



HIGHER EDUCATION IN INDIA

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Abstract:

Higher Education in India has evolved in distinct and divergent streams with each stream monitored by an apex body, indirectly controlled by the Ministry of Human Resource Development. The 433 universities/ institutions are mostly funded by the state governments. However, there are 40 important universities called Central universities, which are maintained by the Union Government and because of relatively large funding, they have an edge over the others. The engineering education and business schools are monitored and accredited by the All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) while medical education is monitored and accredited by the Medical Council of India (MCI). Like-wise, agriculture education and research is monitored by the Indian Council for Agriculture Research. Apart from these, National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE) controls all the teacher training institutions in the country. The country has some ace engineering, management and medical education institutions which are directly funded by the Ministry of Human Resource Development of the Union Government. Admission to all professional education colleges is done through all-India common admission tests of which the IIT-JEE, AIEEE, CAT and CPMT are the most popular ones. Most of the institutions reserve a small percentage of seats for foreign students.

KEYWORDS-

Higher Education, Students, Qualification, Management, Quality Assurance, Reorientation.

INTRODUCTION

INDIA has seen a consistently high rate of economic growth in the recent years. It has now become a major player in the global knowledge economy. Skill-based activities have made significant contribution to this growth. Such activities depend on the large pool of qualified manpower that is fed by its large higher education system. It is now widely accepted that higher education has been critical to India's emergence in the global knowledge economy. Yet, it is believed that a crisis is plaguing the Indian higher education system. While, the National Knowledge Commission (NKC) set up by the Prime Minister calls it a 'quiet crisis', the Human Resource Minister calls higher education 'a sick child'. Industries routinely point towards huge skill shortages and are of the opinion that growth momentum may not be sustained unless the problem of skill shortages is addressed.

There appear to be endless problems with the Indian higher education system. The higher education system produces graduates that are unemployable, though there are mounting skill shortages in a number of sectors. The standards of academic research are low and declining.

An unwieldy affiliating system, inflexible academic structure, uneven capacity across subjects, eroding autonomy of academic institutions, low level of public funding, archaic and dysfunctional regulatory environment are some of its many problems. Finally, it is widely held that it suffers from several systemic deficiencies and is driven by populism, and in the absence of reliable data, there is little informed

Title : HIGHER EDUCATION IN INDIA .
Source: Indian Streams Research Journal [2230-7850] ARVIND DESHMUKH yr:2011 vol:I iss:X

public debate. More than 35 years ago, Nobel laureate Amartya Sen, while analysing the crisis in Indian education, rather than attributing the crisis in Indian education to administrative neglect or to thoughtless action, pointed out that the 'grave failures in policy-making in the field of education require the analysis of the characteristics of the economic and social forces operating in India, and response of public policy to these forces' (Amartya Sen, 'The Crisis in Indian education', Lal Bahadur Shastri Memorial Lectures, 10–11 March 1970). He emphasised that 'due to the government's tendency to formulate educational policies based on public pressure, often wrong policies are pursued.' Unfortunately, it is believed that policy-making suffers from similar failure even today. Rather than pragmatism, it is populism, ideology and vested interests that drive policy. It seeks to achieve arbitrarily set goals that are often elusive and, more than that, pursued half-heartedly.

Education in India is seen as one of the ways to upward social mobility. Good education is seen as a stepping stone to a high flying career. Education System in India currently represents a great paradox. On the one hand we have IIMs & IITs that rank among the best institutes in the world and on the other hand there are number of schools in the country that don't even have the basic infrastructure. Even after more than 50 years after independence we are far away from the goal of universal literacy. But on a positive note, Indian professionals are considered among the best in the world are in great demand. This signifies the inherent strength of Indian education system.

The Educational structure in India which operates at all conceivable levels from pre-school to post doctoral is of monumental proportions. According to a World Bank report there are more than 7,40,000 formal schools; more than 3.6 million teachers are working on full time basis; there are more than 175 Universities offering under graduate and post graduate courses and about 6000 colleges affiliated to these universities.

The educational structure in India is generally referred to as the Ten + Two + Three (10+2+3) pattern. The first ten years provide undifferentiated general education for all students. The +2 stage, also known as the higher secondary or senior secondary, provides for differentiation into academic and vocational streams and marks the end of school education. In +3 stage, which involves college education, the student goes for higher studies in his chosen field of subject. This is a comprehensive website on education in India. It gives detailed information on education and career options in India.

HIGHER EDUCATION IN INDIA:

Management in Higher Education:

HIGHER education has been primarily public funded so far. Now it is being funded from a variety of sources. While private financing is important and growing rapidly, institutions now look for diverse sources to expand, meet the rising costs and enhance quality in an increasingly competitive environment. With an explosive growth of the private sector and the growth of self-financing programmes in public institutions, private financing is a significant part of overall financing of Indian higher education. It is now realised that increased funding would not automatically result in better higher education. Thus, while the government support decreases noticeably (at least in relative terms), performance and accountability expectations have increased. Funding policies are designed to enforce accountability. The chapter begins with the conceptual debate on resource flows and examines patterns of public funding, private funding primarily through tuitions and fees and third stream funding in the context of global patterns and trends. To enhance efficiency in the use of resources, fund allocation mechanism and institutional management are important. These are examined. With focus on inclusive growth and achieving equity objective, students' financial aid is now critical. Schemes of grants and loans, particularly emerging trend towards income-contingent loans are discussed. Finally, the core elements of sustainable funding for India are discussed.

Management experts in India, China discuss Asian education

AHMEDABAD: The strength of Indian education system was presented to the Chinese and other Asian countries at an education summit in Chengdu, China recently. Several management experts and policy makers participated in the summit, which focused on improving the quality of basic and higher education in Asia.

The India China Management Education summit focused on developing a strategic system of building a mechanism for internationalizing India's education system and class design. The summit also aimed at cooperation and exchange with China with the goal of reaching sustainable development.

QUALITY ASSURANCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION:

1. The quality assurance of higher education has become an important global trend. Nearly half of all countries worldwide have created quality assurance mechanisms, of one type or another, during the last decade or two. The following factors help explain this trend:

Due to the rapid expansion of higher education systems, there is now a more diverse range of providers of higher education, comprising public and private institutions, cross-border institutions and distance education organizations.

Globalization has brought with it an increasing level of academic fraud, such as 'diploma mills', 'fly-by-night providers', 'bogus institutions' or fake credentials. This increases the demand for trustworthy organizations that can establish confidence using quality assurance methods.

The quality of public higher education institutions has suffered in many countries due to economic constraints and a shift in priorities from advanced levels to basic education. There are strong expectations that quality assurance mechanisms will ensure continuous quality control and improvement.

Quality assurance is linked to professional mobility, and a growing number of regional and international integration processes. This raises the need for more effective mechanisms for the professional recognition of higher education credentials.

2. Quality assurance is both a national and an institutional responsibility:

Internal quality assurance (IQA) refers to each institution's or programme's policies and mechanisms for ensuring that it is fulfilling its own purposes, as well as the standards that apply to higher education in general, or to the profession or discipline in particular.

External quality assurance (EQA) refers to the actions of an external body, possibly a quality assurance agency, which assesses the operation of the institution or its programmes, to determine whether it is meeting the agreed standards. EQA systems include accreditation, assessment or audit.

Quality assurance has two underlying broad objectives: control/accountability and improvement. Control/accountability relates to processes which assess whether minimum standards are in place in a higher education institution or programme. Quality improvement identifies developmental processes, such as the strengths and weaknesses of institutions and their academic provision.

IIEP carried out a research project focusing on organizational and methodological options in quality assurance systems. Five modules were prepared for a distance education programme on 'External quality assurance: options for higher education managers'. This has been implemented in four regions: Anglophone Africa, 2006; Asia and the Pacific, 2007; Francophone Africa and Arab states, 2008. A course is being organized for small states, with the objective of supporting countries in the establishment of a QA system, or the assessment of any existing system.

In the next few paragraphs I am going to discuss the major problems afflicting the Higher Education of India and its corresponding solution which needs to be brought into effect.

1) Quality Management of Higher Education :

The most important element of Quality Management is constant evaluation with the current needs of the market and existence of competition.

Now the biggest problem we have in Technological higher studies is that our syllabus is hardly updated and kept in pace with the demands of the industry. We do have periodical Quality assessments but that is hardly implemented. As a result when students don't find job after their Post Grads or Masters, they look at it as a waste of time and money. The best way of Management of such problems is by bringing together the Industry and Academics. And the best way of doing this is by bringing in more and more industrial projects into the universities so that students can work on live projects. We also need to attract industrial experts into the universities.

2) Foreign Investment in Higher Education :

Today it's so easy to open a Spencer, Walmart or a Metro supermarket in India. But there is hardly any investment in the education sector which can be a very good business in India keeping in mind the explosion of the middle class of the country and the ongoing change in the mindset of people looking at higher education as an asset. This is mainly because of the various complications involved to open a Private University in India. If we can work out this problem then it will bring in competition and which will result in

better quality, easy accessibility and increase in the total number of seats.

3) Autonomous or Govt Regulated :

The recent case of the hunger strike of IIT Professors is the best example of the result of Govt Regulated higher education in a country. Politics has to be kept away from the education sector if the country needs to grow. The more the education is Govt regulated, more is Reservations, Politics and ofcourse corruption.

4) Gap/ Break in Studies :

If we see the normal trend in India then we find that the students from a weak family background hardly has the access to higher education. This is because in our country we cannot take a break for a semester for earning money during the course of Bachelors or Masters. Other than this if someone takes a break for a few years after his high school to earn money for his Bachelors then one cannot dream of a good university or good company to work in future. This is because in India we look at Gap / Break in studies as a negative point in a Resume disregarding the self-sustaining quality of a student. Whereas this is absolutely fine in the developed world.

5) Investment in R&D :

If we compare the number of Doctorate Thesis and Post Docs in India then we find a very very big gap and it results in brain drain. We need to invest more on the R&D sector so that our talents don't get lured by the research opportunities outside. Today IITs undoubtedly produces the best undergrads of the world. But how many patents does it file every year. Now its time to make them the best research institutes of the world.

6) Pays and Perks of a Research scholar :

This point has long been neglected saying innovation comes with passion for the subject not with the perks and pays. So if one has a passion for a subject he will never go to the corporate world. But they forget the fact that they may go to the developed world where they have both money and opportunities, not to mention the research facilities.

If industries are the engine of the growth of a nation then Research on modern technology is the fuel for this engine. How long can we survive with purchase of Technologies from the developed world. Moreover it also comes with a high price. The money which we spend to buy one Sukoi fighter aircraft from Russia if invested on the pays and perks of scientists and research facilities can help retain our talents at home who invent these technologies for other countries. So that we can make our very own Sukoi.

7) Utilization of the pool of NRI Scientists, students, Research scholars in different parts of the world:

Today there exist a very big pool of quality NRIs throughout the world. The govt. has already realized this potential and is attracting good investment opportunities for them. But that is the business perspective of global India. Its high time now that we try to establish more joint Research collaborations with different International Universities through these ambassadors. Well the premier institutions of India like IIT,IISc,JNU,TIFR etc have already followed this strategy and achieved a lot but now its time that even the mediocre ranking Universities apply the same principle and its extended to fields other than Engineering.

8) Developing Exchange models between different countries :

Well right now this scheme exists only in the top level institutions of our country. Whereas if we compare other developing countries then even the mediocre level Universities have adopted this model. This has been made possible because of their good networking approaches with various Universities of the developing world. Getting an international exposure is very important in the development of the overall personality and the

horizon of thinking of a human being.

9) Developing Exchange Models within India :

First of all let me discuss why its so Important ? Well, India is even bigger than Europe....so its practically a continent. But how much do we know about India. If you watch a BBC Documentary on India shot by a foreigner you will realize that you never ever knew that such customs, such traditions ever existed in India. An international student who comes to India for a summer break and travels through the country learns much more than any average youth of India.

But we should not forget that these ordinary average youths of India are the future political leaders,engineers, doctors,teachers and Managers of India. Just imagine what would happen if a person from Sweden is elected as the president of Italy ? Similarly how can you expect a person from Gujarat to understand the problems faced by a person from Arunachal Pradesh if he had never been there, never known about the culture over there, never met any person from there.

Learning the culture of other places, knowing people of different places, travelling plays a very very important role in life. Now the government has to realize the importance of it. And the best way of developing this quality in youths is to develop an exchange model between different Universities in India whereby students can spend one semester or one year in each University if they wish thereby learning culture and values of different countries within India.

10) Availability of free downloadable course modules.

It bring in increased accessibility and more uniformity in education.

How about if a student at Patna gets an opportunity to attend the lectures of JNU, Delhi from his home. Well, to achieve the above vision the first step is to bring in an uniformity in the syllabus of the courses offered in various Universities of India. Besides India is a big country with limited infrastructure to provide every student with the facilities as offered in premier institutes. So the best way to reach to the youths of India with more or less same quality is by making available free downloadable course materials, video lectures etc. It has already been successfully implemented by IIT on the lines of MIT,USA

11) Job Opportunities:

Today higher studies is only concentrated in the field of Engg and Management.How many youths aspire for MA in arts subjects.....its due to dearth of jobs.....So its needed to integrate a job oriented curriculum or elements of entrepreneurship in the course to give them the confidence of being self independent.

CONCLUSION:

Higher education cannot be developed to the exclusion of other policy initiatives. The development of infrastructure, better governance, public health improvements, trade reform, and financial market development – these and others will be needed as well. The benefits of higher education require a long gestation period. There may be shortcuts to establishing educational infrastructure, but shaping people to understand and convey higher education values and best practice will take decades, as opposed to a few years. For this reason the Task Force urges policy-makers and donors – public and private, national and international – to waste no time. They must work with educational leaders and other key stakeholders to reposition higher education in developing countries. Only then will it produce larger and better trained pools of graduates and research of higher quality. The chance is simply too great to miss. As H.G. Wells said in The Outline of History, “Human history becomes more and more a race between education and catastrophe.”

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