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Current Scenario of Higher Education in India

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ABSTRACT

India, even after 70 years of its independence, is far away from the goal of universal literacy. There are number of college in the country, but they don't have proper basic infrastructure. However on a positive note, India is engaged in the use of higher education as a powerful tool to build a knowledge-based information society of the 21st Century. Indian professionals are considered among the best in the world are in great demand. This signifies the inherent strength of Indian education system. The present paper is an attempt, to identify and discuss a number of problems & challenges faced by 'Higher Education' in India. The paper is an outcome of a review of a substantial number of secondary sources on the current problems and challenges of higher education in India.

(KEYWORDS :Indian higher education, Current scenario, Research, enrollment, Issues and challenges)

INTRODUCTION:

India's huge pool of young people might be considered its biggest strength internationally. But unfortunately, India is far from having its act together when it comes to figuring out how to educate these young populations. Data suggests that only one out of every seven children born in India goes to college. What's more, the nation suffers from both a crippling quantity, as well as a quality, challenge when it comes to higher education. At one end we claim that India has the third largest 3rd higher education system in the world. However, the system continues to be fraught with numerous issues. There are the issues concerning management, which include aspects like access, equity and relevance. The assessment of institutions and their accreditation is something that the regulators need to attend to. There are the issues related to financing and ensuring that education in the country continues to be a public service. It should not be allowed to degenerate into a profit making venture. Moreover, there are very few institutions in India who are giving quality inputs so as to inculcate the learning skills amongst students. Higher Education System in India compare to developing / developed countries needs substantial improvement.

The story about the Indian Higher Education (India's university) system as it exists today started in 1857 with three essentially British creations – the Universities of Madras, Calcutta and Bombay. According to MHRD (NIRF-2015), India has the third largest higher education system in the world, behind China and the United States comprising of 795 universities, 39,671 affiliated colleges, 10,15,696 teaching faculty and 2,37,64,960 students including 29,34,989 post-graduate and 2,00,730 research scholars. The total enrolment has increased from a meagre 2 lakhs in 1947 to 238 lakhs in 2013-14. Colleges, affiliated to 194 affiliating universities, constitute the bulk of the higher education system in India contributing around 86.48% of the total enrolment. According to Wikipedia/AICTE, The total number of Professional college (2015) are 8526, Out of these there are 3364 are engineering colleges and 2450 management (MBA) college's.

CURRENT STATUS OF HIGHER EDUCATION

India is rushing headlong toward economic success and modernization, counting on high-tech industries such as information technology and biotechnology to propel the nation to prosperity. Unfortunately, its weak higher education sector constitutes the Achilles heel of this strategy. Its systematic disinvestment in higher education in recent years has yielded neither world-class research nor very many highly trained scholars, scientists, or

managers to sustain high-tech development. India's main competitors — especially China but also Singapore, Taiwan, and South Korea — are investing in large and differentiated higher education systems. They are providing access to large numbers of students at the bottom of the academic system while at the same time building some research-based universities that are able to compete with the world's best institutions. These countries are positioning themselves for leadership in the knowledge-based economies of the coming era.

India has significant advantages in the 21st century knowledge race. It has a large higher education sector — the third largest in the world in student numbers, after China and the United States. It uses English as a primary language of higher education and research. It has a long academic tradition. Academic freedom is respected. There are a small number of high quality institutions, departments, and centers that can form the basis of quality sector in higher education. The fact that the States, rather than the Central Government, exercise major responsibility for higher education creates a rather cumbersome structure, but the system allows for a variety of policies and approaches.

Yet the weaknesses far outweigh the strengths. India educates approximately 10 per cent of its young people in higher education compared with more than half in the major industrialized countries and 15 per cent in China. Almost all of the world's academic systems resemble a pyramid, with a small high quality tier at the top and a massive sector at the bottom. India has a tiny top tier. None of its universities occupies a solid position at the top. A few of the best universities have some excellent departments and centers, and there is a small number of outstanding undergraduate colleges. At present, the world-class institutions are mainly limited to the Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs), the Indian Institutes of Management (IIMs) and perhaps a few others such as the All India Institute of Medical Sciences and the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research. These institutions, combined, enroll well under 1 per cent of the student population.

With just a few exceptions, India's colleges and universities have become large, under-funded, ungovernable institutions. At many of them, politics has intruded into campus life, influencing academic appointments and decisions across levels. Under-investment in libraries, information technology, laboratories, and classrooms makes it very difficult to provide top-quality instruction or engage in cutting-edge research.

PROBLEMS OF INDIAN HIGHER EDUCTATION SYSTEM

Higher education in India suffers from several systemic deficiencies. As a result, it continues to provide graduates that are unemployable despite emerging shortages of skilledmanpower. The standard of academic research is low anddeclining. Some of the problems of the Indian higher education, such as the unwieldyaffiliating system, inflexible academic structure, uneven capacity across various subjects,eroding autonomy of academic institutions, and the low level of public funding are wellknown. Higher education in India has expanded rapidly over the past two decades.This growth has been mainly driven by private sector initiatives. There are genuine concernsabout many of them being substandard and exploitative. Due to the government’s ambivalence on the role of private sector in higher education, the growth has been chaoticand unplanned. The regulatory system has failed to maintain standards or check exploitation.Instead, it resulted in erecting formidable entry barriers that generate undesirable rents. Despite, its impressive growth, higher education in India could maintain only a very small base of quality institutions at the top. Standards of the majority of the institutions are poor and declining. There are a large number of small and non-viable institutions. Entry to the small number of quality institutions is very competitive giving rise to high stake entrance tests and a flourishing private tuition industry.

The stakes are so high that quota-based reservation of seats in such institutions in the name of affirmative action has come to occupy centre stage in India’s electoral politics. Despite some merit, it has resulted in fragmentation of merit space and further intensified competition for the limited seats in quality institutions. While public funding declined (in real terms), enrolments in higher education institutions grew to meet the surge in demand. This further deteriorated academic standards. As a result, the institutions were forced to raise their tuition fees to sustain themselves. Emergence of private education providers and increase in tuition fees

in public institutions without any substantial programme for students‟ financial aid has made higher education beyond the reach of the poor.

Due to these problems of our higher education system a lot of Indian students are going overseas to study rose a stunning 256% – from 53,266 to 189,629 – in just nine years (2002–2011) According to a study called "Indian student mobility to selected European countries: An overview" by researchers at one of India's top business schools, the Indian Institute of Management–Bangalore. This is welcome news for the many institutions in Europe and North America that are the main recipients of Indian students, but it is also cause for concern in some quarters in India.

CHALLENGES FACING HIGHER EDUCATION

This fall into four broad categories: the low quality of teaching and learning; the supply-demand gap; uneven growth and access to opportunity; and constraints on research capacity and innovation.

⁾ The low quality of teaching and learning

Arguably, the greatest challenge facing higher education in India is the chronic shortage of quality faculty. Various reports estimate that 30-40% of faculty positions are unfilled. Most faculties have had no training in teaching. Other issues in teaching and learning which compound the problems include:

a. Outdated, rigid curricula and the absence of employer engagement in course content and skills development. Very few opportunities for interdisciplinary learning.

b. Pedagogies and assessment are focused on input and rote learning; students have little opportunity to develop a wider range of transversal skills, including critical thinking, analytical reasoning, problem-solving and collaborative working.

c. High student: teacher ratio, due to the lack of teaching staff and pressure to enroll more students.

d. Separation of research and teaching; lack of early stage research experience.

e. An ineffective quality assurance system and a complete lack of accountability by institutions to the state and central government, students and other stakeholders.

This has resulted in graduates with low employability, a common feature of higher education across south Asia, and an insufficient basis for movement to higher levels of study and research. These problems are endemic across higher education institutions in India, including many of the 'top tier' institutions, but particularly so in affiliated colleges and state universities.

⁾ The Supply-Demand Gap

Despite an average growth rate of over 7% in the last decade, India's GER in higher education is very low. By some estimates, even if India succeeds in its target of 30% GER by 2020, 100 million qualified students will still not have places at university. India needs to drastically increase the number of places at universities and enrolment through distance learning programmes. Over the last decade, the diversity of courses offered by universities and colleges has narrowed, resulting in saturated markets for engineers, technology graduates and MBAs.

⁾ Uneven growth and access to opportunity

Despite efforts to spread the location of higher education institutions more evenly across the country, there is wide variation, particularly between urban and rural areas, but also between states. There are still significant multi-dimensional inequalities in enrolment rates between rural and urban populations, rich and poor, minority and mainstream communities, men and women and people with disabilities. 'Inclusive growth' is a priority for reform in Indian education. With the growth in the middle classes, Indian universities must prepare themselves for considerable changes in student profile.

Constraints on research and innovation

In the Times Higher Education World University Rankings 2014-15, not a single university from India could make it to the list of top 275 universities in the world and no Indian institute for engineering and technology figures in the list of top 100 universities for that category. Isn't it shocking for a country that boasts of having more number of engineering institutions and producing more number of engineers than any other country in the world does not have a single world-class university?

Over emphasis on academic qualifications by the University Grants Commission (UGC) has resulted in a number of university teachers registering for Ph.D. programmes. It is not passion for research but passion for climbing up the career ladder in the form of promotion that motivates teachers to register for Ph.D. As a result, the quality of most PhD research is sub-standard and our Indian universities have highly qualified but highly unproductive academics.

India cannot build internationally recognized research-oriented universities overnight, but the country has the key elements in place to begin and sustain the process. India will need to create a dozen or more universities that can compete internationally to fully participate in the new world economy. Without these universities, India is destined to remain a scientific backwater.

CONCLUSION:

The problems that confront Indian higher education today are low rates of enrolment, unequal access, and poor quality of infrastructure and lack of relevance. The goals remain the same expansion with inclusion and ensuring quality and relevant education. The main challenge to be overcome is to increase the present rate of enrolment of 20 per cent. Given the low rate of enrolment, we need more quality teaching institutions at the undergraduate level. The influence of academicians on policies and the obsession with a flawed notion of excellence in terms of it being only about research have undermined the focus of having good teaching institutions. Nobody denies the utility of research in teaching, but it should not be forgotten that imparting knowledge is equally important.

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