanded very rapidly in the last six decades after independence yet it is not equally accessible to all. India is today one of the fastest developing countries of

the world with the annual growth rate going above 9%. Still a large section of the population remains illiterate and a large number of children's do not get even primary education. This is not only excluded a large section of the population from contributing to the development of the country fully but it has also prevented them from utilising the benefits of whatever development have taken place for the benefit of the people. No doubt India is facing various challenges in higher education but to tackle these challenges and to boost higher education is utmost important. India is a country of huge human resource potential, to utilise this potential properly is the issue which needed to discuss. Opportunities are available but how to get benefits from these opportunities and how to make them accessible to others is the matter of concern. 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, infrastructure and at the end the Responsiveness.

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