

## **The Scenario of Higher Education in India; challenge and elucidation**

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### **Abstract -**

The role of the higher education in the national development is well established. A significant growth in this sector has been observed in the last six decades. The fact is Indian Higher Education System Network is largest in the world with maximum number of affiliated and constituent colleges or institutions. This has also contributed significantly in the economic growth of the India.

When India introduced its first five year plan there were 28 Universities, 695 colleges and 1,74,000 students in comparison of today's more than 700 universities and 36,000 affiliated colleges enrolling nearly 30 million students which makes about 18 per cent Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in higher education in India, the scene is quite complex. With all these institutions, nearly 86 per cent of students are enrolled in bachelor's degree programs with about 74 per cent enrolling in three-year B.A., B.Com. or B.Sc. degrees. One-sixth of all Indian students are enrolled in engineering/technology degrees. Education, medicine, agriculture, veterinary science and law all together accounts for less than 10 per cent of total enrolment. About 12 per cent students pursue post graduate studies whereas only 2 per cent are enrolled in doctoral degree and other diploma programs. Still the higher education system is passing through turbulent time and facing many challenges. The gross enrollment ratio of India is very low in comparison with other countries eg. China more than 23%, UK 57% and US with 83%.

Recently a report released by MHRD clarified that, the country's Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) has grown to 18.8%. Encouraging as it may seem, still there is plenty of reasons to believe that there is still a long way to go in attaining excellence in higher education and a number of loopholes still need to be plugged in. On some areas India have performed well but there are areas where it is still lagging behind. There exists a major policy deficit in the country that is curbing the development in higher education. Even though there are a number of committees and commissions set up like the National Knowledge Commission and the Yashpal Committee, the implementation of the recommendations of these commissions happens at snail's pace.

The central government funding on education is less than 1% of GDP. The government sponsored capacity building is not sufficient to meet the emerging need for higher education. At present 30 million students are enrolled in higher education sector. According to FICCI-E&Y

report to achieve 30% gross enrolment rate (GER) over the next decade the country would need an additional capacity to cater to 25 million new seats. The extra capacity generation would need an extra Rs. 10 lakh crores by 2020. At the current budgetary allocation for education, the funds would be insufficient. Private sector can bridge the gap in budgetary allocation and required allocation. Further, The success of private institutions in USA, Japan, and Malaysia are a good example of positive contribution of private players in higher education. The private sector led to increase of gross enrolment rate (GER) during the period from 1999 to 2008, from 71% to 83% in USA. In Japan it increased from 45% to 58%. In Malaysia it increased from 28% to 32%.

### **Challenges in Higher education**

The broad issues to be addressed includes, inter alia, accessibility, quality, equity, affordability, inclusiveness, funding and regulation, which require a cohesive and integrated approach for solutions.

**Poor Employability Poor industry academia linkages:** The demographic profile of India and transformation of economy into a knowledge economy creates the need for an active industry academia interaction. Poor employability of the graduates highlights the isolation between the academic institutions and industry. The knowledge economy can only be sustained if the higher education institutions are able to transform into critically thinking, innovative people with an entrepreneurial spirit to meet the needs of the industry.

In this regard the need of the hour is -

1. Creating conditions that improve the interactions between industry, academia, research labs and students as well as skill upgrading.
2. Creating mechanisms that will increase the level of structured innovation and entrepreneurship so that more students from Kerala become job-creators rather than job-seekers, especially in sectors where the state has a comparative advantage.
3. Using the fast-moving technology of education in ways that can make it feasible to update students with the latest course content, custom-created courseware, and localized materials with minimum expenditure of time and effort.

### **Lack of uniformity in various courses being offered**

There is no uniformity in the content, pedagogy, and forms of assessments by different public and private institutions. Though the higher education in india has come up a long way, there seems to be a wide disparity in the education policies related to the syllabus followed by various universities in India. The result is that, when some recently established universities have moved quite ahead by incorporating contemporary developments in their respective syllabi, many age old and well-reputed universities have lagged behind simply by failing to upgrade their course of studies.

To some extent it is true that a specific standard should be maintained while making the syllabus for a particular course in a university. Non uniformity in the syllabus and particularly the ratings of the university leads to complex problem among the students. However, in order to maintain a perfect uniformity in syllabus is difficult to achieve because there are different types of students studying in all these and they come from such different backgrounds. so deleting the demarcation becomes tough.

### **Poor Regulation**

In India, the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) is responsible for supervising the functioning of all the universities through its chief regulatory body —Universities Grants Commission (UGC). The other government organization's which are responsible for the regulation of technical education are All-India Council for Technical Education (AICTE). There are two quality assessment bodies, namely National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) and National Board of Accreditation (NBC). AICTE and UGC are responsible for providing guidelines for all academic and academic administration related issues.

The existing model of higher education in India is based on deep and pervasive distrust among regulators over the possibility of universities doing things on their own, and doing it well. The current framework that require universities to be constantly regulated by laws, rules, regulations, guidelines and policies set by the government and the regulatory bodies have not produced the best results.

There are at least five factors that increasingly govern such regulation. The first relates to Central laws and rules concerning universities and higher education. A second concerns laws and rules of State governments. A third relates to rules, regulations and guidelines formulated by the UGC. A fourth one concerns rules, regulations and guidelines formulated by regulatory bodies such as the Medical Council of India and the Bar Council of India. A fifth concerns orders and directions passed by courts.

There are issues relating to quality and accountability that need to be ensured, and regulatory bodies should assume that role and responsibility. That role needs to significantly change from the existing model to a more progressive approach where universities are allowed to take greater responsibility on their own. There is a need to develop a framework of Earned Autonomy for universities where new forms of regulatory models are created. This model can have a system in which universities could be identified on the basis of indicators and assessment criteria so that a number of them, public and private, could be allowed to function more autonomously than others. This framework should allow upward mobility: universities should be able to fulfil a specific set of goals to develop and reach different stages of autonomy.

### **Shortage of Faculty**

Most of the educational institutions in the country are facing a serious faculty crunch. Many graduate and post graduate departments in colleges and universities are functioning with less than 50 per cent of the total sanctioned faculty strength. Even institutions of international repute like IITs are working with more than 30 per cent faculty positions lying vacant in most of the departments. One estimate projects more than 3,00,000 vacancies of college and university teachers in the country. A task force on faculty shortage set up by the Ministry of Education has estimated the current faculty shortage in the country at 54 per cent. A further 1,00,000 teachers will be required each year in colleges in the coming decade if the shortage is not addressed as the country's higher education system expands. The recruiters cite lack of competent candidates as the main reason for such a large scale vacancy of faculty members in the country. However, one needs to look at this problem more objectively.

The University Grants Commission through the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) conducts National Eligibility Test (NET) for prospective college and university teachers every year. On the similar line various state governments also conduct their State-Level Eligibility Test (SLET). However, when it comes to recruitment, colleges and universities have never been regular in recruiting teachers for their departments. Many universities take years to recruit teachers and in the process the students are the worst sufferers. Some of the reasons for the delay in recruitment of teachers are: the political interference in Vice Chancellor and other university higher officials' appointments and even for faculty recruitments (leading to judicial intervention), the clash between the Chancellor and respective state governments and bureaucratic hassles created through college and university service commission. The poor financial condition of the institutions is also another factor.

Moreover, the question of not getting sufficient qualified and competent people for faculty positions also needs a serious scrutiny. Even though central and state agencies through their NET and SLET certify candidates' qualification for the job, colleges and universities look for candidates with Ph.D. degrees. This might be to help the candidates in future as they might face difficulties to get promotion for going to the higher level without a Ph.D. degree. When NET and SLET qualified candidates are not recruited directly for teaching positions, many of those who can't afford pursuing their Ph. D. degrees or wait for years to get recruited, go for other lower-level jobs.

### **Research & Development Activities**

The quality of higher education is also reflected and judged by the Research and Development activities of the Higher Education Institution / Universities. One of the ways to measure the rigorousness of research and innovation in a country is by looking at its patent filings. The Indian government has also been indicating that it is keen to see an increase in domestic patent filings across all industry sectors and technology areas. The World Intellectual Property Organization's (WIPO) IP Indicators report for 2013 revealed that of the 43,663 patents applications made in

India in 2012-2013, only 22% were filed by domestic entities. “Domestic filings need to be increased by encouraging research and development in India.

There is a need to develop a culture of intense research at the university level. In other words, universities should be seen as laboratories of research. One way to improve this is by creating a tenure system for the University lecturers and linking their tenure with a certain research output. It may be good to adopt a selective purposive approach by identifying a few high quality select institutions abroad and invite them to come to India, to share teaching and research with Indian students and faculty, and vice versa. However, in doing so care has to be taken that academic considerations are not displaced by commercial interests

### **Conclusion**

The exponential growth in higher education institutes needs to be regulated based on quality of outcomes. Government funding and scholarships need to be rationalized based on the merit of the students rather than subsidizing limited number of institutes like IIT's. Uncontrolled and unbalanced growth of private institutes needs to be regulated to focus on development of research based Universities and correcting regional disparity in higher education. This is a need to rethink on present system of not for profit nature of educational institutes. To address the shortage of faculties regulators need to consider possibilities of allowing experience professionals from industry to be hired instead of hiring only PhD's for leadership positions in academics.

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