Higher Education in India – Challenges andSuggestions

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ABSTRACT

The world has realized that the economic success of the states is directly determined by their education systems. Education is a Nation's Strength. A developed nation is inevitably an educated nation. Indian higher education system is the third largest in the world, next to the United States and China. Since independence, India as a developing nation is contentiously progressing in the education field. Although there have been lot of challenges to higher education system of India but equally have lot of opportunities and suggestions to overcome these challenges and to make higher education system much better. Now 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 higher educated people who are skilled and who can drive our economy forward. When India can provide skilled people to the outside world then we can transfer our country from a developing nation to a developed nation very easily and quickly. It needs greater transparency and accountability, the role of colleges and universities in the new millennium, and emerging scientific research on how people learn is of utmost important. This study is based on secondary sources of data. The current study aims to highlight the challenges and to point out the suggestions need to higher education system in India.

Keywords : Education, Challenges, suggestions, Colleges, Universities

I INTRODUCTION

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 'Right to Education Act' which stipulates compulsory and free education to all children within the age groups of 6-14 years, has brought about a revolution in the education system of the country with statistics revealing a staggering enrolment in schools over the last four years. The involvement of private sector in higher education has seen drastic changes in the field. Today over 60% of higher education institutions in India are promoted by the private sector. This has accelerated establishment of institutes which have originated over the last decade making India home to the largest number of Higher Education institutions in the world, with student enrolments at the second highest (Shaguri, 2013).The number of Universities has increased 34 times from 20 in 1950 to 677 in 2014. Despite these

numbers, international education rating agencies have not placed many of these institutions within the best of the world ranking. Also, India has failed to produce world class universities. Today, Knowledge is power. The more knowledge one has, the more empowered one is. However, India continues to face harsh challenges. Despite growing investment in education, 25 per cent of its population is still illiterate; only 15 per cent of Indian students reach high school, and just 7 per cent graduate (Masani, 2008).The quality of Indian education system, whether at primary or higher education is significantly poor as compared to major developing nations of the world. As of 2008, India's post-secondary institutions offer only enough seats for 7 per cent of India's college-age population, 25 per cent of teaching positions nationwide are vacant, and 57per cent of college professors lack either a master's or PhD degree (Newsweek, 2011). As of 2011, there are1522 degree-granting engineering colleges in India with an annual student intake of 582,000 (Science and Technology Education, 2009) plus 1,244 polytechnics with an annual intake of 265,000. However, these institutions face shortage of faculty and concerns have been raised over the quality of education (Mitra, 2008). Despite these challenges higher education system of India equally have lot of suggestions and opportunities to overcome these challenges and have the capability to make its identity at international level? However, it needs greater transparency and accountability, the role of universities and colleges in the new millennium, and emerging scientific research on how people learn is of extremeimportant.

II CHALLENGES IN HIGHER EDUCATION IN INDIA

We are not able to list a single university in top 100 universities of the world. Various governments changed during seven decades. They tried to boost the education system and implemented various education policies but they were not sufficient to put an example for the universe. UGC is continuously working and focusing on quality education in higher education sector. Still we are facing lot of problems and challenges in our education system. Some of the basic challenges in higher education system in India are discussed below:

➢ _ **Enrolment**: The Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) of India in higher education is only 15% which is quite low as compared to the developed as well as, other developing countries. With the increase of enrolments at school level, the supply of higher education institutes is insufficient to meet the growing demand in the country.

➢ **Equity**: There is no equity in GER among different sects of the society. According to previous studies the GER in higher education in India among male and female varies to a greater extent. There are regional variations too some states have high GER while as some is quite behind the national GER which reflect a significant imbalances within the higher education system.

➢ **Quality**: Quality in higher education is a multi-dimensional, multilevel, and a dynamic concept. Ensuring quality in higher education is amongst the foremost challenges being faced in India today. However, Government is continuously focusing on the quality education. Still Large number of colleges and universities in India are unable to meet the minimum requirements laid down by the UGC and our universities are not in a position to mark its place among the top universities of the world.

➢ **Infrastructure**: Poor infrastructure is another challenge to the higher education system of India; particularly the institutes run by the public sector suffer from poor physical facilities and infrastructure. There are large numbers of colleges which are functioning on second or third floor of the building on ground or first floor there exists readymade hosieries or photocopy shops.

➢ **Political interference**: Most of the educational Institutions are owned by the political leaders, who are playing key role in governing bodies of the Universities. They are using the innocent students for their selfish means. Students organize campaigns, forget their own objectives and begin to develop their careers in politics.

➢ **Faculty:** Faculty shortages and the inability of the state educational system to attract and retain well qualified teachers have been posing challenges to quality education for many years. Large numbers of NET / PhD candidates are unemployed even there are lot of vacancies in higher education, these deserving candidates are then applying in other departments which is a biggest blow to the higher education system.

➢ **Accreditation**: As per the data provided by the NAAC, as of June 2010, "not even 25% of the total higher education institutions in the country were accredited. And among those accredited, only 30% of the universities and 45% of the colleges were found to be of quality to be ranked at 'A' level".

➢ **Research and Innovation**: there are very nominal scholars in our country whose writing is cited byfamous western authors. There is inadequate focus on research in higher education institutes. There areinsufficient resources and facilities, as well as, limited numbers of quality faculty to advice students.Most of the research scholars are without fellowships or not getting their fellowships on time whichdirectly or indirectly affects their research. Moreover, Indian Higher education institutions are poorlyconnected to research centers. So, this is another area of challenge to the higher education in India.

➢ **Structure of higher education**: Management of the Indian education faces challenges of over centralization,bureaucratic structures and lack of accountability, transparency, and professionalism. As aresult of increase in number of affiliated colleges and students, the burden of administrative functions ofuniversities has significantly increased and the core focus on academics and research is diluted (Kumar,2015).

III SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVING QUALITY OF HIGHER EDUCATION

There are some suggestions and Expectations from Government, Industry,Educational Institutions, Parents and Students for improving quality of higher education-

• **Incentives to Teachers and Researchers**- Industry and students are expectingspecialized courses to be offered so that they get the latest and best in educationand they are also industries ready and employable. Vocational and Diploma coursesneed to be made more attractive to facilitate specialized programs being offered tostudents. Incentives should be provided to teachers and researchers to make theseprofessions more attractive for the younger generation.

- **Innovative Practices**- The new technologies offer vast opportunities for progress inall walks of life. Though efforts arerequired to improve the country's innovative capacity, yet the efforts should be tobuild on the existing strengths in light of new understanding of the researchinnovation-growth linkage.

- **To mobilize resources-** Effective measures will have to be adopted to mobilize resources for highereducation. There is also a need to relate the fee structure to the student's capacity topay for the cost. So that, students at lower economic levels can be given highlysubsidized and fully subsidized education.

- **Student-Centered Education and Dynamic Methods-** Student-centered education and employment ofdynamic methods of education will require from teachers new attitudes and newskills. Methods of teaching through lectures will have to subordinate to the methodsthat will lay stress on self-study, personal consultation between teachers and pupils,and dynamic sessions of seminars and workshops. Methods of distance education willhave to be employed on a vast scale.

- **Public Private Partnership**- PPP is most essential to bring in quality in the highereducation system. University Grants Commission and Ministry of HRD should play a major role indeveloping a purposeful interface between the Universities, Industries and NationalResearch Laboratories (NRLs) as a step towards PPP. Funding to NRLs by thegovernment should ensure the involvement of institutions of higher educationengaged in research activities to facilitate availability of latest sophisticatedequipment.

- **To Provide Need Based Job-Oriented Courses**- Combination of arts subjectsand computer science and science and humanities or literature should be introducedso that such courses could be useful for the students to do jobs. Theprogram must be focused on graduate studies and research and developingstrategies and mechanisms for the rapid and efficient transfer of knowledge and forits application to specific national and local conditions and needs.

- **Action Plan for Improving Quality**- Academic and administrative audit should beconducted once in three years in colleges by external experts for ensuring quality inall aspects of academic activities. The self-finance colleges should come forward foraccreditation and fulfill the requirements of accreditation. Universities and collegesshould realize the need for quality education and come forward with action plan forimproving quality in higher educational institutions.

- **Quality development-**. Italso requires that higher education should be characterized by its internationaldimensions: exchange of knowledge, interactive networking, mobility of teachers andstudents and international research projects, while taking into account the nationalcultural values and circumstances.

- **World Class Education-** India should aspire for the internationalstandard in education. Many national universities like in the USA, UK, Australia, etc.allow studies in higher education for foreign students in their countries and throughcorrespondence courses as well. In the same way India Universities of world classeducation can also offer courses of studies to foreign students taking advantage of the globalization process. To achieve that goal it should adopt uniform internationalsyllabus in its educational institutions.

- **Stipends to Research Fellows**- The number of PhDs from Indian Universitiesshould increase with proper standards. This should be seen in the context ofextremely low fraction of PhDs in India in relation to M.Sc. /B.Tech.as compared towhat it is in USA, UK, Germany, Japan etc. Meritorious doctoral students should berecognized through teaching assistantships with stipends over and above theresearch fellowships Identifying talented, meritorious students and encouraging themthrough recognition is very important to attract students into research and teaching.

- **Fair Quality Assurance System**- Colleges and Private institutes should set upInternal Quality Assurance Cell and must follow a minimum standard to givedegrees. The quality assurance system must be independent of political andinstitutional interaction and it must have a basis in the legislation. There should beoperational, financial and academic autonomy coupled with accountability. There is aneed of an independent accreditation agency with a conglomerate of government,industry, academia, society etc.

- **To increase Quantity of Universities**- We need more universities because we aremore in number and present number of universities is too less. .

- **Examination Reforms**- Examination reforms, gradually shifting from the terminal,annual and semester examinations to regular and continuous assessment ofstudent's performance in learning should be implemented

- **High-tech Libraries-** Our university libraries have a very good collection of books,but they are all in mess. A library must be online and conducive for serious study.Indian universities should concentrate more on providing quality education which iscomparable to that of international standards.

IV CONCLUSION

Education is a process by which a person's body, mind and character are formed and strengthened. Higher education in India has expanded very rapidly in the last seven decades afterindependence yet it is not equally accessible to all. India is today one of the fastest developing countries of theworld with the annual growth rate going above 9%. Still a large section of the population remains illiterate and alarge number of children's do not get even primary education. This is not only excluded a large section of thepopulation from contributing to the development of the country fully but it has also prevented them fromutilizing the benefits of whatever development have taken place for the benefit of the people. No doubt India isfacing various challenges in higher education but to tackle these challenges and to boost higher education isutmost important. Suggestions and opportunities are available but how to get benefits from these suggestions and opportunities andhow to make them accessible to others is the matter of concern. In order to sustain that rate of growth, there isneed to increase the number of institutes and also the quality of higher education in India. To reach and achievethe future requirements there is an urgent need to relook at the Financial Resources, Access and Equity, QualityStandards, Relevance, infrastructure and at the end the responsivenessAfter independence, there has been tremendous increase in institutions of higherlearning in all disciplines. We need highereducated people who are skilled and who can drive our economy forward. When India

canprovide skilled people to the outside world then we can transfer our country from adeveloping nation to a developed nation very easily and quickly.

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