

Higher Education: Indian Scenario

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Abstract: India's higher education system is the third largest in the world, next to United States and China. The main governing body at the tertiary level is the University Grants Commission, which enforces its standards, advises the government, and helps coordinate between the centre and the state. Accreditation for higher learning is overseen by 12 autonomous institutions established by the University Grants Commission (UGC). India is a global leader in terms of GDP spent by public and private sources on higher education. India devotes a very high proportion of its national wealth on higher education. Many of India's 34,000 undergraduate colleges are too small to be viable. They are generally understaffed and ill-equipped; two-thirds do not even satisfy government-established minimum norms, and they are unable to innovate because of the rigid bureaucracy of the affiliating system that links the colleges to a supervising university. All this makes the system highly fragmented, scattered and difficult to manage

This paper which is based on the secondary data highlights on Indian scenario in higher education, black side of commerce education, challenges to be faced to make the education at par with global education etc. The objectives of the paper are

- To present scenario of Indian Higher Education System.
- To highlight on changing face of education
- To discuss on the issues and the challenges in higher education
- To highlight on the need for and improvements in modern business education

Keywords: Indian, higher education, fragmented, changing, scenario, challenges

Introduction:

Higher education includes teaching, research, exacting applied work (e.g. in medical schools and dental schools), and social services activities of universities. Within the realm of teaching, it includes both the *undergraduate* level, and beyond that, *graduate-level* (or *postgraduate* level). The latter level of education is often referred to as graduate school, especially in North America.

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autonomous institutions established by the University Grants Commission (UGC). (8)

Indian higher education system has expanded at a fast pace by adding nearly 20,000 colleges and more than 8 million students in a decade from 2000-01 to 2010-11. As of 2011, India has 42 central universities, 275 state universities, 130 deemed universities, 90 private universities, 5 institutions established and functioning under the State Act, and 33 Institutes of National Importance. Other institutions include 33,000 colleges as Government Degree Colleges and Private Degree Colleges, including 1800 exclusive women's colleges, functioning under these universities and institutions as reported by the UGC in 2012.(9) The emphasis in the tertiary level of education lies on

science and technology. Indian educational institutions by 2004 consisted of a large number of technology institutes. Distance learning and open education is also a feature of the Indian higher education system, and is looked after by the Distance Education Council. Indira Gandhi National Open University is the largest university in the world by number of students, having approximately 3.5 million students across the globe. Some institutions of India, such as the Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs), Indian Institutes of Management (IIMs), National Institute of Technology (NITs) and Jawaharlal Nehru University have been globally acclaimed for their standard of education. The IITs enroll about 8000 students annually and the alumni have contributed to both the growth of the private sector and the public sectors of India. Three Indian universities were listed in the Times Higher Education list of the world's top 200 universities — Indian Institutes of Technology, Indian Institutes of Management, and Jawaharlal Nehru University in 2005 and 2006. Six Indian Institutes of Technology and the Birla Institute of Technology and Science - Pilani were listed among the top 20 science and technology schools in Asia by *Asiaweek*. The Indian School of Business situated in Hyderabad was ranked number 12 in global MBA rankings by the *Financial Times* of London in 2010 while the All India Institute of Medical Sciences has been recognized as a global leader in medical research and treatment(1).

Indian scenario of education; Discussion

India is a global leader in terms of GDP spent by public and private sources on higher education. India devotes a very high proportion of its national wealth on higher education. At 3 per cent of the GDP (1.2 per cent from public and 1.8 per cent from private sources), India spends more than what the United States (1 per cent public and 1.6 per cent

private) or Korea (0.7 per cent public and 1.9 per cent private) spends on higher education. This suggests a limited scope for further increase, though more is required since in absolute figures, investment in higher education does not measure up to international terms. Further, there is an urgent need for effective and efficient use of funds to promote both equity and excellence.

The gross enrolment rate the proportion of the age group accessing higher education — of 18 per cent is among the highest for countries at India's level of development. This is particularly impressive given India's size and complexity. The recently approved 12th Five-Year Plan aims at raising the gross enrolment rate to 25 per cent by 2017, which is both desirable and achievable.

Many of India's 34,000 undergraduate colleges are too small to be viable. They are generally understaffed and ill-equipped; two-thirds do not even satisfy government-established minimum norms, and they are unable to innovate because of the rigid bureaucracy of the affiliating system that links the colleges to a supervising university. All this makes the system highly fragmented, scattered and difficult to manage. There is a strong case for consolidation and merging small institutions. But the affiliating system is vast and deep-rooted and, therefore, is neither feasible nor desirable to dismantle it. However, decentralization of part of the curriculum holds great promise. With greater academic autonomy, the core courses could be retained by the university, while the responsibility for the rest of the curriculum could be devolved to the colleges. This would create a desired innovation culture in the colleges. Clustering and even merging colleges that are very small would also have to figure in this reform. In addition, universities that affiliate a large number of colleges would need to be reorganized into two or more

universities, with each affiliating a smaller number of colleges to improve overall academic effectiveness.(5)

‘Our university system is, in many parts, in a state of disrepair...In almost half the districts in the country, higher education enrollments are abysmally low, almost two-third of our universities and 90 per cent of our colleges are rated as below average on quality parameters... I am concerned that in many states university appointments, including that of vice-chancellors, have been politicized and have become subject to caste and communal considerations, there are complaints of favoritism and corruption.’

— Prime Minister Manmohan Singh

The bigger challenge is that of students who do not choose to study in fields that will best contribute to economic growth or to their own job prospects. Also employers regularly complain that graduates are not adequately prepared for available jobs.

Indian Academics:

While it is true that Indian Academics, by International comparisons, are relatively well paid, they are not necessarily effective. Especially college teachers are constrained by rigid bureaucracy. Further work is not carefully evaluated .Salary increments are promotions are awarded rather on the basis of seniority than merit. A system of academic performance indicators for promotions and appointment of professors and lecturers is yet to take roots. Indian academicians are committed to their profession however structural impediments and an ossified culture get in the way. India has achieved some areas of accomplishment in higher education. The challenge is to capitalize on the plans and reforms an ossified system.(6)

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 concerns 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 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.

Recognizing the above and the basic fact, that the Universities have to perform multiple roles, like creating new knowledge, acquiring new capabilities and producing an intelligent human recourse pool, through challenging teaching, research and extension activities so as to balance both the need and the demand, the UGC has initiated nation wide discussions for action oriented results.

Challenges

The new challenge before the country at the beginning of the 21st century is to become a developed society by the year 2020, which requires that not only a vibrant economy driven by knowledge has to be ushered in soon, but also a new society where justice and human values prevail has to be created. Challenges in the higher education are not only nation centric but have attained that global dimension, particularly after trade in services has been brought under the preview of the WTO regime. With the explosive growth of knowledge in the past century and with the development of handy tools of information and communication technologies as well as of other scientific innovations, competition has become a

hallmark of growth all over the world. As a result, knowledge is not going to be the driver of Indian Economy but also, it is going to permeate into all the strata of Indian Society for a better quality of life and living conditions. Therefore India has to rise to the occasion urgently and reorient its higher education system to be vibrant, competitive, meaningful and purposeful. Besides there is absolutely no substitute to quality of higher education, although the country has been faced for a long time with the serious problems of meeting the quality needs of our society. It is therefore essential the careful balancing of the two is given priority to meet the twin requirements of the society in the foreseeable future.

Changing face of education:

Today the world economy is experiencing an unprecedented change. New developments in science and technology, media revaluation and internationalization of education and the ever expanding competitive environment and revolutionizing the education scene are some of the features. A paradigm shift has been noticed in higher education now a days from 'national education' to 'global education', from 'one time education for few' to 'life long education for all', from teacher centric education to 'learner centric education'. These changes make new demands and pose fresh challenges to the established education system and practices in the country. Because of independence and integration of the world economy in recent years, the Indian Higher Education System has a new role and a challenge to provide to the nation and the world at large, skilled human manpower at all levels, having breadth of knowledge and confidence to effectively confront the social and economic realities.

It is worth noting that while India has the second largest system of higher education, next to U.S., total number of students hardly represent 6% of the relevant age group i.e. 18 to 23, which is much below the average of developed countries, which is about 47%. Thus access, equity, accountability and quality should form the four guiding principles, while planning for higher education development in India in the twenty-first century.

The major challenge before the Indian Higher Education System is to bring equity in quality of education across the length and breadth of the country. This is more close to the heart of students in the rural, semi urban and urban areas, as they wish to participate in new economic revolution. India is a nation that has always tried to bring the rural India in line with the mainstream by also introducing several government schools and colleges in villages and introducing systems that empowers socially and economically deprived students with the tool of education.

Conclusions

In new millennium the concept of education has changed from conceptual and theoretical education to practical, professional and experiment- oriented education, from bounded classrooms to open and virtual classrooms, from institutional centric to student centric education and from local to global perspective style, from traditional methods to speedily changing technological applications. Commerce education as a branch of higher education, being applied wing of knowledge, has a close relationship with the fast changing world of industry and business.

To accelerate economic development in India, country requires trained and qualified managers to control huge investments made by the companies. Commerce education covers diversified fields of

education and research in management, finance, marketing, accounting, business laws and other commercial laws. In the cut-throat global competition, use of extensive tools in every area is necessary to maintain challenging position in the global market

Education is instrumental in democratic reform as it offers people the opportunity to take up and reflect on the conditions that shape themselves and their relationship with others. In industrialized countries commercial education is organized on dynamic and systematic lines. But in developing country it was not given a fair chance as education or a profession. It is treated as inferior to other specialized branches of knowledge in every respect due to following aspects:

Black side of Commerce education. :-

The arguments made against the commerce education are:

- Absence of skills development of the students.
- No in-depth knowledge of the subject.
- Purely examination oriented attitude of the students.
- No practical knowledge to the students.
- Lack of industry, Institute interface.
- Weak and outdated syllabi.
- Dilution in student and faculty quality.
- Weak academic administration and planning.
- Low self-esteem for students, teachers, etc.,

Emerging issues of commerce education do not include emotional and spiritual intelligence, six sigma, Application of Lean, Behavioural finance, Incidental case studies, Portfolio management, Corporate governance, Research techniques, Personal finance planning, Modern techniques and technology in commerce education etc .

Thus present commerce education in India is in crisis also due to rapid and speedy changes taking place in the field of commerce.

The impact of globalization on the corporate sector in particular has suddenly created a demand for human resource trained in the field of business education with innovative ideas, new approaches in business and behavioural sciences as well as professional skills(4). In order to fill the vacuum in this regard a new and futuristic orientation requires to be given to the discipline of business education. At the outset, it would be worthwhile to mention that the conventional business education has become irrelevant in the new era of globalization and liberalization. Keeping in mind the significance of modern business education, the Indian government has liberalized the business education market since 1990s, resulting in an unprecedented growth in the number of technical and management institutions mostly through private investment. It is worthwhile to mention here that outside US, India now trains largest number of MBAs with about 75,000 degrees annually. At present, there are more than 1200 institutions providing business education in the country. The students now have a vast choice regarding the institutions in which they want to study. Since the management graduates and post-graduates produced by these institutions are primarily absorbed by industry, there is a growing need to match the curriculum and structure of business education to better fit the needs of India

and sensitive to the changes in both in the industrial and services sectors within the country. Moreover, it is important to properly assess the quality of business education imparted to the students in various institutions for proper decision Govt. of India has already adopted L.P.G which has shown increase in economic growth. Needless to say, it demands tremendous notable changes in the educational field too. Commerce education in this changing scenario demands drastic changes in the present quality of commerce education i.e. improvement of quality of institution, department, teaching and non-teaching staff, and students and even the parents also.

This demands improvement in the syllabus, development in teaching methodology, inculcating the right attitude of the student towards education, emancipation in the role played by the teacher Commerce discipline covers all aspect of industry. The growing importance of commerce education directly hits the development of the nation. For survival and growth in global educational market, **“Quality commerce education”** is the urgent need which satisfies the changing expectations of the industry and the society.

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