HIGHER EDUCATION A WAY TO TRANSFORM A NATION: CURRENT SCENARIO, CHALLENGES, AND SUGGESTIONS FOR HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE PURVANCHAL REGION OF UTTAR PRADESH

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Abstract: It is rightly claimed that ensuring a quality higher education is one of the most relevant things we can do for our future generation. Higher education refers to education beyond the secondary level of education. It is also known as the tertiary or post-secondary level of education. In the present time, when changes are occurring rapidly, one can adjust himself only when he accepts the changes progressively, and it is only possible when the individuals are educated. Higher education is a confronting challenge that the entire nation is facing.

Since independence, substantial development has been witnessed. On the eve of independence, there were about 27 universities and 498 colleges in our country. But as of 1st June 2020, according to the list published by the UGC, there were about 54 centrals, 416 state 125 deemed and 361 private universities. There are seven institutes under the State Legislature Act, and 159 institutes of national importance, including institutions like IIT, IISER, NIT, etc. In India, Uttar Pradesh has emerged as the state with the highest number of colleges. **Purvanchal** was endowed with esteemed institutions like Banaras Hindu University, MMM University of Technology, Deen Dayal Upadhyay Gorakhpur University, etc. But instead of having a sufficient number of colleges and universities, the education system is still lagging. This study tries to examine the situation of Higher education in Uttar Pradesh (especially in the Purvanchal Region) distribution of colleges and universities, and the various initiatives taken by the government. After analyzing the entire situation, the paper suggests some possible measures to make our educational system the pre-eminent one.

Index Terms - Higher Education, Purvanchal, Tertiary level of Education, Esteemed institutions, Institute of Eminence, Educational System.

I. INTRODUCTION

Higher education plays a vital role in the life of an individual as well as society. It is one of the key parameters on which the development of any nation depends. India has depicted a growing trend since independence in higher education. From independence, we saw significant growth and development in the education sector in our country. Its coverage has increased extensively.

Indian higher education system has been ranked third in the world after the US and China. But a country comprises numerous states, and every state has distinct geographical, demographic, and socio-economic factors. When it comes to Uttar Pradesh, it is the most popular state having 18 divisions and 75 districts. At present, there are 75 universities in Uttar Pradesh, out of which 6 are Central, 32 are State, 29 are Private & 8 Deemed Universities are there. These are two IITs in Varanasi, 1 National Law University in Lucknow, and several polytechnic & engineering colleges. King George Medical University, Harcourt Butler Technical University, and Manohar Lohia National Law University are some of the institutions in the U.P. known worldwide for their quality education.

But when we specifically focus on Purvanchal, it refers to a geographical area that comprises the eastern end of U.P. This region is well known for its cultural and natural heritage. It consists of 17 districts. Varanasi, Siddhartha Nagar, Deoria, Gorakhpur, Basti, Kushinagar, Mau, Mirzapur, Jaunpur, etc. In the academic institutions, Purvanchal has the following status-

- Banaras Hindu University is a world-renowned Central University in Purvanchal. It is located in Varanasi.

- The Indian Institute of Technology (IIT BHU) is an Institute of National Importance & it is one of the 16 esteemed IIT institutions.

- In Gorakhpur, there are two government universities. One is Deen Dayal Upadhyay Gorakhpur University, and the other is Madan Mohan Malviya University of Technology. In this district, AIIMS was recently developed by the government.

- There was another state university named Veer Bahadur Singh Purvanchal University, established in the Jaunpur district in 1987.

- Siddhartha University is a state university in Siddhartha Nagar, U.P. It was established on 17th June 2015 by the state government of Uttar Pradesh.

- This region has a medical college named Baba Raghav Das Medical College, Purvanchal Dental College, and other 137 degree colleges. These colleges offer multifarious degree programs in science, art, and other technical streams. The larger establishment of such institutions helps in spurting the literacy rate of the state to 73% (as per the report published by NSO survey in 2018), which was 67.68% in 2011 but despite the various developments, it still education seems to be a far cry because of the several loopholes in the education system.

II. CHALLENGES IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Despite the various initiatives taken by the Central & State governments, the literacy rate in the U.P. is 73% (as per NSO report, 2018), which is below the national average literacy rate of 77.7%. When we compare it with other states like Kerala, which has a literacy rate of 96.2%, significant differences have been witnessed. Such variations indicate the lacuna in our education system. Even the various districts of the Purvanchal region like Deoria, Maharajganj, Sant Kabir Nagar, Siddhartha Nagar, and Varanasi have a lower literacy rate than the national average rate of 77.7%.

1. According to the census, 2011 UP has a literacy rate of 67.28 percent. In contrast, the female literacy rate is 57.28%. The male literacy rate is 77.28%, which is a cause of concern because a difference in literacy rates between males and females indicates gender disparity.

2. Uttar Pradesh has emerged as a state with the greatest number of state universities. It has 29 states and six central universities, which is the largest among all the states. But as India's most populous state and has a population of 166 million, the availability of institutions fails to cater to such a vast population. To prevent the migration of students to other states for higher education, some more institutions are required.

3. The infrastructure of state universities is also a matter of utmost concern. The state government should give sufficient grants to such universities so that good infrastructure and quality research can be ensured. In many institutions, various designations are found vacant, and staff seem to be overburdened with the work, which is the cause of mismanagement among the institutions.

4. The other cause of concern in the state is the highest dropout ratio. The common reason behind such dropouts is the poor financial condition of the families. Another reason is that students might not get interested in education because they may fail in secondary and senior secondary classes.

5. As per the NIRF ranking in 2020, six universities in Uttar Pradesh have been ranked under the top 100 ranking. Banaras Hindu University holds the third position, and Aligarh Muslim University holds the 17th position.

However, as per NIRF ranking 2021, only seven institutions of Uttar Pradesh have been ranked under the top 100 ranking. IIT Kanpur holds the fifth rank and Banaras Hindu University stood at tenth position which indicates a satisfactory but not good performance of the state. So the quality of the institute is also the biggest challenge. For getting a good ranking- teaching-learning resources, research, graduation outcome, outreach, and inclusivity are the few parameters that need improvement.

III. SOME KEY STEPS BY THE U.P STATE GOVERNMENT TO PROMOTE THE HIGHER EDUCATION

1. For setting university in Saharanpur, ten crores have been proposed by the government.

2. The state government has proposed the setup of a Police Forensic University in Lucknow.

3. Ayush University in Gorakhpur and Law University are going to be set up in Prayagraj.

4. A fund of 20.70 crores has been earmarked for setting up a university in Aligarh.

5. Provision has been made to ensure Wi-Fi facilities in all universities and colleges.

6. A provision of 2 crores has been made for setting up the Atal Good Governance Chain in Lucknow University.

7. A provision for a 21.51 crore fund has been made for Sampurnand Sanskrit Vishwavidyalaya.

8. Rs 8 crore fund provision has been made for setting up engineering colleges in Mirzapur.

IV. SUGGESTIONS

1. Efforts should be made to make the learning student-centric. Such learning gives a primary acknowledgment to student's interests and tries to improve their learning outcomes.

2. There should be regular and necessary changes in curriculum as per the needs of modern society because education is said to be effective only when it is updated and not stagnated.

3. As we recently went through an outbreak of the pandemic covid-19, schools, and colleges remained suspended for several months as a preventive measure to stop the spread of such virus as a result of which students suffered a lot. CBSE reduces the syllabus by up to 30% to reduce the student's burden, so the same step should also be followed in higher educational institutions.

4. Digitalization has become a buzzword nowadays. So to improve the quality of higher education, digital learning needs to be facilitated. Study material should be made available online, live classes should be organized to become more interactive, and students become more tech-savvy.

5. The literacy rate of females always seems to be lower in comparison to a male because of the conservative mentality of society, which thinks that women's education is not that important because a male member has to earn for a family, as a result of which women's education never receives a primary consideration. So, the government should launch such schemes that provide the facility of higher education to a girl child at a free cost or nominalized rate.

6. Skill development programs should be made a part of academics. So that holistic development can be ensured.

7. In common parlance, it is generally observed that students drop their or even don't pursue higher education because of the weak financial background of their family. So government should take some steps for fee reimbursement of students of such low-income families.

8. The state government should give a strong impetus to developing colleges in remote areas so that students in rural areas can get ample opportunities and become the recipients of quality education.

9. As per data released by AISHE 2017-18, UP has 6922 colleges more than any other Indian state, but it still lags in literacy rate compared to other states like Kerala, having the highest literacy rate. Even the presence of huge numbers of colleges does not guarantee a good education. So far, to ensure quality education, an independent body needs to be set up by the state government, which keeps a regular watch over various colleges and institutions.

10. As privatization is a part of this global arena. Many private colleges have been taking education as a lucrative business for making a significant profit, so the state government should prescribe a fee structure for every course, which every college should abide.

11. Accreditation of colleges and universities should be made periodic and compulsory to ensure the quality of higher education. There should be transparency in the selection of the staff of higher educational institutions.

12. The government should try to increase its budget for the education sector and give sufficient grants to educational institutes to ensure their development. The government should also undertake public-private partnerships so that government & private collaboration can make education more effective.

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