

HIGHER EDUCATION IN INDIA SINCE INDEPENDENCE: PERFORMANCE AND PERSPECTIVES

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Abstract

Education is one of the significant factors instrumental in the development of a country. It should be transformed to the needs of the time and changing scenario of the world. It provides an opportunity to critically reflect upon the social, economic, cultural, moral and spiritual issues facing humanity. India needs more efficient and educated people to drive our economy forward. To develop India as an education hub or to become a prosperous partner in global economy, India has to qualitatively strengthen education in general and higher education in particular. The present paper holds an immediate significance of creating awareness of many issues of concern to be taken care of by the stakeholders at the national as well as the global levels. The study is also unique in the sense that it brings about better understanding of the present scenario of the higher education system in the country and its pattern of growth since independence. The present study throws a gainful insight on various aspects of growth of higher education in India.

Keywords: Indian Higher Education, areas of concern, quality education, future trends

Introduction

Education in India has always been valued more than mere considering it as a means towards earning a good living. Right from pre-historic days, Education, especially higher education has been given a predominant position in the Indian society. Ancient India considered knowledge as the third eye that gives insight into all affairs. Education was available in Gurukulas, Agrahars, Viharas and Madarasas, throughout the country. The great universities flourished in India when most of the western world was groping in the dark. Those were the halcyon days when India led the world in scientific knowledge and philosophical speculations. Education has vital role to play in the life of an individual as well as the society. It is considered to have the potential to effect change in the system of social stratification.

Higher education plays an essential role in society by creating new knowledge, transmitting it to students and fostering innovation. Quality teaching in higher education matters for student learning outcomes. But fostering quality teaching needs higher education institutions to ensure that the education they offer meets the expectations of students and the requirements of employers, both today and for the future (Hénard and Roseveare 2012).

Research in education is necessary in order to provide a basis for educational planning. It is one of the main fields that should be embedded in higher education curriculum (Niemi & Jakku-Sihvonen, 2006). With regard to this, research-based education has received increasing interest both among researchers in higher education and in public discussion.

The growth pattern of higher education in post independence is a big swag, whereas there are many achievements to rejoice, still there are many areas of concern to be taken care of. Therefore, this present study deals with the aspects of growth of higher education in India

Aims and Objectives of the study

In the light of the issues discussed earlier and the available literature relating to status of higher education in India the following specific objectives are framed to present the study:

1. To trace the growth pattern of higher education in India since independence.
2. To identify the areas of achievements in higher education in India.
3. To discuss the areas of concern in higher education in India

1 Growth pattern of Higher Education since Independence

India can take pride in claiming itself to have one of the largest educational system among developed countries of the World after China and U.S. with the reputation of having universities like Nalanda and Taxla in the early times. The references which stand well supported by the historians have enough evidences to justify this claim thereby establishing that higher education in India had its roots in the early times as well. The Mughal period did not have much to claim as this was a period of wars and instability.

During the early part of the colonial rule the Britishers were more into establishing themselves rather than caring for the education in the country more so the British rulers were skeptic about the spread of education in India as it may not generate awareness and awakening among the Indian masses. Once the British administrative juggernaut started rolling in India then they had to, out of compulsions, take some note of education in India which partially was also due to the pressure from Indian social and political leaders. But undoubtedly, in pre independence era, access to higher education was very limited. From the year 1883 till the independence the number of colleges in India were not only inadequate but in few hundreds and subsequently the enrolment of the students was also found to be low.

The education scenario at the time of Independence was structurally flawed with inequalities characterized by gender, social and regional imbalances. It is on an increasing trend which has been indicated in the UGC report.

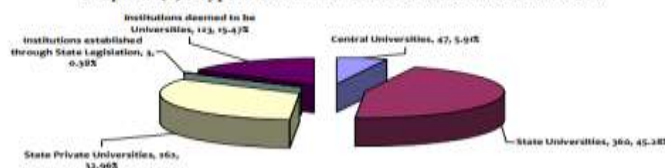
2.1(e) : Type-wise Number of Universities * and Total Number of Colleges# as on 31.03.2017

S. No.	Type of University / Institution	Number of Universities / Institutions (as on 31.03.2017)	Number of Universities / Colleges eligible for Central Assistance under Section 12B of the UGC Act, 1956 (As on 31.03.2017)
1	Central Universities	47	
2	State Public Universities	360	208
3	State Private Universities	262	3
4	Institutions established through State Legislation	3	
5	Institutions deemed to be Universities	123	9
	Total	795	220
6	Colleges	42338	8993

* Universities/ Institutions listed by UGC

Colleges includes Affiliated colleges / University Colleges / Constituent Colleges / PG centres / Recognised Centres / Off Campuses etc (Source : AISHE)

Graph 2.1(e) : Type-wise number of Universities as on 31.03.2017



Education Commissions for the development of Education in India

University Education Commission was established in the year 1948-49 to review the whole system of education in the country. Later on Kothari Commission was appointed by the union government and the reports of these two commissions made the base for the New Education Policy, 1986.

The Government decided to review the growth and development of Higher education through five years plans which paid rich dividends in promoting education in India including higher education. Higher education may include education in general or specialized or professional areas. Thus, the higher education in India has been assessed through the three indicators of higher education in India;

- i. Universities and Colleges
- ii. Students Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER)
- iii. Teachers Strength

At the time of Independence of India in 1947, there were only 20 Universities and 500 Colleges in the country with 210,000 students enrolled in higher education institutions.

But in the last fifty years, India has made remarkable progress in the field of education and has seriously attempted to decrease the number of people in illiterate bracket.

At the time of Independence of India, there were only 20 Universities and 500 Colleges in the country with 2.1 lakhs students in higher education. The numbers now have increased 44.75 times in the case of the Degree awarding Universities, 84.68 times in the case of Colleges and the students enrolment has gone up to over 140.1 times in the formal system of higher education in comparison to the figures at the time of independence.

As on 31.03.2017, the number of Universities had gone up to 795 listed by UGC – (47 Central, 360 State Public, 262 State Private, 123 Deemed to be Universities, three Institutions established under State Legislation and 42338 colleges in the Higher Education sector.

- ❖ Total enrolment in higher education has been estimated to be 35.7 million with 19.0 million boys and 16.7 million girls. Girls constitute 46.8% of the total enrolment. Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in Higher education in India is 25.2%, which is calculated for 18-23 years of age group. GER for male population is 26.0% and for females, it is 24.5%. For Scheduled Castes, it is 21.1% and for Scheduled Tribes, it is 15.4% as compared to the national GER of 25.2%.
- ❖ 15 State Public and 27 State Private Universities were included in the UGC list of universities and 4 State Public Universities. 4 Deemed Universities and One State Private University were declared fit to receive Central Assistance under Section 12B of the UGC Act 1956
- ❖ The total number of colleges recognized under Section 2(f) of the UGC Act, 1956 was 10966. The maximum number of colleges recognized so far under Section 2(f) is in the State of Uttar Pradesh (2398), followed by Maharashtra (1373), Karnataka (965) and Tamil Nadu (570) and Gujarat (542)
- ❖ The total enrolment in all courses and levels in regular stream was 294.27 lakhs including 141.56 lakhs women students, constituting 48.11%. The maximum number of students had been enrolled in the state of Uttar Pradesh (58.71 lakhs), followed by Maharashtra (30.95 lakhs), Tamil Nadu (24.82 lakhs) and Madhya Pradesh (16.76 lakhs) etc.
- ❖ Pupil Teacher Ratio (PTR) in Universities and Colleges is 22 if regular enrolment is considered whereas PTR for Universities and its Constituent Units is 19 for regular mode

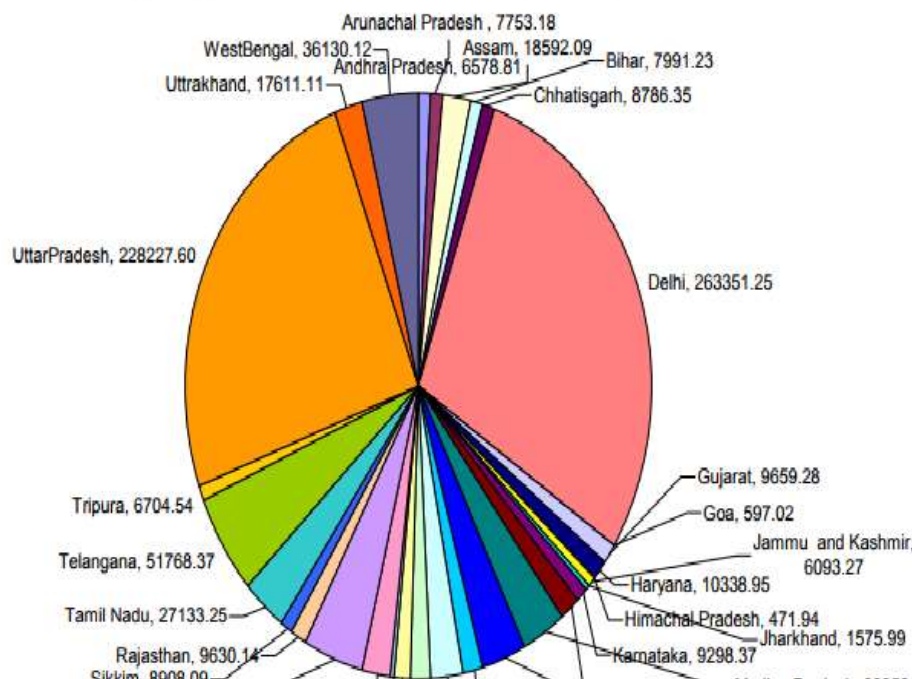
Result oriented growth of Higher Education in India since Independence

- Higher Education Institutions in the country are categorized in 3 broad Categories; University, College and Stand-Alone Institutions.

- There are 799 Universities, 39071 colleges and 11923 Stand Alone Institutions listed on AISHE web portal and out of them 754 Universities, 33903 Colleges and 7154 Stand Alone Institutions have responded during the survey. 268 Universities are affiliating i.e. having Colleges.
- 277 Universities are privately managed. 307 Universities are located in rural area
- At Undergraduate level the highest number (40%) of students is enrolled in Arts/Humanities/Social Sciences courses followed by Science (16%), Engineering and Technology (15.6%) and Commerce (14.1%)

Research is seen as a primary and a vital function of a university and, therefore, of the higher education systems worldwide. Research plays an important role in the economic development of any country. In fact, research and development form the basis of future Competitiveness of an economy.

Graph I.5(h) :State-wise Total Grant* Released (₹in Lakh): Plan+Non-Plan 2016-17



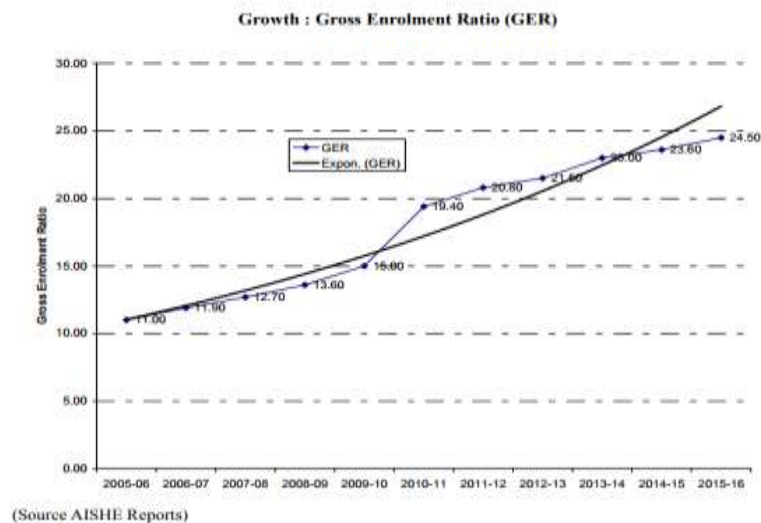
2 To identify the areas of achievement in higher education in India.

Higher education is the chief instrument for ensuring the upward mobility of the people and the advancement of the country. The Indian higher education system is being supported by assistance under each Plan. The main objective of the XII Plan is to expand enrolment in higher education with inclusiveness, quality and relevant education along with necessary academic reforms in the university/college system. Thus, the main focus has been on expansion and access to higher education through increasing institutional capacity and enhancement of intake capacity, promotion of inclusive education through equal access to various groups in higher education, undertaking academic and governance reforms, etc.

A target of 30 % Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) by 2017 from 15 % in 2012 was set for the XII Plan. The fifteen per cent net increase was sought to be achieved through a dual strategy that includes increasing the number of educational institutions and enhancing the intake capacity of the existing institutions.

Gross Enrolment Ratio in Higher Education (18-23Years) – Estimated Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) 2015-16 in Higher Education in India is 24.5% which is calculated for 18-23 Years of Age Group. For

Scheduled Castes it is 19.9% and for Scheduled Tribes it is 14.2%. GER for male population at All India level is 25.4% whereas for SC males it is 20.8% and 15.6% for ST males. Similarly GER for Female population at All India level 23.5% whereas for SC females it is 19.0 % and for ST females, it is 12.9% (Source AISHE Report 2015-16)



In understanding how the higher education system is regulated it is essential to realize the difference between “accreditation” and “recognition” in India. Until recent years, being “recognized” was the only mode of validating postsecondary institutions. The process involved evaluation of the institution in question by the recognizing agency in order to establish whether it meets the standards and norms put forth by the agency. Unlike the usual accreditation process which involves periodic review by the accreditation agency to ascertain if an institution is meeting its objectives and established standards, whereas “recognition” is a one-time process.

The Indian system of higher education has always responded well to the challenges of the time. Two decades ago, when the system came under severe criticism that it had allowed the mushrooming of higher education institutions (HEIs), compromising the quality of educational offerings, the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) and the University Grants Commission (UGC) took initiatives to restore the standards of higher education. Consequently, the National Policy on Education (1986) places special emphasis on upholding the quality of higher education in India. On the recommendations of the Programme of Action (1992) document that provided the guidelines for implementation of the National Policy on Education (1986), in 1994, the UGC established the National Assessment and Accreditation Council. (Prasad & Stella, 2004).

Higher education accreditation is a type of quality assurance process under which services and operations of post-secondary educational institutions or programs are evaluated by an external body to determine if applicable standards are met. If standards are met, accredited status is granted by the agency”. Accreditation is broadly used for understanding the “Quality Status” of an institution.

In the context of Higher Education, the accreditation status indicates that the particular Higher Educational Institutions (HEI) – a College, a University, or any other recognized Unit therein, meets the standards of quality as set by the Accreditation Agency, in terms of its performance, related to the educational processes and outcomes, covering the curriculum, teaching-learning, evaluation, faculty, research, infrastructure, learning resources, organization, governance, financial well being and student services (NAAC).

Basically accreditation is the process by which a (non-)governmental or private body evaluates the quality of a higher education institution as a whole or of a specific educational programme in order to formally recognize it as having met certain predetermined minimal criteria or standards. The result of this process is

usually the awarding of a status (a yes/no decision), of recognition, and sometimes of a license to operate within a time-limited validity. (Vlăsceanu, et al., 2007, p. 25)

Accreditation is important because: 1. the institution knows its strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities through an informed review process, 2. the identification of internal areas of planning and resource allocation collegiality on the campus, 3. funding agencies look for objective data for performance funding, 4. The institution initiates innovative and modern methods of pedagogy. 5. A new sense of direction and identity for the institution, 6. Provides society with reliable information on the quality education offered. 7. Provides employers reliable information on the quality of education offered to the prospective recruits and 8. Intra and inter-institutional interactions. (Source: NAAC)

3 Areas of Concern in higher education in India

- **Enrollment:**

In India, GER in higher education has more than doubled over a period of 11 years, going from 9% in 2002-03 to 24% in 2013-14. The Rashtriya Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyan is a centrally sponsored scheme launched in 2013, mainly to provide funding to state higher educational institutions. The scheme's objective is to achieve 30% GER in higher education by 2020. While GER has increased, it reflects that currently only 24% of people who should be enrolled in universities (as per target age-group of 18-24 years) are actually enrolled. This is fairly low compared to other countries such as the UK and USA.

- **Expenditure on Higher Education**

It may be noted that over the past 10 years, the central government expenditure on higher education, has been fairly constant around 1-1.5% of its total expenditure.¹⁹ While various committees have observed the importance of private sector investment in higher education to raise this expenditure.

- **Quality**

Accreditation: It is important to improve the quality of higher education institutions along with quantitative expansion. Accreditation is a way of measuring such quality of institutions. It is the process of assessing the performance of institutions that volunteer to be accredited, on the basis of a few set parameters. Once these have been considered a final grade is assigned to the institution by the accrediting authority.

- **Lack of Action Plan for Improving Quality**

Universities and colleges should realize the need for quality education and come forward with action plan for improving quality in higher educational institutions. Academic and administrative audit must be conducted once in three years in colleges by external experts for ensuring quality in all aspects of academic activities.

Results of the study

- Over last two decades, a rapidly growing Indian economy has led to a huge demand for an educated and skilled labour force. To meet the manpower needs of a dynamic economy, not surprisingly, private enterprises have cropped up to complement public educational institutions, plagued as they are by capacity constraints. In fact, over the past few decades, it has been the private sector that has really driven capacity-creation in Indian higher education.
- Private presence in higher education got a fillip starting the mid-1980s, coinciding with the reducing investment by Government of India (GoI) and the states. In 2001, when private unaided institutes made up 42.6 per cent of all higher education institutes, 32.8 per cent of Indian students studied there.

- By 2006, the share of private institutes went up to 63.2 per cent and their student share went up to 51.5 per cent. Privatization of higher education is especially noticeable in higher education professional courses such as engineering and Master of Business Administration (MBA), where majority of the institutions offering such programmes have been established by the private sector. So much so, the share of private institutes in the field of pharmacy and engineering is more than 90 per cent.
- 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 education sector in India is poised to witness major growth in the years to come as India will have world's largest tertiary-age population and second largest graduate talent pipeline globally by the end of 2020.
- Currently, higher education contributes 59.7 per cent of the market size, school education 38.1 per cent, pre-school segment 1.6 per cent, and technology and multi-media the remaining 0.6 per cent.
- Higher education system in India has undergone rapid expansion. Currently, India's higher education system is the largest in the world enrolling over 70 million students while in less than two decades, India has managed to create additional capacity for over 40 million students.
- At present, higher education sector witnesses **spending of over Rs 46,200 crore (US\$ 6.78 billion)**, and it is expected to grow at an average annual rate of over 18 per cent to reach **Rs 232,500 crore (US\$ 34.12 billion) in next 10 years.**

Future trends for Higher Education in India

The rapid changes and increased complexity of today's world present new challenges and put new demands on our education system. There has been generally a growing awareness of the necessity to change and improve the preparation of students for productive functioning in the continually changing and highly demanding environment. In confronting this challenge it is necessary to consider the complexity of the education system itself and the multitude of problems that must be addressed. Clearly, no simple, single uniform approach can be applied with the expectation that significant improvements of the system will occur.

The following suggestions are put forth for the improvement of quality of higher education in the country. To get rid of prejudice for Government and Private sectors of education. Both play a vital role and should complement each other to accelerate the growth and development of the nation with special focus on Higher education.

- Expansion of a differentiated university system with a three-tiered formalized structure
- Transition to a learner-centered paradigm of education
- Intensive use of technology
- Reforms in governance
- Integrating the commonly polarized goals of education; i.e. the goal that focuses on transmitting knowledge with the goal that emphasizes the development of the individual student.
- Adapting teaching to different student characteristics by using diverse methods of teaching. Adaptation to the ability levels, patterns of different abilities, learning styles, personality characteristics, and cultural backgrounds.

- Integrating the curriculum by developing inter-disciplinary curriculum units that enable students to acquire knowledge from different disciplines through a unifying theme while having the opportunity to contribute in different and special ways to the objectives of the integrated units.

The government should consider some potential measures for enabling greater private sector participation in setting up high quality institutions

Potential Government measure	Description
Simplify regulations by reducing input-based constraints	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Currently, higher education regulation in India is input-based. For example, players need to ensure a minimum amount of land, infrastructure, corpus, faculty, etc. At the same time, the focus is on inspection-based approvals which is characterized by subjectivity in decision-making . The Government should consider following the example of several other countries and introduce output-based regulation by measuring outcomes such as knowledge, placements, etc.
Encourage geographical spread of private universities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Currently, State Private Universities are concentrated in a handful of states. the top 5 states account for about 65% of such universities— given that they have put in place enabling regulatory environments and provide government support The Central Government should work with other State Governments to create enabling regulations that encourage private players to set up universities in those states as well The Government should expedite the passage of the Innovation Universities Bill through to set up Innovation Universities which are governed by conducive regulation and are independent of geographical constraints .
Allow for profit education along with suitable safeguards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This will enable greater private capital inflow for setting up new capacity and therefore achieving the Government GER targets.

Changes in Teaching Learning Process

- The rapid changes and increased complexity of today's world present new challenges and put new demands on our education system. There has been generally a growing awareness of the necessity to change and improve the preparation of students for productive functioning in the continually changing and highly demanding environment.
- In confronting this challenge it is necessary to consider the complexity of the education system itself and the multitude of problems that must be addressed.
- Clearly, no simple, single uniform approach can be applied with the expectation that significant improvements of the system will occur.

Conclusion

Over the last two decades, India has remarkably transformed its higher education landscape. A target of 30 percent Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) by 2017 from 15 percent in 2012 was set for the XII Plan. The five percent net increase was sought to be achieved through a dual strategy that include increasing the number of educational institutions, opening gates for foreign institutes and enhancing the intake capacity of existing institutions. It is clear that India is soon going to open up its higher education sector for foreign institutions to open up their campuses here and according to speculation it can be even bigger than the telecom boom that the country witnessed but providing connectivity is different thing than providing education. With well-planned expansion of 12th Plan by UGC Indian Higher education system will see a huge change for the qualitative improvement in the education sector.

The time has come to create a second wave of institution building and of excellence in the fields of education, research and capability building'. We need an educational system that is modern, liberal and can adapt to the changing needs of a changing society, a changing economy and a changing world. The thrust of public policy for higher education in India has to be to address these challenges. However, one university can't make much difference. If the government welcomes more such initiatives, the future will be ours. We will be able to match and compete with other countries and the dream to be the world's greatest economy won't be difficult to achieve.

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