

Challenges and Prospects of Higher Education in India: A Review

Anita Jhahria

Associate Professor, Department of Zoology, Shri Kalyan Govt. Girls College Sikar, Rajasthan, India

ABSTRACT

Education is one of the important factors instrumental in the development of a country. It should be transformed with the changing needs of the time and existing scenario of the world. In particular, the higher education and the mode of its delivery should be tuned time and again for greater development and changes to cope with such challenges. In this backdrop, given the present scenario of Indian higher education, there needs a paradigm shift in the higher education system. The unplanned expansion of higher education opportunities, spiraling trend of the educated unemployed, commercialization of education, the imbalance of quantity with quality, are some of the pertinent cases in point which pose continuous threats to higher education of India. In this light, the new reforms in education to come must address all the above concerns in higher education and involve innovative modalities of how to classify and reclassify information, how to look at problems from new and different directions and at last how to bring about new future society to meet the challenges to come. The recent development in communication technologies have helped to cross the barriers of time and distance. Borders have become porous and the sky open. To meet the futuristic challenging prospects of Indian higher education the present paper focuses on the need for including value based stem scientific temperament in higher education of India.

Keywords: Scenario, Higher Education, Reforms, Challenges, Future Prospects.

INTRODUCTION

"Education is an ornament in prosperity and a refuge in adversity." Aristotle

Higher education is by and large, recognized to embrace teaching, research and extension. If we critically analyze the assortment of concepts pertaining to higher education, we can note the various roles personated by higher education in our society. Higher education is the fount or feeder system in all walks of life and therefore supplies the much-needed human resources in management, planning, design, teaching and research. It is essentially the gateway to multifaceted development and prosperity in the country. Scientific and technological advancement and economic evolution of a country are as dependant on the higher education system as they are on the working class.

Higher education in India has experienced dramatic expansion since independence. 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. Methods of higher education also have to be appropriate to the needs of four pillars of education, learning to learn, learning to do, learning to be and learning to become. (Ganihar & Bhat, 2006) Student centered education and the employment of dynamic method of education will require from teachers new attitudes and skills (Saravana kumar & Mohan, 2007)

Methods of teaching through lectures will have to be supplemented with the methods that will lay stress on self study, personal consultation between teachers and students and informative sessions of seminars and workshops. 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.

The student of today learning a specific content of information will find to his amazement that he is not prepared to face the life which he has to live for the next five decades because the knowledge furnished with, has become outdated long back. There are four predominant concepts of higher education:

- Higher education is the production of qualified human resources. In this view, higher education is eyed as a process in which the students are counted as "products" absorbed in the labour market. Thus, higher education becomes input to the growth and development of business and industry.
- Higher education is training for a research career. Higher education, in this light, is seen as the preparation for qualified scientists and researchers who would develop the frontiers of knowledge. Quality within this viewpoint is more about research publications and transmission of the academic rigour to quality research.
- Higher Education is the efficient management of teaching provision. Imparting knowledge, as it is opined by many, forms the core of educational institutions. Thus, higher education institutions focus on efficient management of teaching learning provisions by improving the quality of teaching and hence, enabling a higher completion rate among the students.
- Higher education as a matter of extending life-chances. In this observation, higher education is but, an opportunity to participate in the development process of the individual through a flexible, continuing mode of education. Remarkably, all the above concepts of higher education are not exclusive; rather they are integrated and give an overall picture of what is higher in higher education.

Thus, a well-developed and equitable system of higher education that upholds quality learning as a consequence of both teaching and research is a key ingredient of success in the emerging knowledge economy.

Objectives of Higher Education

The main objectives of the study are as follows

- To study the current status of higher education In India
- To identify the problems of higher education in India.
- To study the future prospects of higher education in India
- To give some suggestions to improve the quality of higher education in India

Two observations require declaration at the outset of any statement on higher education in India: Firstly, higher education plays a key role in the realization of India's extraordinary potential and aspirations for economic and technological advancement. Secondly, this potential and its connotations for individual advancement call for an extraordinary demand of higher education among India's youth.

Valuable contributions in higher education have been made by Henard, (2008), Masani, (2011), Shaguri,(2013), Sharma and Sharma(2015),Sheikh (2017), Rajalakshmy (2012), Wong and. Chiu(2019), Boruah(2018) Kalyan and Subramanyam (2018) Srimathi and Krishanmoorthy(2019)

Higher education hub

India is attracting a large number of foreign students to their central, state and private universities and colleges from several parts of the world. Asian and western students find India a place of higher education hub due to the fact that the education provided here is inexpensive, higher quality and in the learner friendly environment. This trend evinces that Indian higher education has more potentialities to cater to the need of growing global demand.

IMPROVING QUALITY OF HIGHER EDUCATION

"The aim of teaching is simple: it is to make student learning possible .To teach is to make an assumption about that and how the student learns; therefore, to teach well implies learning about students' learning"

-Ramsden, 1992 The requirement of the teacher in higher education has several dimensions allied to it:

- It involves the provision of a broad and well laid-out context of knowledge within which students can sit and comprehend the content of their more specific studies
- It involves the creation of a learning environment in which students are encouraged to think prudently and critically and express their thoughts, and in which they wish to confront and resolve difficulties rather than gloss over them.
- It involves a constant monitoring and reflecting on the processes of teaching and student understanding and seeking to nurture them. The quality society can be produced only through quality education. In this line, the higher education of India needs mechanisms to improve the quality of education provided through universities and other degree awarding institutions. The mechanism should pay attention on refining, diversifying, and upgrading higher education and research programmes.

CHALLENGES IN HIGHER EDUCATION IN INDIA

As we consider the challenges facing them in that endeavor, it is useful to remember that higher education is not a monolith. It is made up of many independent and diverse institutional types all operating to support and sustain internal organizational self-interest even as they serve broader societal objectives. Some of the basic challenges in higher education system in India are discussed below:

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 numbers of colleges which are functioning on second or third floor of the building on ground or first floor there exists readymade hosiery or photocopy shops.

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 organize 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 / 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

Research and Innovation: there are very nominal scholars in our country whose writing is cited by famous western authors. 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 centres. 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 centralization, 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 (Kumar, 2015).

OPPORTUNITIES IN HIGHER EDUCATION

India is a large country, with an estimated population of young people aged between 18 to 23 years to be around 150 millions.. 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. Indian higher education system is growing very fast irrespective of various challenges but there is no reason that these Challenges cannot be overcome. With the help of new-age learning tools, it is easy for country like India to overcome these problems and bring a paradigm shift in the country's higher education sector..

There are opportunities for strategic engagement and capacity building in higher education leadership and management at the state level. There are opportunities for India to collaboration at national and international level on areas of systemic reform, including quality assurance, international credit recognition, and unified national qualifications framework. 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..A great deal of talent of the highest level is, in fact, lost by an in egalitarian system of education.(Balachander, 1986).

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.

Initiatives taken by the government in the area of human resource development:

- A project has been taken up to make a national digital library of eBooks on various Subjects and topics
- Another special scheme called “Udaan” for girl students. The focus of the project is to overcome the low enrolment ratio of girl students in prestigious technical institutions
- Another interesting step is the launching of a mission named after freedom fighter and educationist Pandit Madan Mohan Malviya to build a strong professional cadre of
- The Central Government has also launched a scheme called Unnat Bharat Abhiyan for the promotion of technologies from the laboratory to the ground.
- Rashtriya Avishkar Abhiyan has launched to revive interest in the technology among youth through support for innovative learning based on observations and experimentation.
- Under the Global Initiative of Academic Networks (GIAN) programme, India's ministry of human resource development and department of science and technology will “create a channel for US professors to teach in Indian academic and research institutions

Suggestions for Improving the System of Higher Education:

- 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.
- 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.

RECENT INITIATIVES TAKEN BY THE GOVERNMENT

Education Quality Upgradation and Inclusion Programme (EQUIP) has been recently launched: This is a five-year vision plan to improve the quality and accessibility of higher education over the next five years (2019-2024). Double the Gross

Enrolment Ratio (GER) in higher education and resolve the geographically and socially skewed access to higher education institutions in India. Position at least 50 Indian institutions among the top-1000 global universities.

Revitalizing Infrastructure and Systems in Education (RISE) by 2022 Qualitatively upgrade the research and academic infrastructure in India to global best standards by 2022. Make India into an education hub by making available high-quality research infrastructure in Indian higher educational institutions.

To allow access of HEFA funding to institutions like Central Universities, AIIMS, IISERs and newly created Institutes of National Importance, without creating any additional burden to the students. Higher Education Financing Agency (HEFA) has been tasked to mobilise Rs. 1, 00,000 crores for this initiative.

UGC's Learning Outcome-based Curriculum Framework (LOCF) LOCF guidelines, issued by UGC in 2018, aims to to make student active learner and teacher a good facilitator.

Graded Autonomy to Universities & Colleges: 3-tiered graded autonomy regulatory system has been initiated, with the categorization based on accreditation scores. Category I and Category II universities will have significant autonomy to conduct examinations, prescribe evaluation systems and even announce results.

Global Initiative for Academics Network (GIAN): The programme seeks to invite distinguished academicians, entrepreneurs, scientists, experts from premier institutions from across the world, to teach in the higher educational institutions in India.

All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE): The main objectives of the survey are to- identify & capture all the institutions of higher learning in the country; and collect the data from all the higher education institutions on various aspects of higher education.

National Institutional Ranking Framework was developed in 2015. The rankings are published annually since 2016. It outlines a methodology to rank educational institutions across the country based on five broad parameters: Teaching, learning and resources, Research and professional practice; Graduation outcomes, outreach and inclusivity, and perception.

Way Forward

Regulatory and governance reforms:

Restructure or merge different higher education regulators (UGC, AICTE, NCTE etc.) to ensure effective coordination .Amend UGC Act to give legislative backing to regulatory structure. Allow foreign institutions to operate joint degree programmes with Indian institutions. Link University grants to performance Creating 'world-class universities': 20 universities – 10 each from the public and private sector – are being selected as 'Institutions of Eminence', to help them attain world-class standards of teaching and research. A graded mechanism to ensure additional funds flow to top public universities should be developed. The Draft National Education Policy, 2019 recommended restructuring of the higher education system into Tier 1, Tier 2 and Tier 3.

Tier 1 includes research universities focusing equally on research and teaching, Tier 2 includes teaching universities focusing primarily on teaching; and Tier 3 includes colleges focusing only on teaching at undergraduate levels. All such institutions will gradually move towards full autonomy - academic, administrative, and financial.

Increased focus on vocational and profession led education: Include vocational subjects in mainstream universities to allow for greater acceptance and utility for vocational learning.

Accreditation Framework: All higher education institutions must be accredited compulsorily & regularly, by agencies, empanelled through a transparent, high-quality process.

Performance-linked funding and incentives: All central universities should develop strategic plans for getting into the top 500 global universities rankings in the next 10 years. Funding to these institutions should be linked to performance and outcomes through the MHRD and newly constituted Higher Education Funding Agency.

Distance and online education: Broaden the scope of Massive Open Online Course (MOOCs) and Open and Distance Learning (ODL) to provide access to quality education beyond geographical boundaries.(India Rankings Report ,2019)

CONCLUSION

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 utilize this potential properly is the issue which needed to discuss. 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. Ultimately, we need for our rich diverse ecosystem of colleges and universities to defend, protect and sustain higher education's extremely important role as a trusted source of knowledge, education, and freedom of inquiry.

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