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THE HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM OF INDIA AND ITS CHALLENGES

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ABSTRACT

If India has to become an economic power then it has to focus on education. There are so many attempts have been made to reform in primary and secondary levels education in schools because the higher education system serves the requirements of both the domestic as well as global economy. However focusing on higher education does not mean I am belittling the need of primary education.Both are relevant and both have importance if country has to be changed holistically. Government data suggests that only one out of every seven children born in India goes to college. So There is need to improve the quality and quantity of higher education to fill-up the faculty posts in the universities and institutions with good quality of teaching staff with skills and knowledge; revise the curriculum with quality on regular basis with relevance and flexibility to make employable the students and ultimately improve the good quality of human resources in the country. The employable manpower will increase the demand and supply of the economy and also improve the socio economic conditions by raising the per capita income of the people as well as the GDP of country as a whole. The paper attempts to focus on the various challenges currently facing the India higher education and importance of the policy reforms in this sector.

KEY WORDS: *higher education, challenges, quality and excellence in teaching.*

INTRODUCTION

State of Higher education in India is in between good and bad. I mean in a nutshell to say neither it is good nor it is that bad. Indian higher education is a large and complex system, the vast network of total 760 degree-granting institutions/universities: around 45 central universities, 316 state universities (Public), 181 privet universities, 122 deemed universities (private or public), 75 institutions of national importance (public), 38498 colleges (public or private) enrolling and 12276 stand alone Institutions more than 20 million students. Former Indian Human Resource Development (HRD) minister Mr. Kapil Sibal estimated that India needs 1,500 universities, almost three times the current number, to serve its young and aspiring population to meet expectations of economic growth. But, it is not just quantity. Quality is an issue too. President of India Mr. Pranab Mukherjee said that the government's effort is to increase "quantity" in higher education exponentially must be matched with commensurate the efforts to improve "quality". Mr. Mukherjee said that more than 50 percent of the population is under 25 years and soon one-fifth of the world's working age population will be in India, so India's biggest strength in the coming years is going to be her demographic dividend, this dividend is, however, something we cannot take for granted. We must urgently equip our youth with necessary skills and jobs. GER ratio in India across three different levels is 92% at primary level; 52% at secondary level and 20% at higher education levels in 2014. The figure for GER was 12.4% before three years and within three years the improvement has 20% which is considered a good sign by many but it is still not as good as people might think of it. Although, India has shown an improvement in the past decade and the number of institutes and number of students enrolled have improved; but it is still not consistent with the global ratios for GER. The average GER ratio worldwide is considered to be 30% and India is lagging behind in it. Developed countries worldwide possess higher GER with USA having 34% GER; UK has 59%. Japan has 55% and China 28% (Sunaina Roy). National University of Educational Planning and Administration has pointed out that —The investment required in higher education is more than 9 lakh crore if we want to achieve 30% GER in 2020. This includes the cost of setting up more institutes, infrastructure and salaries. In China, government spends more than 1.5 per cent of its GDP on higher education while India spends less than 0.5 per cent. HRD Minister releases Knowledge Paper at FICCI Higher Education Summit 2014, which reveals that India's vision to build a 21st century model for higher education that is of high-quality, equitable and affordable, and be a model of a higher education system that

is not just the best in the world, but the best for the world. The paper suggests key imperatives to realize this vision such as developing the higher education institutes with an international outlook and global impact; providing world-class teaching, research and conducive learning environment; relaxing complex regulatory requirements; incentivizing transnational education; developing skilled, job-ready and productive graduates; enabling higher education graduates with global skills, who can be employed by or serve workforce-deficient countries; developing research-focused universities that deliver high-quality research output and research-focused graduates; increasing R&D funding by Government, promoting increased industry participation in research and innovation and creating a conducive educational, financial and regulatory ecosystem to promote entrepreneurship.

There are some main players in the higher education system in the country of India which is the largest 'Higher Education System in the world: Central Government is responsible for major policy relating to higher education in the country. It provides grants to the UGC and establishes central universities in the country and also responsible for declaration of Educational Institutions as 'Deemed to be University' on the recommendation of the UGC. Professional Councils are responsible for recognition of courses, promotion of professional institutions and providing grants to undergraduate programmes and various awards. And universities are responsible for coordination, determination and maintenance of standards, release of grants (Arunachalam, P.: 2010). Education in general and higher education in particular is the strongest instrument for the development and humanization of mankind. Higher education is a very important sector for the growth and development of human resource which can take responsibility for social, economic and scientific development of the country. Higher education is recognized as a vehicle for sustainable development and is realized as a powerful tool to build knowledge based society. (Anuradha Goswami: 2013) While India has a potential embark on its journey on education super highway problems like inclusiveness, reservation policy and its impact on education system, the problems of mediocrity, scarce resources and the unemployment among the educated youth are some of the stumbling blocks in the way of achieving greater growth in education.(Jandhyala B. G. Tilak, 2013) India needs many more colleges to meet the growth rate of the economy, but, the seats are remaining vacant because of the quality and employability is not captured by these statistics of growth. Students and families are increasingly seeking education which may improve their prospects of employability and upward mobility. Institutions and policy-makers need to understand the qualitative dimension of the demand and adapt it to remain relevant and more competitive in nature **(**Rahul Choudaha: 2011)**.** The most important of any educational set-up is faculty in terms of its adequacy, composition, and quality and hypnotized that the imperial psychology of "I Centric Approach" is still deep-rooted in Indian scenario including in the educational settings. Therefore, teachers are still considered as deliverers of knowledge from ivory towers of knowledge; there is absence of collegial atmosphere expected in an educational institution; emotional bondage between teachers & students is virtually non-existent; and above all teachers are seldom considered as mentors, coaches and counselors (A.K. Sen Gupta & Vikram Parekh: 2009). Archana Krishnan suggested that in a phase when foreign universities with their high educational standards are waiting to enter the Indian Educational Sector, Indian Institutions, whether big or small, can give the foreign universities a tough competition, by adhering to quality standards in all their practices. It's high time that the Indian Educationalists wake up to this fact before half of the poor quality institutions become history.

The quality of education is as the transformative potential of society, one way of looking at quality, prevalent in both the research literature and reports of program implementation, concerns the relationship between different "inputs" and a measure of student performance, or "output." The outputs are usually students results on achievement tests, assessments, or end-of-cycle examinations. The inputs include a wide variety of factors: infrastructure and resources, quality of teaching environment, textbooks, teacher preparation, teacher salaries, supervision, attitudes and incentives, educational institutional climate, curriculum, student's physical well-being, and family and socio-economic context.

OBJECTIVES

1. To identify on the Emerging issues of higher education in India.
2. To identify on the Emerging Challenges of higher education in India.
3. Suggestions for improving quality of higher education and Conclusion.

MAJOR CHALLENGES OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN INDIA

More Demand and less Supply: The talent pool aspiring for quality of higher education is increasing at a much faster rate than number of institutions with quality. India ranks second in the world in terms of enrolment of students in higher education as per the XII five year plan and UNESCO's Global Education Reports (2011). UNESCO's Global Education Reports (2012) referred that India has taken a long leap in students' enrolment in HEIs when compared with USA (25.9:19.1) and slightly lagging behind China (25.9:29.3). This means that more students with highly competitive academic preparedness are available; however, the institutions with high quality have not increased in the same proportion. The rate of growth of teachers (faculty) was slower than the number of universities and colleges. This has created a shortage of qualified faculty in higher education institutions.

Need of Quality Improvement: There is a very big problem of quality and quantity exist in India in the form of students; institutions and in faculty staff. The reality seems that Indian higher education is regressing as the availability of quality institutions is unable to keep up with supply of talent pool. Numbers of students have grown at a slower pace as compared to the number of universities and colleges. This has resulted in over supply of seats and many of which remain vacant. If this quantitative expansion of colleges had a significant qualitative element in it then students would have had more confidence in their choices to go beyond the "tried and tested" reputed brands. The quality education is a catalyst for positive changes in individuals and society; ultimately it promotes social change. There is the lack skills for employability 10% of graduates and 25% of engineering graduates are directly employable because the *q*uality of education delivered in most institutions is very poor. It is

also fact that Education is become a seller's market and everybody wants to get more profit rather than the quality education.

Faculty Shortage: One of the most important cornerstones of any educational set-up is faculty in terms of its adequacy, composition, and quality. The Indian institutes cannot be termed to be in a comfortable position in any of the above dimensions. There are no core faculty members in many colleges; some have very few and largely depend on outside visiting faculty. Some of these visiting faculty members are not committed ones, but simply freelancers in teaching across a large number of institutes without any dedication or focus. In all central universities, out of total 15, 573 sanctioned posts, 4, 933 (31.67%) posts are sanctioned in four major central universities i. e. Banaras Hindu University (BHU), University of Delhi (DU), Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) and University of Hyderabad (UoH). In all central universities of India, out of 15, 573 posts, 9, 866 (63.35%) posts are filled-up. In case of total 4, 933 sanctioned posts in DU, BHU, JNU and UoH, the total of 2, 880 (58.38%) posts are filled-up. In case of total 9,866 filled-up posts in all central universities, the total 29.19% of teaching posts are filled by BHU, DU, JNU and UoH. So, in all central universities, 36.65% posts are vacant in which 41.62% posts vacant in four major central universities of India. So there is an immediate need to fill the vacant posts in the universities and institutions in India (Komaraiah, J. B. & Singh, Shree Priya : 2014).

Curriculum and Process of Delivery Problem: Three important components of any content and curriculum are quality, relevance and flexibility. While first two are an absolute necessity to ensure quality education, the last one is assuming importance in the emerging world where change has become ultimate reality. Unfortunately, in many of the institutes in India, the course content lacks in all above components the way it should be. Skill building is really very crucial to ensure employability. Indian higher education does not have good market linkages nationally or internationally, Industry and academia connection is necessary to ensure curriculum and skills in line with requirements. There is necessary to understand and make sure that the knowledge, skills and global professional skills will give the good jobs because of the ttheoretical part of the courses do not get the practical approach.

Privatization: Privatization is also a big problem that higher education faces. Privatization of higher education is the way to go. However just privatization is not going to solve the problem. You need to foster the culture of creativity, imagination and learning new skills in young students.

Quality & Excellency in Teaching: Teachers quality and the strength of educator's leadership are recognised as the greatest determinants of educational success. Quality teaching has a measurable impact on student outcomes and on our society. Teacher quality affects all stages of the teaching "lifecycle", from attraction into the profession to ongoing development and retention in their own schools. Improving teacher and school leader quality requires action to attract the "best and brightest" entrants to teaching; Train our future teachers through world-class pre-service education; and develop teacher's skills and knowledge through ongoing professional learning. Many countries are simultaneously implementing reforms based on more active approaches to teaching and learning, further challenging education systems and, especially, teachers. So there is a need of a training programs for all faculty members in public and private institutions not only on the subject matter, but also to enhance the effectiveness of their teaching skills and also visit the faculty members for three to six months in the best universities in the world for training and also provide funding support to education institutions to enable them to organize activities such as summer workshops and exchange programs.

Financing Problem: Financing is also an issue with higher education in India. Yes India is already spending very much on higher education and it can't spend more. However if the quality of higher education has to be improved then more financing is needed.

Quota System: Debating quota system is very controversial. But we think honestly then I must tell you quota is not good for the quality of higher education. Talent and merit is more important than your identity. However quota system is still a challenge.

NEED FOR REFORMS

Not a single Indian University is regarded by academics internationally as being among the world's most prestigious Times Higher Education world reputation Rankings released on 12th March 2015. To achieve the India's vision to build a 21st century model for higher education that is of high-quality, equitable and affordable, and be a model of a higher education system that is not just the best in the world but the best for the world. There is a need to develop research focused universities that deliver high quality of research output and research focused graduates, develop a skilled job ready and productive workforce by imparting technical and soft skills training. Imparting education / skills that enable the students to become entrepreneurs and enabling higher education graduates with global skills, who can be employed by workforce- deficient countries.

There is also a need to develop the successful economic models at the grass- root (district/block) level through community engagement. By the technology we can solve the India's three critical problems like access to education, equity of education and quality of education. With the help of advance technology the students from around the world would have seamless access to high-quality contents generated by elite institutions; recorded lectures of renowned faculty, a dispersed and diverse peer group, and certification from the reputed universities at global and Indian to increase more open and distance education opportunities. There is need to reform the examination system and provide greater autonomy to encourage innovation. India lacks a healthy research environment, by and large so there is a need to encourage the more qualitative, mainly applied/industry-oriented research Ph. Ds. To strengthen research and development in the country, encourage a global outlook in research and enhance the quality of Ph. D. programme and set-up centers of excellence/world-class research centers in top universities in India. There is need of huge injection of funds and industry-academia partnerships. Research training and improvements in research infrastructure would need to be planned, as well as opportunities for researchers to collaborate with other academia both within the country and overseas. Knowledge produced through good research will definitely enhance the adaptive capacity of the human society.

There is first need to fill the vacant posts in the Universities and Institutions in India because without the faculty member all the plans only on papers. There must be autonomy in content design and faculty recruitment and the governing body comprising mix of academics and industry leaders and industry's involvement in development of curricula, guest lectures, mentoring, live projects and industry tours and the faculty of educational institutions must be chosen on the basis of their experience in the industry. And last but not the least, the transparency in the functioning of regulators and accreditation bodies of public and private institutions are the most important in the development of the higher education sector.

CONCLUSION

There is need to reform of higher education as the way attempts have been made to reform in primary and secondary level education in schools because the higher education system serves the requirements of both the domestic as well as global economy. The prevailing system of higher education in India is not capable of starting a new era and is not competitive at the international level with the exception of few institutes. This system needs a major renovation to stand competitively in this era of globalization. To increased overall GER in higher education and to reduce the disparity in GER across the geographic, economic and social groups then adopt new educational techniques which combine learning, flipped classroom and experiential learning that encourage tie-ups between higher education institutions and providers of skill-based training to conduct skill modules and increased innovation capability and entrepreneurship in the country that will give churning out employable manpower to meet the increasing demands of industry and also improve the socio economic conditions and per capita income of the people as well as the GDP of country.

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