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HIGHER EDUCATION IN INDIA: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

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ABSTRACT

This paper is an effort to evaluate the higher education system in India. 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.

Key words: Scientific research, Higher education, Transparency, Opportunities

INTRODUCTION

HIGHER EDUCATION

Higher education is tertiary education that leads to the awarding of a college diploma. Higher education, also known as post-secondary education, third-level education, or tertiary education, is the optional final stage of formal instruction after secondary school. It corresponds to the International Standard Classification of Education levels 6, 7, and 8 in the 2011 edition. As opposed to higher education, non-degree tertiary education is sometimes referred to as further education or continuing education.

HIGHER EDUCATION IN INDIA

The higher education system in India has grown in a remarkable way, particularly in the post-independence period, to become one of the largest systems of its kind in the world. However, the system has many issues of concern at present, like financing and management including access, equity and relevance, reorientation of programmes by laying emphasis on health consciousness, values and ethics and quality of higher education together with the assessment of institutions and their accreditation. These issues are important for the country, as it is now engaged in the use of higher education as a powerful tool to build a knowledge-based information society of the 21st Century.

CHALLENGES FACED IN HIGHER EDUCATION IN INDIA

1. Enrollment:

- According to the All-India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) report 2018-19, the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in Higher education in India is only 26.3%, which is quite low as compared to the developed as well as, other developing countries.
- With the increase of enrollments at the school level, the supply of higher education institutes is insufficient to meet the growing demand in the country.

2. Quality:

- Ensuring quality in higher education is amongst the foremost challenges being faced in India today.
- However, the Government is continuously focusing on quality education. Still, a 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 their place among the top universities of the world.

3. Political Interference:

Increasing interference of politicians in the management of higher education jeopardizes the autonomy of HEIs.

Also, students organize campaigns, forget their own objectives and begin to develop their careers in politics.

4. Poor Infrastructure and Facilities:

- 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.
- 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 though there are a lot of vacancies in higher education.

5. Inadequate Research:

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 centers and to industries.

6. Poor Governance Structure:

- Management of Indian education faces challenges of over-centralization, bureaucratic structures and lack of accountability, transparency, and professionalism.
- As a result of the increase in the 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.

REASON FOR A MORE DISMAL PERFORMANCE IN STATE-LEVEL UNIVERSITIES.

- The above-stated issues are faced by both central and state's higher education institutions (HEIs), but the state is handicapped at one more front.
- Central government HEIs are hardly ever short of funding and patronage has been ensured by the Central government and its arms; national-level parties, industries and businesses; and the national elite and the intelligentsia. This appears to be the key factor for the better performance of Central government HEIs.
- However, similar arrangements have never been built between the State universities and State governments, State-level political parties and organizations, industry and businesses; and the elite and the intelligentsia. This may be because:
 - The aims, goals, methods and priorities of these institutions are pretty much the same as those of the Central institutions.
 - The only real value adds that the State universities are doing for the State and its people seem to be that of enabling a few lakh to become graduates every year.
 - Some of the methods to face the above challenges are:

Revamping State HEIs: In order to receive much more funding and support from the State system, State universities would have to commit to delivering lots more to the State and its people where they are located. They must come up with a new vision and programmes specifically addressing the needs of the State, its industry, economy and society, and on the basis of it make the State-level players commit to providing full ownership and support to them.

Foreign Collaboration: Government must promote collaboration between Indian higher education institutes and top international institutes and also generate linkages between national research laboratories and research centers of top institutions for better quality and collaborative research.

Multidisciplinary Approach: There should be a multidisciplinary approach in higher education so that students' knowledge may not be restricted only up to their own subjects. HEIs in both public and private must be away from political affiliations, provided with good infrastructure and facilities. Higher education in India has expanded very rapidly in the last seven decades after independence yet its accessibility and quality both remain a concern. If India wants economic gains and development to percolate at the grassroots level, it needs to invest in education on a priority basis.

OPPORTUNITIES IN HIGHER EDUCATION IN INDIA

India is a large country, with an estimated population of young people aged between 18 to 23 years to be around 150 millions. The sheer size of the market offers huge opportunities for development of the higher education sector in India. 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 enrollments, 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

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. With such a vibrant country with huge population properly educated, the possibilities are endless. If knowledge is imparted using advanced digital teaching and learning tools, and society is made aware of where we are currently lagging behind, our country can easily emerge as one of the most developed nations in the world.

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 collaborate 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. The idea of equalizing educational opportunities also lies in the fact that "the ability to profit by higher education is spread among all classes of people. There are great reserves of untapped ability in the society; if offered the chance they can rise to the top. A great deal of talent of the highest level is, in fact, lost by an inegalitarian system of education"

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.

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 utilizing 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 utilize 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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