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## HIGHER EDUCATION IN INDIA: IN REFERENCE TO PRESENT AND FUTURE PROSPECTIVE

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### ABSTRACT

India's higher education system is the world's third largest in terms of students, next to China and the United States. In future, India will be one of the largest education hubs. India's Higher Education sector has witnessed a tremendous increase in the number of Universities/University level Institutions & Colleges since independence. The higher education in India is, generally, seemed to be bleak since post-independence and raises several questions still unanswered. The unplanned expansion of higher education opportunities, spiralling trend of the educated unemployed, commercialization of education, the imbalance of quantity with quality, ignorance equity and excellence, are some of the pertinent cases in point that 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. Hence, the emerging Indian society needs to make the system of their higher education must innovative and futuristic to face the changing demands of the modern Indian Society. This paper includes the key challenges that India is currently facing in higher education and also includes some initiatives taken by the government to meet those challenges.

**Key Words:** Higher Education, India, Present Scenario, Future prospects, Challenges, Government Initiatives

## INTRODUCTION

The Education System in India is one of the strongest and most efficacious in the World. Being a country with the largest population in the entire world, India still provides great education facilities for students. Numerous universities are set up in the country providing opportunities for students from different backgrounds. A large number of universities and schools provide facilities to international students as well which makes the campus culture more diverse and flourishing. Education is easily accessible in India on every level which makes it a great resource for the public to use and especially the Indian government is taking measures to reach out to the public regarding the importance of education and encouraging them to educate the younger generation in a manner that they can be an asset for the country and themselves.

Higher education refers to the education beyond the secondary level that is imparted to the students in colleges and universities. Indian higher education system is the third largest in the world after United States and China. University grants commission (UGC) is the main governing body of the higher education in India. It enforces its standards, advises government and helps in coordinating centre and state. An incredible increase has been witnessed in the number of universities and colleges in India since independence, so that knowledge can be imparted to the youth of country. The central point of economic development is human capital that can be created through knowledge and education. Private sector is strongly playing its part in education sector in India. But unplanned expansion and commercialisation of higher education has raised various questions about the quality of the education being imparted. Low quality education will produce unemployed human resources that are produced because of ignorance of excellence. Such failure to provide education and employment can take the Indian economy on the pathway of unsustainability. The new reforms in this sector must address these challenges, so that Indian education system can make its identity at international level. Teachers too should be empowered as a part of reforms for Indian higher education meeting the growing demands of liberalization and globalization going on in the world. Hence, the system of higher education should be restructured according to the changing needs of the society.

## PRESENT SCENARIO OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN INDIA

Quality in Higher Education has become a primary agenda of the countries worldwide. In the context marked by expansion of higher education and globalization of economic activities, education has become a national concern in developing countries with an international dimension. To cope with this changing context, developing countries have been pressurized to ensure and assure quality of higher education at a nationally comparable and internationally acceptable standard. Consequently, many developing countries such as India, initiated national quality assurance mechanisms and many more in the process of evolving a suitable strategy. But it's not going to be easy where there are resource constraints.

The current state of higher education in India is characterized by both opportunities and challenges. The Central government of India provides funding to public universities for better facilities and makes them more accessible to students with any sort of financial background. On one hand, India has a rapidly growing higher education system, with many universities and colleges offering a wide range of programs. This has

created many opportunities for students to pursue higher education and to acquire the skills and knowledge necessary to succeed in the global economy.

An academic revolution has taken place in higher education particularly in the past half century marked by a paradigm shift in scope and opportunity. Over the years higher education system has become an enterprise having much of business orientation with all its exposure to fierce competition at different level of stakeholders. Indian education system considered as one of the largest of its kind in the world also faced/encounters enormous challenges in the new millennium. These challenges are diversified and manifold stretching from contemporary curriculum development, quality assurance and accreditation and ethical value propositions to policy planning and governance. In a technology driven society knowledge rewrites the fate of a nation and so does higher education. India faces a complex and challenging situation in respect of its higher education system. Increased population has led to an outpour in the number of students seeking admission in universities and colleges. This has led to the commercialisation of education. Deterioration in the quality is the obvious outcome of this quantitative increase in institutions.

## CHALLENGES IN HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM

It is our 76rd year of freedom still our education system has not grown completely. We are not ready to list a solitary college in the top 100 universities in the world. Different governments changed during these six decades. But none of them are able to tackle the challenges in higher education in India. They attempted to help the Problems of Higher Education in India and actualized different education approaches however they were not adequate in put a model for the universe. UGC is persistently working and concentrating on quality education in the higher education area.

However, there are also several challenges facing the Indian higher education system. One of the main challenges is the shortage of quality faculty and inadequate funding for research and development. Government has also implemented various education policies but they not proved to be fruitful. UGC is continuously working for quality education in higher education sector. But still we are facing a lot of challenges in this field. Some of them are discussed below:

- **Commercialisation of education:** The unbalanced expansion of private sector has made higher education a profitable business. This sector works on the principle of demand and supply, ignoring the quality and relevance of higher education. This has created a big challenge for higher education system.
- **Issue of quality:** Still large number of universities and colleges are not able to meet minimum requirement laid down by the UGC. Providing quality textbooks is yet another issue especially in case of teaching in regional languages. Quantity aspect also leads to appointment of lower quality faculty making this issue more challenging.
- **Poor infrastructure:** Poor infrastructure is another test to the higher education system of India especially the establishments run by the open part that experience the ill effects of poor physical offices and infrastructure. There are a huge number of schools which are working on the second or third floor of the structure on the ground or the first floor there exists readymade hosieries or photocopy shops.

- **Access to education:** The challenge in front of government of India is to make the higher education equally accessible to everyone by breaking the barriers of rich or poor, male or female or belongs to rural area or urban area, or is from lower caste or upper caste. There is wide inaccessibility of higher education in case of female, students from rural areas and lower caste students.
- **Research and innovations:** There is lack of attention on research in higher educational institutes. Resources and facilities provided are not sufficient for quality research. Most of the research scholars are without fellowships or not getting their fellowships on time that directly or indirectly affects their research. Moreover, Indian Higher education institutions are poorly connected to research centres.
- **Rising Cost of Education:** The cost of higher education in India is on an upward trajectory. Factors such as the increasing cost of living, rising demand for higher education, and reduced government funding contribute to this trend. Unfortunately, the soaring expenses associated with higher education make it unaffordable for many students, especially those hailing from rural areas.
- **Political interference:** Most of the educational institutes are owned by the political leaders, who plays a key role in managing and governing institutes. They make students to organise campaigns, leading to distraction from the main objective and make students to develop a career in politics.
- **Management problem:** Management of the Indian education faces challenges of over centralisation, bureaucratic structures and lack of accountability, transparency, and professionalism. Because 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.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVING FUTURE PROSPECTS OF HIGHER EDUCATION

Improving the higher education system in India is a complex and multi-faceted challenge that requires the involvement and cooperation of multiple stakeholders, including the government, educators, universities, and private sector. Some possible recommendations include:

1. **Increase government funding for education:** The government should allocate more funds for education, particularly for higher education. This would help to ensure that universities have the resources which they need to provide high-quality education to students.
2. **Improve the quality of teachers:** The government should provide training and support to teachers to ensure that they are equipped to provide high-quality education to students. This can be done by offering professional development opportunities and financial incentives to teachers.
3. **Promote research and innovation:** The government should promote research and innovation in higher education by providing funding and support for research projects and encouraging collaboration between universities, researchers, and private sector companies.
4. **Increase access to education:** The government should ensure that all students have access to quality education by providing financial aid, scholarships, and other forms of support for students from low-income backgrounds.
5. **Ensure accountability and transparency:** The government should ensure that universities are accountable and transparent in their operations.

Despite of challenges in the way, Indian higher education system is growing very rapidly. Future of the higher education system can be improved and challenges can be faced with reforms in the education system, which can bring paradigm shift in the country's higher education system. There are some of the suggestions that can improve the future prospects of higher education in India: -

- **Global collaboration:** Government can allow foreign educational institutions to enter into collaboration with Indian institutions on large scale. This will enhance the capabilities of educational institutions. This will also result in quality education and reduction in politically motivated institutions.
- **Audits for improving quality:** Colleges must conduct academic audits by external experts to ensure quality in academics. Universities and colleges must prepare action plans to improve quality in higher education system. Continuous improvement will leads to attainment of higher standards in higher education sector.
- **Employability of students:** Colleges and universities understand the need for employability of students. Vocational trainings are being offered to students. There should be such an arrangement between educational institutions and entrepreneurs, so that students can be trained in entrepreneur skills and entrepreneurs can update themselves with new skills and information.
- **High-tech libraries:** Due to manual management of library, students are not able to utilise the library resources to the fullest. This not only interfere with the students learning but also possess a great problem for researchers. Therefore, library must be online and it should provide serious study environment to the students.
- **Cross cultural programmes:** The government should cooperate in arranging cross-cultural programmes with in India as well as across border. It will help students to know about business culture, technological development and economic and social progress of humans societies in different parts of world.
- **Personality development:** Education system should leads to the development of creativity and natural skills in student. It should not suppress their unique attributes but should develop their personality. Plenty of opportunities are available for skilled and talented personnel worldwide.
- **Role of faculty:** The final onus of quality education in quantity education falls on the faculty members. Teachers can provide with the best trained manpower to the society. Institutes should set standards for employment of teachers. NET qualified and Ph.D. holders should be the faculty for the students. Teachers should be empowered so that global level of teaching can be imparted to students.

## GOVERNMENT INITIATIVE FOR HIGHER EDUCATION IN INDIA?

The Indian government has taken several initiatives to improve the higher education system in the country. Some of the major initiatives are: -

- Education Quality Upgradation and Inclusion Program (EQUIP)
- Technical Education Quality Improvement Programme of Government of India (TEQIP)
- Institute of Eminence (IoE)
- **Funding and Financing**
  - Higher Education Financing Agency
  - Rashtriya Uchcharitar Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA)

- **Research and Development**
  - Prime Minister's Research Fellows (PMRF)
  - The Scheme for Promotion of Academic and Research Collaboration (SPARC)
  - Impacting Research Innovation and Technology (IMPRINT)
  - Impactful Research in Social Sciences (IMPRESS)
- **Technology and E-Governance**
  - National Educational Alliance for Technology
  - National Academic Depository
  - e-PG Pathshala
- **Surveys and Ranking**
  - National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF)
  - All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE)
- **Vocational Education**
  - National Apprenticeship Training Scheme (NATS)
  - SHREYAS Programme
- **International outreach**
  - Study in India Programme
  - Holding the IIT-Joint Entrance Exam (IIT-JEE) in 25 countries.
  - Setting up of branches of IITs in other countries
- **Scholarships**
  - Central Sector Scheme of Scholarship for College and University Students.
  - National Fellowship and Scholarship for Higher Education of ST Students.
  - Merit Cum Means Scholarship For Professional and Technical Courses CS (Minorities).
  - Pragati Scholarship for Girls.
  - Special Scholarship Scheme for North Eastern Region.

## 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. In a nutshell it can be said that, higher education is growing in India in terms of importance, awareness, institutions and enrolments but it seems to be inadequate. Indian economy is facing various challenges in the present situation of its higher education sector that can be overcome through appropriate changes in the traditional viewpoint and effective implementation of appropriate policies. Future prospects of higher education can be lightened up with the efforts of every one of us. With the use of digital teaching and learning tools and by overcoming the weak points in Indian system, India can easily emerge as one of the most developed nations in the world.

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