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HIGHER EDUCATION IN INDIA: CHALLENGES, OPPORTUNITIES AND SUGGESTIONS

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INTRODUCTION

Education is a very important aspect for the development of a country. Education provides an opportunity for uplifting the social, economic, cultural, and moral issues tackled by society. India needs to focus on education for more educated and efficient people to drive our nation. In the world, there are many Indian who well known for their capabilities and skills. This paper is mainly focused on the overall scenario of higher education in India. This paper aims to identify issues and challenges in the field of higher education in India. And some suggestions are provided to overcome these challenges.

The institutional framework of higher education in India consists of Universities and Colleges. As reported in 2015, India has 760 universities and 38,498 colleges. There are three types of universities: Conventional Universities, Deemed Universities and Institutions of National Importance. While Conventional Universities are established through Act of Parliament or State Legislatures, Deemed Universities award degrees through the notification of the central government. Institutes of National Importance are those that have been awarded the status by Parliament.

The education system of India falls broadly under the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD). Amongst the branches of the MHRD, the Department of Higher Education is responsible for overseeing the growth of the higher education sector. The Department aims to improve quality of and access to higher education for all sections of the population. One of the key objectives of the Department is to increase the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in higher education to 30% by 2020. Some of the other objectives of the department include: expansion of institutional base, greater inclusion of minorities, and removal of regional disparities, infrastructural improvement and increased global participation.

CHALLENGES IN HIGHER EDUCATION IN INDIA

Indian education system has not been developed fully. At present, we are not able to list a single university in top 100 universities of the world. Various governments changed during these six 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:

1. 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.

2. 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.

3. 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.

4. 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 number 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.

5. 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 organise campaigns, forget their own objectives and begin to develop their careers in politics.

6. 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.

7. 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".

8. Research and Innovation: there are very nominal scholars in our country whose writing is cited by famous western authors. There is inadequate focus on research in higher education institutes. There are insufficient 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 which directly or indirectly affects their research. Indian Higher education institutions are poorly connected to research centers. So, this is another area of challenge to the higher education in India.

9. Structure of higher education: Management of the Indian education faces challenges of overcentralisation, bureaucratic structures and lack of accountability, transparency, and professionalism.

OPPORTUNITIES IN HIGHER EDUCATION

India is a large country, with an estimated population of young people aged between 18 to 23 years to be around 150 millions. The sheer size of the market offers huge opportunities for development of the higher education sector in India. India now boasts of having more than 33,000 colleges and 659 universities, which has been quite a remarkable growth during the last six decades. The year 2012 witnessed 21.4 million enrollments, which makes India the 3rd largest educational system in the world. Unfortunately, the educational infrastructure of India is inadequate to handle such huge volumes. In spite all the government spending in the educational sector, it is just too insufficient to meet the growing

requirements. Therefore, higher Education sector has now been identified as one of the promising areas for private and foreign investments.

Indian higher education system is growing very fast irrespective of various challenges but there is no reason that these Challenges cannot be overcome. With the help of new-age learning tools, it is easy for country like India to overcome these problems and bring a paradigm shift in the country's higher education sector. With such a vibrant country with huge population properly educated, the possibilities are endless. If knowledge is imparted using advanced digital teaching and learning tools, and society is made aware of where we are currently lagging behind, our country can easily emerge as one of the most developed nations in the world. There are opportunities for strategic engagement and capacity building in higher education leadership and management at the state level. There are opportunities for India to collaboration at national and international level on areas of systemic reform, including quality assurance, international credit recognition, and unified national qualifications framework. Equality of educational opportunity in higher education is considered essential because higher education is a powerful tool for reducing or eliminating income and wealth disparities.

The need to enhance the employability of graduates is presenting entry points for collaboration in enterprise education and entrepreneurship, links with industry, research skills and the wide range of transferable skills, including English. The emerging interest in Indian higher education institutions in the vocational skills market provides areas for potential engagement with international partners. There is a need to build stronger relationships and increase mutual understanding in higher education by increasing support and participation in conferences, workshops, seminars which enable debate and dialogue with other countries of the world.

SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVING THE SYSTEM OF HIGHER EDUCATION

In India, one problem is numbers and the other is quality. We want to be a developed country. If we really want to achieve that target, we should have at least 20% of the age group in higher education. The present number is uncertain but is reported to be around 10% .In other words, within a decade we will have to double the opportunities for higher education. It is just impossible for the Government alone to create the facilities needed. Private providers have to play a role.

1. There is an urgent need to implement innovative and transformational approach form primary to higher education level to make Indian educational system globally more relevant and competitive.

2. Higher educational institutes need to improve quality and reputation.

3. There should be a good infrastructure of colleges and universities which may attract the students.

4. Government must promote collaboration between Indian higher education institutes and top International institutes and also generates linkage between national research laboratories and research centers of top institutions for better quality and collaborative research.

5. There is a need to focus on the graduate students by providing them such courses in which they can achieve excellence, gain deeper knowledge of subject so that they will get jobs after recruitment in the companies which would reduce unnecessary rush to the higher education.

6. Universities and colleges in both public private must be away from the political affiliations,

7. Favouritism, money making process should be out of education system etc.

8. There should be a multidisciplinary approach in higher education so that students knowledge may not be restricted only upto his own subjects.

CONCLUSION

Indian higher education is in need of radical reforms. A focus on enforcing higher standards of transparency, strengthening of the vocational and doctoral education system, and professionalization of the sector through stronger institutional responsibility would help in accelerating efforts and working around the problems. Rapid development of IT sector and engineering education in India has arrested students into linear path without giving them a chance to explore and discover their passions. Concerted and collaborative efforts are needed in broaden student choices through liberal arts education.

Higher education institutions are clearly in the midst of rapid change in response to environmental, social, economic, technological, and political transformations sweeping the globe. Addressing the challenges is critical not only for the future of institutions but also for that of the world at large. Institutional repositories consist of formally organized and managed collections of digital content generated by faculty, staff, and students at the institutions which can help us at this end.

Higher education in India has expanded very rapidly in the last six decades after independence yet it is not equally accessible to all. India is today one of the fastest developing countries of the world with the annual growth rate going above 9%. Still a large section of the population remains illiterate and a large number of children's do not get even primary education. This is not only excluded a large section of the population from contributing to the development of the country fully but it has also prevented them from utilising the benefits of whatever development have taken place for the benefit of the people. No doubt India is facing various challenges in higher education but to tackle these challenges and to boost higher education is utmost important. India is a country of huge human resource potential, to utilise this potential properly is the issue which needed to discuss. Opportunities are available but how to get benefits from these opportunities and how to make them accessible to others is the matter of concern. In order to sustain that rate of growth, there is need to increase the number of institutes and also the quality of higher education in India. To reach and achieve the future requirements there is an urgent need to relook at the Financial Resources, Access and Equity, Quality Standards, Relevance, infrastructure and at the end the responsiveness.

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