



Higher Education in India: Challenges and Opportunities

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Abstract

India is in transition phase in higher education sector. It has imposed some threatening issues, challenges and opportunities. This paper focuses on the present scenario of higher education in India. It also aims to identify various issues like accessibility of higher education to all groups of the society, quality of higher education etc. Secondary data is used to provide statistics of higher education and to give overview of the existing scenario of higher education sector. This study also identifies challenges and suggests effective measures to overcome the obstacles in higher education sector.

Keyword: Higher education, accessibility, Challenges, opportunities.

Introduction-

The importance of Higher Education can be clearly understand by former United States president barrack Obama in following words, “Higher Education cannot be a luxury reserved just for a privileged few. It is an economic necessity for every family. And every family should be able to afford it.” Higher education is a long-term social investment to support the social structure, cultural growth, economic development, equality and justice. In the 21st century, the higher education is a powerful tool which can be utilized to build knowledge based society.

Conceptual framework of higher education

Higher Education qualification infers Higher Diplomas, Foundation Degrees to Honours Degrees. These courses take a minimum of 3 years to maximum of 4 years to complete. On the other hand, Further Education refers to degrees above graduation like, Post Graduate or Master and Doctorate degrees. In short, Tertiary Education means colleges and university



level education. The Post Higher Secondary Education is known as Higher Education in India.

Current scenario of Higher Education-

The report of the All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) for year 2015-16 classifies and represents various facets of the institutes of Higher education in India. It comprises entire Higher Education Institutions in the country. Institutions are categorized in 3 broad Categories; University, College and Stand-Alone Institutions. There are 799 Universities, 39071 colleges and 11923 Stand Alone Institutions. 277 Universities are privately managed. 307 Universities are located in rural Area. 14 Universities are exclusively for women, 4 in Rajasthan, 2 in Tamil Nadu & 1 each in Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Delhi, Haryana, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Uttarkhand and West Bengal. In addition to 1 Central Open University, 13 State Open Universities and 1 State Private Open University, there are 118 Dual mode Universities, which offer education through distance mode also and the maximum (19) of them are located in Tamil Nadu. There are 459 General, 101 Technical, 64 Agriculture & Allied, 50 Medical, 20 Law, 11 Sanskrit and 7 Language Universities. The top 8 States in terms of highest number of colleges in India are Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Tamil Nadu and Madhya Pradesh. Bangalore district tops in terms of number of colleges with 970 colleges followed by Jaipur with 616 colleges. Top 50 districts have about 34% of colleges. 60% Colleges are located in Rural Area. 11.1% Colleges are exclusively for Women. Only 1.7% Colleges run Ph.D. programme and 33% Colleges run Post Graduate Level programmes. 78% Colleges are privately managed; 64% Private-unaided and 14% Private aided. Andhra Pradesh & Telangana have more than 80% Private-unaided colleges and Tamil Nadu has 76% Private-unaided Colleges, whereas, Bihar has 13% and Assam has only 10% Private-unaided colleges. 22% of the Colleges are having enrolment less than 100 and only 4.3% Colleges have enrolment more than 3000. Total enrolment in higher education has been estimated to be 34.6 million with 18.6 million boys and 16 million girls. Girls constitute 46.2% of the total enrolment. Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in Higher education in India is 24.5%, which is calculated for 18-23 years of age group. GER for male population is 25.4% and for females, it is 23.5%. For Scheduled Castes, it is 19.9% and for Scheduled Tribes, it is 14.2% as compared to the national GER of



24.5%. About 79.3% of the students are enrolled in Undergraduate level programme. 1,26,451 students are enrolled in Ph.D. that is less than 0.4% of the total student enrolment. The estimated total number of teachers is 15,18,813. Out of which more than half about 61% are male teachers and 39% are female teachers. At all-India level there are merely 64 female teachers per 100 male teachers. Pupil Teacher Ratio (PTR) in Universities and Colleges is 21 if regular enrolment is considered. The share of Ph.D. student is highest in State Public University (33%) followed by Institute of National Importance (22%), Central University (14%) and Deemed University-Private (12%). Number of female students is lowest in Institutes of National Importance followed by State Private Open Universities, Deemed University- Government. The University Grant Commission of India provide loan grant in the country, but it is also responsible for coordinating, formulating and maintaining the standards in institutions of higher education. Apart from the UGC here are various professional councils that are responsible for recognizing courses, promoting professional institutes and providing grants to undergraduate programmes. They are All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE), Distance Education Council (DEC), Indian Council for Agriculture Research (ICAR), Bar Council of India (BCI), 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), Dentist Council of India (DCI), Central Council of Homeopathy (CCH) and the Central Council of Indian Medicine (CCIM) are the statutory professional councils of India.

Educational Evolution of Rural Women

A review of the rural literacy status over the last 50 years generates a satisfactory feeling as the literacy level has gone up. In the last 15 years the numbers are on a decrease in the category of illiterate rural women but majority of literate women fall in the category of literate only up till primary. It appears that higher education in the lives of rural females is not considered necessary by their family and society. Since the beginning their role is defined as that of a care taker of the family and children. It is not always the parents or society to be held responsible for the girl child not being educated. The reasons stated by girls who do not attend school indicate that they are pressurized with household job and the value of education is not inculcated in them. As compared to their male counterparts they are more interested in studies but are not able to live their interest due to their incorrectly defined roles in the

society. Quite of the females are not send to school for school being far and no proper conveyance available for travelling. There are scenarios of proper amenities and resources not being available in schools. This even includes under qualified and non-dedicated teachers and other staff. Huge amount of fund is released periodically for the female education which is not invested on the target population.

Conclusion-

Study reveals that the higher education system is not capable to respond to society's changing needs. Today, India is one of the fastest developing countries of the world. To maintain that growth there is need to increase the quality of higher education in India. To attain the future necessities there is an crucial need to analyze Financial Resources, Access and Equity, Quality Standards, Relevance and at the end the Responsiveness. DP Singh, Vice President and Head HR, IBM India/ South Asia said, "Skill is emerging as the new currency across businesses globally and in India. Today's rapidly evolving economic environment makes up-skilling an imperative across job profiles and sectors. India is stuck by both a skill gap and a higher education sector struggling to keep up. That is why it is critical to take proactive measures to transform the higher education system to create a new model that better aligns with industry imperatives." Technical advancement, ever changing skills requirements and obsolete curriculum are challenges for India's higher education system in its efforts to equip students with employability skills. India should consider providing students with essential skills by partnering with industry, adopting new learning technologies for quality and better output and delivering experience-based, applied learning.

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