Higher Education In India: Structure And Challenges

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Abstract

Higher Education system in India is undergoing a rapid transformation. After independence higher education has grown remarkably in India. Now, the country has the largest higher education system in the world in terms of the number of institutions. However despite this impressive number of institutions, there are many inadequacies that affect the system. In GER (Gross Enrollment Ratio) India lags behind even that of developing countries including China, Brazil, Malaysia and Philippines. This paper presents the development and present scenario of higher education in India by analyzing the various challenges that higher education sector is facing. This paper also presents the initiatives taken by the government and recommendations to meet these challenges.

Keywords: Challenges, Education, Government, Higher, India, Institutions, Knowledge, System, Universities, World

1. Introduction

Knowledge has always been a distinguishing characteristic of human beings in view of their capacity to transmit knowledge from one generation to another. There is no doubt in the fact that knowledge is power. 21st century is going to be a knowledge century and economic development and human resources development are closely linked together. India being the nation of young people, is full of aspirations, and has lot to achieve in this age of knowledge. According to population projections based on 2001 census figures, in 2011 nearby 144 million of India’s populations will be between the age group of 18 to 23 the target age group for higher education. Education in general and higher education in particular, is a highly nation specific activity. Indian government has realised that education plays an important role in the empowerment of people social or economic. While basic level education makes the person literate, higher education makes him stand out, makes him realise his true potential. Higher education is necessary in a country to promote the economic and social development.

2. Structure of Higher Education in India

India has always been a land of scholars and learners. In ancient times, India was regarded for its universities like Taxila, Nalanda and Vikramshila all over the world. Students from all over the world used to come to get education in these institutes. In 1854, establishment of modern universities in India was first recommended by British Colonial Administration. In 1857, universities in Calcutta, Bombay and Madras were set up by the British rule. At beginning of India’s independence, there were 20 universities and 500 colleges enrolling about 2, 30,000 students. Since independence India has progressed
significantly in terms of higher education. According to MHRD Annual Report 2009-10, as of March 2009, India has 26455 institutes of higher education; 504 universities and university level institutions and 25951 colleges. At present, we have 659 universities in the country including State universities, Central universities, Private universities and Deemed to be universities. (Twelfth Five Year Plan 2012-2017) Universities in India, both private and public, are spread across the nation. In fact the public sector and private is not in opposition to each other but they are working simultaneously in Indian sphere of education. UGC is the main governing body that enforces the standards, advises the government and helps coordinate between centre and states.

3. Challenges in Higher Education:

Low gross enrolment ratio: According the World Bank statistics, higher education enrolment is a leading indicator of economic growth. Since independence in 1947, there has been a significant expansion in higher education in India. Despite the impressive statistics, the fact is that India has a very low GER as compared to the other developing nations. Currently India’s GER stands at 15% (Source: Higher Education in India twelfth five year plan 2012-17) and the government has targeted it take it to a level of 20% by 2020.

Demand and supply gap: Statistics show that there is huge gap between demand and supply. There are some of the institutions and courses where all desired students cannot get admissions while there are some of the institutions and courses where seats are lying vacant.

- **Quality Education:** Quantity and quality of highly specialised human resources determine their competence in global market. According to a government report two third of India’s colleges and universities are below standards. However, NAAC has been established by the government to bring the quality in higher education in India. As per data provided by NAAC not even 25% of the total higher education institutions in the country were accredited so far and among those accredited, only 30% of the universities and 45% of the colleges were found to be ranked at ‘A’ level.

- **Poor focus on research:** Research and higher education are complimentary to each other. But in India focus on research is very poor. In India percentage of its GDP is very low that is spent on research as compared to other nations.

- **Faculty shortage:** If we take into account the ideal student and teacher ratio, and compare it with India, we will find huge gap. Sometimes the posts remain vacant for years because of approval or lack of funds and sometimes the reason is lack of qualified person. This is responsible for under performance of students.

4. Conclusion

In this paper we have presented the development and present scenario of higher education in India by analyzing the various data and also identify the key challenges, like demand supply gap, quality education, research and development, and shortage of faculty. Government has done well if we analyze the statistics and there are some very good proposals brought by government. India has a long way to go to meet the aspirations of its young population.
5. References