HIGHER EDUCATION IN INDIA: CHALLENGES AND INTERVENTIONS

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Abstract

The world has witnessed the dynamic changes in the society of every country in these modern and postmodern eras. This rapid change in the society is due to the spread of education in almost every corner of the world. The country may be develop or developing but the progress of any nation is highly dependent on the quality of education it is providing to its citizen. The education system of India started from the ancient era and it has witnessed many changes in the education system of the nation. Today India stand as the third largest in the world in terms of Higher Education system. The Indian Higher Education system took long journey to arrive to the present status. India overcome many challenges to provide quality higher education to the deserving citizen of the country. The role of education is very vital for the prosperous development of the nation. Therefore, the government of India is al trying its level best to make the education fulfilled the social needs of the nation. The nation has introduced National Education Policy 2020, which outlines the vision of new education system in India. The India as a country has huge potential to emerge as develop nation with strong political wills backed by visionary education system.

Keywords: Education, Dynamic, Challenges, Higher Education

Introduction

The education system existed in India since the starting of the civilization wayback in ancient period. The system of education existed during ancient period was known as "Gurukul System of Education". In Gurukul system the students stay with the guru in the same house like a family member and attain the education from the guru (teacher). In the Gurukul system, the students were educated under the guidance of a "Guru" in different areas of religion, philosophy and science. India has been always been a land of scholars and learners. In ancient times also, India was regarded all over the world for its universities like Taxila, Nalanda, Vikramshila and its scholars. The development of education system in India got tremendous changes with the passing of the time due to the invasion of the country by many foreign rulers, which after invasion tried to introduce their own system of education. Many foreign invaders

even damaged many educational centres, which disrupted the smooth functioning of the education system in the country. The British rulers brought the modern education system to India. The British rulers established the formal system of higher education focused on languages, literature, history, and philosophy. The educational institutions during British period was intended to teach and generate English-speaking working-class people for administrative services under the British rule. The Universities established under the British rule were following the system adopted by the University of London disregarding the socio-cultural practices of India during that era. However, the initiatives taken by the Britisher's in modern education system led to an expansion of higher education system in different parts of India in 1947. The higher education system in India grew rapidly after independence. By 1980, there were 132 universities and 4738 colleges, enrolling around five per cent of the eligible age group in higher education. The number of institutions in India is four times more than the number of institutions in both the United States and the entire Europe (Prasad and Kumar, 2020).

Present Scenario of Higher Education in India

The higher education system of India evolved since the ancient period. It was due to the invasion of many foreign rulers and change in the social system the existing education system during ancient period was distracted. The education system introduced by the foreign rulers were not easily available to the common people especially the higher education. The higher education in India got some support from the government after the country got independence from the foreign rulers in the year 1947. The government constituted many commissions and committees to introduce a better education system in the nation. India has a publicly funded higher education system that is the third largest in the world, next to the 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. In terms of the growth of higher educational institutions in the country it is quite clear from the table-1 that it has increased from 755 institutions in the year 2015-16 to 1,012 institutions in the year 2019- 20. It reflects that the higher educational institutions in the country is increasing. It is also clear from the table-2 that the Compound Annual Growth Rate of undergraduate in terms of enrolment is 19.1 and that of Ph.D programme is 8.5 in India as per AISHE 2019-20 report. Taking into account all types of Institutions (University, Colleges and Stand-Alone Institutions), Pupil Teacher Ratio (PTR) at All India level comes out to be 26 and

23 if only regular enrolment is considered. In case of University and its Colleges, PTR is 28 for regular Mode (AISHE Report 2019-20).

Table-1: Types and Numbers of University in India

Sl.no.	University Type	Number of University				
		2015-16	**2016-17**	**2017-18**	**2018-19**	**2019-20**
1	State Public University	329	345	351	371	386
2	State Private University	197	233	262	304	327
3	Deemed University-Private	79	79	80	80	80
4	Institute of National Importance	75	100	101	127	135
5	Central University	43	44	45	46	48
6	Deemed University-Government	32	33	33	34	36
	Total	**755**	**834**	**872**	**962**	**1,012**

Source: AISHE 2019-20

Table-2: Higher Education Enrolment and its Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR)

YEAR	Ph.D	M.Phil	Post Graduate	Undergraduate
2015-16	126451	42523	3917156	27420450
2016-17	141037	43267	4007570	28348197
2017-18	161412	34109	4114310	29016350
2018-19	169170	30692	4042522	29829075
2019-20	202550	23934	4312535	30647287
CAGR	**8.5**	**-8.1**	**12.2**	**19.1**

Source: AISHE 2019-20

Challenges in Higher Education in India

Although the government is trying to improve the higher education system in India but even after the 75th years of independence the higher education in the country is facing some visible challenges. Some of the basic challenges in higher education system in India are discuss below:

❖ **Research and Innovations:** Research and innovation is one of the major focus area of higher education. The quality of higher education is reflects in the outcome of research and innovations of that particular institution. In India the higher education are not getting enough infrastructures and financial supports to conduct independent research, which demotivate the researchers to do basic research in the area of their interest. This is one of the main reasons that, our bright students are choosing foreign countries to conduct their research work.

❖ **Privatization and Commercialization of Higher Education:** Privatization and commercialization of higher education is a big challenge for the developing countries like India. If it is not control at the initial stage it has the chance to engulf the whole education system. There is a mushrooming of private higher educational institutions in the nation and many influential people are expecting the government higher educational institutions to be privatized for their own benefits. It is due to the establishment of private higher educational institutions the chances of commercialization of higher education system is increasing. It the higher education system become fully commercialized then many deserving students will be deprived of the higher education and only few students will get the benefits of higher education.

❖ **Existence of Heterogeneous Education System:** The existence of private higher educational system run and managed by different group of organizations / societies is also a big challenge for maintaining equity in terms of quality in higher education sector. The unity in diversity is the beauty of our nation but at the same time, it become very difficult when every society or community tried to influence the higher education system of the nation with his or her own ideology.

❖ **Enrolment of Students:** The enrolment in higher education is very important for the development of the nation. The Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) of India at higher education is 27.1% in the year 2021 as per the AISHE report. At the same time the GER of other develop and developing countries like the USA Germany France UK Brazil have more than 50% GER at higher education. The countries like China and Indonasia also have higher GER at higher education than India. The government should established higher educational institution with sufficient faculties and infrastructure to meet the demand of higher education in the nation.

❖ **Work culture and Administrations:** The work culture of higher education is highly influenced by the administrator of that particular institution. When the main administrator tried to do favour some section of the society working in the institution it develop unhealthy academic atmosphere in the entire system of the institution which ultimately hamper the quality academic output.

❖ **Quality and Excellence:** The maintenance of quality and excellence in higher education is a big challenge in the higher education. The quality has multi dimensions and a dynamic concept, which reflects the overall performance of the institutions. The higher education

institutions are establish with the vision to maintain quality and excellence throughout its existence and the government is focusing on the quality of higher education by adopting certain mechanism. There are many higher educational institutions existing the country, which fail to fulfill the various parameters set by the government or authority for maintaining the quality and excellence in higher education.

❖ **Lack of Infrastructures:** The higher education needs proper physical infrastructures to fulfill the requirement of the students and other human resources engaged in that institution. However, in India it is one of the most challenging area of higher education system in India. Many higher educational institutions of the country is lacking basic infrastructures, which finally hamper the academic development of the students. It also creates a huge difference between the academic development of various institutions managed by different authorities like private, semi-private and government institutions.

❖ **Political interference at Higher Education:** In India the politician or their kith's and kin directly or indirectly own many educational institutions. They run the higher educational institutions for profit making and political campaign purpose. It distract the students' main motives of education and finally begin to develop their careers in politics.

❖ **Faculty Shortage:** Higher education institutions are facing a shortage of faculty members and many qualified teachers are applying from one institution to another institution in search of better facilities. They well qualified teachers are also sometime assigned other non-teaching responsibilities in the institution which sometime discourage them. Many higher educational institutions are having lots of vacancy in teaching and the indifferent attitude of the authority to fill-up these vacancies also hamper the quality output of these institutions.

Various Initiatives taken by the Government of India for Human Resources

India is home to 1,043 universities, 42,343 colleges and 11,779 other standalone institutions that offer higher education collectively to close to 38.5 million students of whom 49 per cent are female. And all those who walk in through the gates of these institutions do so with great expectations from the degrees they are pursuing and the avenues that will open up for them. After all, dreaming big is a characteristic of youth (Singh, 2022). The higher education system in India is one of the largest and revered education system in the world. There is a huge potentiality in the higher education system of India to impart excellent quality education. The future of higher education is bright provide it overcome some hurdle present in the system. The

bulk youth population pursuing higher education of India if backed by proper infrastructures and quality teaching, research and innovations could bring a drastic change in the country in near future. The National Education Policy 2020 proposed to bring many changes in the entire educational structure of the nation starting from school education to the tertiary level of education and it is a ray of hope to for the future education system of the country. The NEP 2020 is expected to bring many positive changes in the higher education system. The following are the various government initiatives and intervention for the development of quality education in India:

❖ **Rashtriya Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA)**: Rashtriya Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA), a Centrally Sponsored Scheme (CSS) is an overarching scheme, operating in mission mode for funding the State Government Universities and colleges to achieve the aims of equity, access and excellence. The funding to states being made on the basis of critical appraisal of State Higher Education Plans, which describe each state's strategy to address issues of equity, access and excellence in higher education.

❖ **•Udaan:** Udaan is a special scheme for meritorious girl students, which was launched by the Central government. The selected meritorious girls will get mentoring and scholarship to enable them to transit from schools to technical education without any difficulty. Along with this, the scheme will also provide free resources to promote teaching and learning of mathematics and science at senior secondary school level. The scheme is mainly focused to enhance the enrolment of girls students in renown technical institutions by providing proper interventions to build them to take up leadership role in the coming years.

❖ **Rashtriya Avishkar Abhiyan:** this scheme was launched to recuperate interest in the technology among youth through support for innovative learning based on observations and experimentation. The scheme is mainly focusing on direct interaction with the environment around the educational institutions. It will rfresh and rejuvenate the mind of the students to learn outside the classroom. **Digital Library:** The Government has taken project for national digital library of eBooks by considering different disciplines and areas. The scheme is also made to facilitate through which highly qualified faculty of centrally sponsored institutions like IITs, IIMs and central universities would offer online courses free of cost.

❖ **The Scheme of Pandit Madan Mohan Malviya National Mission on Teachers and Teaching:** The Government of India has launched this scheme to improve the quality of

education at all levels by infusing quality and excellence in our teachers and teaching. It will also help to build a strong professional cadre of teachers by addressing all the issues related to teachers, teaching, teacher preparation, professional development, curriculum design, design and development of more effective pedagogy and better assessment and evaluation methodologies.

❖ **Under the Global Initiative of Academic Networks (GIAN):** The ministry of human resource development and department of science and technology will "create a channel for US professors in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics to teach in Indian academic and research institutions on short-term exchanges", as per the website of the US Department of State. It will help the students to get opportunity to learned the foreign professors and they will be exposed to the outside world through education exchange programme.

❖ **Unnat Bharat Abhiyan**: This particular scheme was launched by the Central Government for the promotion of technologies from the laboratory to the ground. This scheme will help the higher educational institutes to connect with villages in their neighbourhood and address the various problems faced by them. The IIT, Delhi is entrusted to coordinate this scheme. The scheme is particularly looking for the solutions for water management, organic farming, renewable energy, infrastructure and livelihood.

Suggestions for Improvement of Higher Education in India

The following are some of the suggestive measures, which could be taken by the authority for the further improvement of higher education in India.

❖ Opportunity should be provided to the bright students enrolled in the higher education with the foreign collaboration, joint ventures and students exchange programme. It will also help to reduce education migration of bright students.

❖ The curriculum for the educational system staring from Primary level to higher education should be thoroughly revisited from time to time to remove any kind of obsolete knowledge's and ideas. Besides this the new innovative ideas and approaches should be introduce in the education system to provide quality education to the young generations.

❖ Higher education institutions must be led by a person who could contact and convinced the Industrialist, Entrepreneurs, Politicians, Scientist and other elite' person for lectures or interaction with the students in the institution. It will motivate the students and provide them clear-cut intention of their future goals for the future development. The liaison with

these elite people could also increase the quality output of the education provided in the higher education institutions.

❖ The quality output of higher education is highly dependent on the various activities and programmes provided under the curriculum of the institutions. The internship programme, students project, career counselling and placement cell of the higher education institution should be properly monitor by the institution authority for the better learning and fruitful outcome of these activities.

❖ Higher education institutions should focus on the quality research and academic programme of the faculty members and students. The interested faculty members should be encourage to attend various academic activities in other institutions and to share the ideas learned from these academic programme with the students. The faculty and students exchange programme with the other higher educational institutions should be encourage by the institution authority and the government for better academic activities in the higher education.

❖ The curriculum of the higher education should also include the courses on local / indigenous knowledge, which could be document for the future generations. The local students should be encourage to preserve and document that indigenous knowledge which are at the verge of extinction.

❖ Government must promote collaboration between Indian higher education institutes and top International institutes as mentioned in the NEP 2020. There should be linkage between national research laboratories and research centers of top institutions for better quality and collaborative research. It will help to develop international level higher educational institutions in India.

Conclusion

The quality of higher education of any country reflects its future prospects and present scenario. There is a rapid expansion of higher education in India since its independence. At the same time, undeniably that many deserving students in the country are deprive of higher education. It is the responsibility of the government of India to provide higher education to the deserving students being one of the fastest developing nation of the world. Recently the government has introduced a National Education Policy 2020, which brought a huge expectation for the prosperous development of education system in India after full implementation. However, there are some challenges in the higher education in India but it has great potentiality to overcome

those challenges in future. The unexplored areas of higher education in India has a potentiality to create many opportunities for the younger generations of the nation. The government has initiated many interventions to enhance the equity, quality and accessibility of higher education in the country, which is quite visible. Therefore, it is the duty and responsibilities of the various implementation agencies to implement it for larger interest of the stakeholders.

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