



ROLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN PROMOTING HOLISTIC DEVELOPMENT IN INDIA

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Abstract

India's higher education system 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. Accreditation for higher learning is overseen by 12 autonomous institutions established by the University Grants Commission.

Higher Education sector has witnessed a tremendous increase in the number of Universities/Universities level Institutions & Colleges since Independence. The number of Universities has increased 34 times from 20 in 1950 to 677 in 2014. The sector boasts of 45 Central Universities of which 40 are under the purview of Ministry of Human Resource Development, 318 State Universities, 185 State Private universities, 129 Deemed to be Universities, 51 Institutions of National Importance (established under Acts of Parliament) under MHRD (IITs - 16, NITs – 30 and IISERs – 5) and four Institutions (established under various State legislations). The number of colleges has also registered manifold increase of 74 times with just 500 in 1950 growing to 37,204, as on 31st March, 2013.

Key words: MHRD, UGC, AICTE, NCTE.

INTRODUCTION

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The quantum growth in the Higher Education sector is spear-headed by Universities, which are the highest seats of learning. In India, "University" means a University established or incorporated by or under a Central Act, a Provincial Act or a State Act and includes any such institution as may, in consultation with the University concerned, be recognised by the University Grants Commission (UGC) in accordance with the regulations made in this regard under the UGC Act, 1956. Every year, millions of students from within the country and abroad, enter these portals mainly for their graduate, post graduate studies while millions leave these portals for the world outside.

While universities, deemed universities and institutions of national importance are largely autonomous institutions entitled by law to design, develop and offer programs which they consider relevant and appropriate for the national needs, the colleges and institutes are expected to be regulated by the universities with which they are affiliated or associated with. Give the wide reach and variety of institutions and programs of higher education, a number of professional, coordinative and regulatory bodies and councils have also been established to ensure

balanced and healthy growth of higher education in the country. Given below is the broad National Qualification Framework presently in vogue in the country.

It is important to remember that 'education' includes 'literacy', but it is not confined to literacy alone. It comprehends much more: It is the acquiring of knowledge or learning, together with the equipment, which provides the skill and the inclination for making profitable use of that knowledge. Since the acquiring of knowledge and improvement of the skill for its application are parts of a dynamic process, education is a lifelong exercise. Higher education is, therefore, never complete in a continuously evolving dynamic personality. If the process becomes static, it leads to stagnation, which must be avoided.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study presently focuses on the following objectives

1. To highlight main players involved in Higher Education and their role and responsibilities in making quality education in India.
2. To provide a theoretical framework in relation to higher education in shaping the minds of people towards holistic development of economy.
3. To evaluate important strategies as the best tools to be adopted for sustainable development and overview of higher education in India.
4. To examine assurance of quality system of higher education and challenges to be taken to eradicate vulnerabilities therein.

MAIN PLAYERS IN HIGHER EDUCATION'S IN INDIA

At present, the main categories of University/University-level Institutions are: - Central Universities, State Universities, Deemed-to-be Universities and University-level institutions. These are described as follows:

Central University

A university established or incorporated by a Central Act.

State University

A university established or incorporated by a Provincial Act or by a State Act.

Private University

A university established through a State/Central Act by a sponsoring body viz. A Society registered under the Societies Registration Act 1860, or any other corresponding law for the time being in force in a State or a Public Trust or a Company registered under Section 25 of the Companies Act, 1956.

Deemed-To-Be University

An Institution Deemed to be University, commonly known as Deemed University, refers to a high-performing institution, which has been so declared by Central Government under Section 3 of the University Grants Commission (UGC) Act, 1956.

Institution of National Importance

An Institution established by Act of Parliament and declared as Institution of National Importance.

Institution under State Legislature Act

An Institution established or incorporated by a State Legislature Act.

Accreditation

Indian law requires that universities be accredited unless created through an act of Parliament. Without accreditation, the government notes, "These fake institutions have no legal entity to call themselves as University/Vishwvidyalaya and to award 'degree' which is not treated as valid for academic/employment purposes." The University Grants Commission Act 1956 explains, "The right of conferring or granting degrees shall be exercised only by a University established or incorporated by or under a Central Act *carlo bon tempo*, or a State Act, or an Institution deemed to be University or an institution specially empowered by an Act of the Parliament to confer or grant degrees. Thus, any institution which has not been created by an enactment of Parliament or a State Legislature or has not been granted the status of a Deemed to be University is not entitled to award a degree."



Accreditation for higher learning is overseen by autonomous institutions established by the University Grants Commission:

All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE)
Distance Education Council (DEC)
Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR)
Bar Council of India (BCI)
National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC)
National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE)
Rehabilitation Council of India (RCI)
Medical Council of India (MCI)
Pharmacy Council of India (PCI)
Indian Nursing Council (INC)
Dental Council of India (DCI)
Central Council of Homeopathy (CCH)
Central Council of Indian Medicine (CCIM)
Veterinary Council of India (VCI)

HIGHER EDUCATION IN INDIA

The context for change The Indian higher education system is facing an unprecedented transformation in the coming decade. This transformation is being driven by economic and demographic change: by 2020, India will be the world's third largest economy, with a correspondingly rapid growth in the size of its middle classes. Currently, over 50% of India's population is under 25 years old; by 2020 India will outpace China as the country with the largest tertiary-age population. Despite significant progress over the last ten years, Indian higher education is faced with four broad challenges.

- The supply-demand gap: India has a low rate of enrolment in higher education, at only 18%, compared with 26% in China and 36% in Brazil. There is enormous unmet demand for higher education. By 2020, the Indian government aims to achieve 30% gross enrolment, which will mean providing 40 million university places, an increase of 14 million in six years.
- The low quality of teaching and learning: The system is beset by issues of quality in many of its institutions: a chronic shortage of faculty, poor quality teaching, outdated and rigid curricula and pedagogy, lack of accountability and quality assurance and separation of research and teaching.
- Constraints on research capacity and innovation: With a very low level of PhD enrolment, India does not have enough high quality researchers; there are few opportunities for interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary working, lack of early stage research experience; a weak ecosystem for innovation, and low levels of industry engagement.
- Uneven growth and access to opportunity: Socially, India remains highly divided; access to higher education is uneven with multidimensional inequalities in enrolment across population groups and geographies. Systemic reform and legislative environment.
- The Government's reforms have broad support within the sector, but many predict it will be a messy and unpredictable process. The devolution of authority and responsibility for higher education reform to the state governments has begun, but there will be huge differences in the capability and the will of different states to act. This will result in great variation in how the reforms unfold across the country, possibly with important implications for international collaboration in the future.
- Key challenges facing the system include quality assurance, credit transfer systems, movement between higher education and vocational skills streams and teacher training in higher education.
- There is an urgent need for systemic change in affiliated colleges to improve the quality of teaching and learning.
- Private businesses are waiting impatiently to enter the higher education market. The private sector will continue to grow, but 'for-profit' higher education is unlikely to be sanctioned soon.
- UK institutions were advised not to wait for transformational legislation to emerge from central government on

international cooperation, but to adopt a flexible and creative approach to make the most of opportunities now.

- The Foreign Education Providers bill is unlikely to be passed in the short to medium term. There is a need for international partners to take a long term view and build closer, multi-dimensional relationships with Indian HE institutions. Institutional engagement.
- Increasing internationalization in research and teaching is strongly supported by the Indian sector and considered vital for Indian institutions in developing India's capacity in research and innovation, driving up India's institutional rankings and increasing the quality of teaching and learning.
- India will move towards international credit recognition to enable more international student mobility, although this will be a complex process.
- Institutions want internationalization to move beyond sending Indian students to the UK; there is strong demand for UK students and faculty to come to India. Some would like to see the restrictions on foreign faculty being hired in India lifted.
- Raising the quality of teaching and learning emerged as the highest priority of most institutions, particularly state institutions. and there is keen interest to work with the UK in these areas. Digital learning technologies will become extremely important; most stakeholders see blended learning as the likely dominant approach but some see distance learning as also enjoying strong growth. Most felt that current digital content and distance learning materials in India are of poor quality and that little good content is being developed at present; they believe international collaboration in instructional design is essential to raise quality. Internet connectivity and accessibility will not remain barriers for much longer; however, teachers are poorly trained both in the effective use of use technology and in pedagogical terms.
- There is currently limited collaboration with industry. Indian institutions would like to engage with industry in the development of science parks, incubation centers and technology transfer units and there is interest in working with the UK on systemic support and institutional models in this area.
- There appears to be no shortage of funding for centrally-funded 'top tier' institutions, such as the IITs, IIMs, and Institutes of National Importance. However, research budgets remain under spent due to a lack of good quality research proposals so here international collaboration can help through professional networking and specific skills such as proposal writing. Research funding in STEM is expected to increase and continue to flow towards these institutions.
- The state universities are underfunded but are optimistic that their funding will increase in the future; they will be looking for international collaboration in areas of capacity-building assistance in teaching and research, and in developing their research networks. Others, which have stronger research capability, are interested in extending their international research partnerships.
- International collaboration in the arts, humanities and social sciences is generally lacking and there is an anxiety about the recent neglect of these disciplines in India. As fewer students have been taking up research careers in these areas, departments have declined, meaning a vicious circle of lack of employment opportunities for researchers. There was optimism that this may change soon, with renewed interest from central government, especially in supporting multi-and inter-disciplinary research. The UK is considered particularly strong in these areas and there is keen interest in collaboration.
- The private sector interviewees were frustrated at the lack of freedom they have under the affiliation system and have aspirations of becoming autonomous private institutions in their own right; some of the better funded institutions are looking to develop research capabilities but many are starting from a low base. However, they believe their strong industry links will attract international higher education partners interested in developing technology transfer. Some are planning to diversify their offer as several of their markets are close to saturation.
- Demand for courses from mature learners and from current students looking to enhance their employability and develop entrepreneurial skills are creating new markets and new requirements for HE institutions as well as support for a national qualifications framework. There is little capacity at present in universities for teaching either skills for employability or entrepreneurship; this was viewed as an important emerging market.

- Much more needs to be done to nurture the next generation of Indian researchers, through providing: early stage research experience and international networking;

Higher education in India is undergoing considerable change. With over 600 million people in India under 25 years old, the system is under tremendous pressure to expand. India's young population has a huge appetite for education and, as the growth in the size of the middle classes escalates, millions are increasingly able to pay for it. By 2020, India will have the largest tertiary-age population in the world² and will have the second largest graduate talent pipeline globally, following China and ahead of the USA³. The opportunities for the UK to engage with India through education are considerable. Government plans are in place to transform the sector over the next five years. Every aspect of higher education is being reorganized and remodeled: funding, leadership and management, quality assurance, accountability, relationships with industry, international collaboration, and the way research and teaching are conducted. If these reforms succeed, the breadth and depth of the change will be transformational. But what is actually happening on the ground in the universities and colleges across India? How do they view these national plans and how are they responding to the enormous social changes happening around them? What do they think the future will look like for their institutions? The British Council, through its presence across India and wide network of relationships with higher education leaders, set out to examine the policy environment in India from the position of stakeholders, to explore the dynamics between policies and their interpretation through to implementation and to form a clearer understanding of the reality facing higher education institutions, their views on what the future holds for them and how they would like to collaborate with the UK.

Education is the prime mover of the society. It determines the role and approach for the modernization of society and the nation at large. Since 'development' is the buzz word for the advancement of our nation, the quality of our education is of paramount importance along with access and equity to tap rich dividends from our demographic capital. Higher education has to be assessed from a broader perspective in the context of various types of changes in the micro and macro environment. With globalization and liberalization, we are players in the global arena. We need to relook at the contents of our educational system and the quality of curriculum transaction, research and development to enhance the quality of education through an effective quality management system.

STRATEGIES TO BE ADOPTED FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Some important strategies are necessary which should be adopted for the promotion of education of Sustainable Development in Higher Education system and can be described as below:

1. Analyze on the basis Questionnaire of sustainable development obtained from participants.
2. Need of national coordination and supporting networks.
3. Dissemination of policies and case studies outcomes.
4. Capacity building in teaching professionals and students.
5. Identify the leadership and award the good professionals.

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE FOR RESEARCH AND HIGHER EDUCATION

Indian higher education system possesses the 3rd rank in the world education system but the full economic benefits could not be achieved due to the mismatch between skill base and market needs. Establishment of NAAC is providing correct and positive symbols to generate and to promote awareness for the up gradation of quality of educational institutes, colleges and universities of India. Education is the backbone of a country. Higher education generally includes three stages or steps such as graduate, post graduate and doctoral programme. Besides this, higher education also includes technical, medical, engineering and other commercial degrees and diploma. Higher education plays a key role in preparing sustainable societies and holds the responsibilities to create the leadership in education system for sustainable development. The green concept in university and college campuses can be achieved by reducing the environment foot print, promoting the programmes for waste minimization through reduce, reuse and recycle (3 R) concept etc.



Research in higher education has an initial target to improve the quality as well as process of education. However, research is an essential and effective tool to lead a country towards the path of progress and prosperity. Therefore, the advanced research culture in higher education system is necessary to play an effective role in global competition.

QUALITY SCENARIO

There is tremendous quantitative expansion of higher education institutions since independence. However the quality is deteriorating. It is commonly observed that on an average, Indian colleges and universities do not perform a commendable job and are definitely not world class. An analysis of institutions reveals that only a fraction of them are accredited during a span of 20 years. There is no program accreditation except for the technical institutions. The mind set of most of the higher education institutions is to adopt a laissez-faire approach with no aspiration or motivation to assume additional responsibilities for quality improvement.

There are many quality gaps with respect to curriculum design and development, teaching, learning and evaluation, research consultancy and extension, infrastructure and learning resources, student support and progression, governance, management and leadership. Research and Development is the weakest link in the higher education system. Innovations in higher education system are very insignificant. No wonder, in spite of the large number of higher education institutions in the country, we do not figure in the first 200 world class institutions by the expert ranking agencies.

QUALITY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

The need to reform our higher education system needs reforms in many aspects:

- The enrollment rates have to be significantly improved to reach the status of a developed nation (30-50%).
- Financial resources have to be enhanced for the large number of state establishments.
- Teacher quality needs to be enhanced through multiple training options.
- Appropriate vocational education programs relevant to the needs of the society have to be identified and implemented to enhance employability of graduates.
- Utilize resources optimally for academic growth and excellence.
- Fortify existing institutions to make them more productive enterprises with reference to a student's academic growth and career advancement.
- Better utilization of ICT infrastructure in academics and administration.
- Curriculum to meet the global challenges through the competencies and skills developed among the students. Employers often feel that graduates are not employable. The educational system of the country need to produce knowledge workers who are competitive and innovative. Therefore, it is easy to surmise that most of the current higher education institutions which focus on the attainment of a discrete body of specialist knowledge is no longer relevant. Employers now want their workforce to be flexible and innovative, demanding them to be capable of learning new skill and acquire relevant knowledge as the need arises.

Educational institutions therefore, must establish a Research Consultancy Center involving faculty, professionals, students and industry, where work on few technologies and discovery is facilitated. The focus has to be on commercially viable research and consultancy.

QUALITY SYSTEM

The Higher education system needs to increasingly focus on the importance of quality assessment, assurance and enhancement. The changes in higher education should be much more accountable to all their stakeholders, not least to the students.

CHALLENGES

Higher education institutions should undergo a continuous need assessment. They should assess the major requirements of stakeholders of the higher education system, in order to sense their changing needs, expectations

and perceptions of the forces driving the change. They have to have an effective management information system to enable them to make quick and relevant decisions.

- Students are encouraged to be active participants in the learning process. Therefore, there should be more student focus in the curriculum, curriculum transaction and other management aspects. Students need to develop critical reflective thinking skills, the ability to make one's own informed judgments in a world in which multiple educational outcomes like complex cognitive skills, ability to apply acquired knowledge of complex life problems, appreciation of human differences, practical competence skills and a coherent integrated sense of identity, etc. exists.
- Promoting employability of graduates is a key. Work experience can be very valuable in helping students to obtain the right orientation. This would enhance the marketability of the educational programmes.
- Prospective students differ in terms of their financial capabilities. Therefore differential fee structure and availability of assistantship/scholarship/loan etc should be very useful.
- The adoption of information technology both in academics and administration is a must. Information and communication technologies through the internet and satellite transmission have opened up avenues of development in educational delivery modes which should be engaged by all institutions.
- The role of the teacher will change to a facilitator. Only a facilitator would be able to improve a student's receptivity to knowledge, by influencing their perception of nature, limits, certainty and utility of knowledge.
- It will require an efficient and effective managerial system through programmes of human resource development. It will also need a very different decision making structure from the present bodies of the university. Hence, it will need a radical change in the structure and constitution of its management bodies, if decision-making becomes time bound and professionally oriented.
- The universities have to become manageable in size. Its span of control has to be reduced with more and more decentralization. With decentralization, autonomy of the colleges, and even departments of universities, will have to be promoted while ensuring accountability. This probably is the only way to make the system effective in all respects.
- Various subsystems in the education system will have to synergize in a major cooperative effort to make our system innovative and competitive with the best in the world. New patterns of governance and leadership capable of responding to the changing scenario and emerging challenges have to be evolved.
- Since technology is transforming the work place, requiring greater technical skills for a growing number of jobs, there is a need to reorient the academic programmes to help them develop necessary skills and expertise to function effectively in a technologically enabled work place. It is important that the skills have economic value content beyond the specialized knowledge that it enjoys in their area of specialization.

INITIATIVES AGAINST CONCERNS AND ISSUES

- Considering all these issues, there is a strong case for transformation which is possible only by quality assessment of the higher education system as a whole, consisting of programs, teaching and learning, research & development, human resources, financial resources, facilities & infrastructure, organizational aspects, leadership and management practices and governance including processes, policies and structure—all aimed at balancing interests of all stakeholders.
- Quality Management System has to be planned and implemented in a holistic way. This can be done only through systematic processes and private public partnership. Processes have to be transparent and institutions of repute, whether industry or private organizations, including international players, can be involved in the whole process. First of all targeting all 38000 institutions for accreditation will be a herculean task. Given the large size of the Indian higher education system, the biggest in the world in terms of the number of colleges, it is imperative to work out an 'E-assessment methodology'. Low performing institutions have to be assisted to improve their quality. Government agencies should be able to facilitate that process.



- Private and international partners should be able to organize the lead audit for capacity building of the above threshold institutions and bring them up to the world class category.
- Private and international players can facilitate the other institutions to be assessed and accredited with adequate capacity building processes to achieve excellence in the quality space. If we set benchmarks for the top level institutions, the idea will penetrate down the line and it will be possible to elevate them to a higher level. The whole exercise should revolve around capacity building for higher education institutions to achieve their objectives and compete with world class institutions.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) is interchangeable terms describing the practice of teaching for sustainability. ESD is the term most used internationally and by the United Nations.^[1] Agenda 21 was the first international document that identified education as an essential tool for achieving sustainable development and highlighted areas of action for education.

Groundwork has been laid for sustainability education worldwide. Recent changes in service learning, a focus on literacy and skills, standards that support interdisciplinary thinking, and the role of systems thinking have all increased the visibility of the movement. Various approaches to ESD encourage people to understand the complexities of, and synergies between, the issues threatening planetary sustainability and understand and assess their own values and those of the society in which they live in the context of sustainability. ESD seeks to engage people in negotiating a sustainable future, making decisions and acting on them. While it is generally agreed on that sustainability education must be customized for individual learners, according to Tilbury and Wortman, the following skills are essential to ESD:

- Envisioning – being able to imagine a better future. The premise is that if we know where we want to go, we will be better able to work out how to get there.
- Critical thinking and reflection learning to question our current belief systems and to recognize the assumptions underlying our knowledge, perspective and opinions. Critical thinking skills help people learn to examine economic, environmental, social and cultural structures in the context of sustainable development.
- Systemic thinking acknowledging complexities and looking for links and synergies when trying to find solutions to problems.
- Building partnerships promoting dialogue and negotiation, learning to work together.
- Participation in decision-making empowering people.

CONCLUSION

The study has come to an end after observing prominent things in Higher education in India. The role and responsibilities of higher educational Institution are amazingly better than ever before. The system of higher education is systematic enough as quality is exercised by different institutions established by UGC. Even if there are measures in place, there are concerns over higher education's that are to be addressed through the initiatives as stated before.

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