
SOME ISSUES OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN INDIA

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Abstract: The system of higher education in India is one of the biggest man making enterprises in the world. The system has grown by way of an answer of the rise in demand, which by itself is the consequence of escalation of expectations on the part of the people. It indicates the faith that the people have come to repose in education as an instrument of change. Perceived thus, the increase in the demand for education, particularly higher education, is an indicator of a healthy civic attitude on the part of the citizens of the democracy, and therefore, deserving all the possible encouragement by the state. In any social system, higher education has its due place. It provides valuable inputs for intellectual excellence, innovation and leadership which are the basic ingredients for the advancement of society in the modern world. The main objectives of the present study are examining the some issues of higher education, Performance of Universities & Colleges, Constraints and Strains in Higher Education, Financial Problems and Interventions Needed.

Introduction: The mission of higher education is to achieve access, equality, justice, quality, employability, inclusiveness and create a knowledge society economy. To increase access, the number of institutions in the country must double in the next five years. More universities must come up from central government and the existing universities must be developed. Also, programs that allow shift system of education (morning and evening shifts), evening PG programs and integrated UG/ PG programs would help the cause of access to higher education. There should be about 20% to 30% increase in intake of students every year. In order to improve the areas of research, it is necessary to upgrade laboratories, motivate researchers and provide research funding. International collaboration of research must be promoted and the researchers must be released from undue restrictions on international travel. There should be enhanced participation rates in higher education from girls, SC/ST students, minorities and physically handicapped.

Objectives: The main objectives of the present study are examining the some issues of higher education, Performance of Universities & Colleges, Constraints and Strains in Higher Education, Financial Problems and Interventions Needed.

Issues that Remain: Though significant progress has been made in the provision of education for all girls, the task is not yet complete. There are several issues that need to be seriously addressed by educational planners and policy makers in the years to come. Some of these are:

1. Provision of post-primary education to girls in remote rural areas and from disadvantaged groups;
2. Special focus on enrolment and retention of SC, ST, OBC girls;
3. Absence of data in case of educationally backward minorities;
4. Education of out-of-school girls in the age group

- 10-18;
5. Improvement of quality of state and state-aided schools;
6. Curricular reforms to make education more meaningful and relevant;
7. Continued trust on gender sensitive and gender inclusive curriculum and its transaction;
8. Further gender inputs into pre-service and in-service education of teachers and teacher educators and textbook writers and textbook production boards;
9. Higher proportion of women teachers in rural areas;
10. Building up of intersectoral convergence with respect to education-health-nutrition of children and adolescent girls;
11. Building up of a functional relationship between the education department and Panchayati Raj institutions;
12. Lack of regular inflow of rural-urban statistics on girls' education.

Higher Education: Constraints and Strains: The system of higher education in India is one of the biggest man making enterprises in the world. The system has grown by way of an answer of the rise in demand, which by itself is the consequence of escalation of expectations on the part of the people.

The constraints:

There are five major constraints on the system:

1. Philosophical constraints;
2. Cultural constraints;
3. Economic constraints
4. Operational constraints.
5. Managerial constraints.

This philosophical constraint underlies the psychomoral-intellectual vacuum the Indian higher educational scenario suffers from. The agonising part is its manifestation in the meaninglessness of the pursuit in the classrooms and on the campuses. This gets reflected in symptoms like agitations, strikes,

work to rule movements, boycotts of examinations etc.

The cultural constraints are too obvious as witnessed in the people's attitudes to each other and towards their work. Anthropologically culture is a very powerful determinant of a person's perceptions of his roles as a member of society and the quality of the acquittal of his role. Education has been recognised as a potent acculturating force the world over. It is also recognised as liberating and empowering force. But, in order that it fulfils these missions, it must be allowed to operate in a cultural environment of freedom, fairness, and encouragement. The target of excellence has been a far cry in almost of all departments of our academic life. The work culture that prevails in our academic world bears no relevance to the looming challenges of globalisation and market friendly economy that are sought to be introduced in Indian life.

The managerial constraints that plague the system of higher education are a legacy of our colonial past that is ill at ease with the democratic present. For more than a century we have administered education through a culture of command and control at all levels. Participative management as a modern strategy adopted in industry and business is a recent arrival in the field of education. Unfortunately, these constraints persist in the system in one form or another and unvarying degrees, setting at thought our plans like the NEP (1986) at the macro level and institutional plans for improvement and excellence at the micro level.

The Strains: While the system works under the five-fold constraints, it is also subjected to five-fold strains that further diminish its capability as an instrument of development of the youthful human resource of the country. The strains are: (i) systematic strains, (ii) demographic strains, (iii) developmental strains, (iv) political strains, and (v) ethical strains.

Students can understand the diverse cultural and social systems of the people living in different parts of the country. In higher education in general, and technical education in particular, steps are needed to facilitate inter-regional mobility by providing equal access to every Indian of requisite merit, regardless of his origins.

Quality of Infrastructure: The quality of infrastructure and the quality of education are closely interlinked. The quality of infrastructure available in educational institutions is not up to the mark. The Kothari Commission of 1964 stipulated that the number of whole time students to be admitted to a college or university department should be determined with reference to laboratory, library and other facilities. But, after five decades the system is rapped and became dysfunctional. The infrastructure,

laboratories, library are poorly organised. The physical facilities such as class rooms and other inputs are very poor. Class rooms are not fully equipped. The library facilities are limited and many libraries are not able to buy standard books and journals. Multiple copies of text books are not available. Reading facilities are limited. Laboratories are not fully equipped with modern equipment. Practical work is reduced to mere rituals.

Financial Problems: In recent years many universities are found facing major financial crunch. The UGC is the funding agency to the universities itself is in financial crisis and is unable to get sufficient funds from the Central Government. The major source of finance for the universities is state governments concern. The financial position of almost all the state governments in the country is very weak and the state governments are not able to grant required funds to the universities. Universities are asked to mobilise resources of their own. The fee structure in the universities is very low and hence the universities are forced to depend again on the government for finance. Universities are facing a major financial crunch. UGC has been getting less and less funds with the result that it can no longer meet its commitments to the universities. In the initial years, while the Government funds accounted for about 57 per cent of the total income of these institutions, this has gone up to 81.5 per cent in 1983-84 and the percentage is probably even much higher today.

Interventions Needed: As already pointed out, the situation with respect to girls' education varies considerably across the country. Therefore, interventions have to be worked out in a contextual manner. However, following are some general proposals that may help in tackling the various issues confronting girls' education in the country.

- A large number of girls from remote and small rural habitations continue to get excluded from primary education. It is necessary to create part or alternative schooling in small un-served habitations.
- It is necessary to upgrade all primary schools to middle schools. Girls do not cross village boundaries ordinarily. The 3 km radial distance for a middle school is forbidding at times due to terrain or reasons of personal safety. Moreover, if all the feeder primary schools are able to retain all entrants in class I and nearly all of them pass out of class V, the present serving middle schools can by no means take in all primary school graduates. Further, there is enough evidence that girls continue on to higher classes wherever there are complete middle/secondary or higher secondary

schools within the village.

- The potential of distance education is immense and needs to be tapped for educating girls living in difficult areas and the large out-of-school girls' population.
- Schemes like Apni Beti Apna Dhan (Haryana), Rajyalakshmi and Saraswati Yojana of Rajasthan, and similar other attempts to secure the fundamental right to life of girls need to be strengthened and linked to education for long-term effects.
- Wherever Panchayats are even partially functional (even when lacking financial resources) and have taken over their schools, thinks have improved for children's education in general and for girls in particular.
- Articulation and organization of village women around issues of daily survival include their concern for education of their sons and daughters. Mahila mandals/samooths need to be strengthened and revived as a major plank of rural development and women's empowerment.
- An expanded programme of formal and non-formal vocational training for rural girls in health, employment, etc., needs to be instated. Transition rates for rural girls need improvement both at middle and secondary levels.
- A national programme of strengthening science and maths teaching in all girls' schools along with

a scheme to meet shortage of science and maths teachers in girls school needs to be instated. The special focus is to improve access of girls to secondary and technical education in rural areas.

- There is need for adequate MIS on women's education and training and gender-sensitive planning.

Conclusion: India is today one of the fastest developing countries of the world with the annual growth rate going above 9%. In order to sustain that rate of growth, there is need to increase the number of institutes and also the quality of higher education in India. In India after independence, there has been tremendous increase in institutions of higher learning in all disciplines. But with the quantitative growth has it been able to attend to the core issue of quality. To reach and achieve the future requirements there is an urgent need to relook at the Financial Resource. With the advent of globalization the character of higher education is set of change. Higher education to be meaningful and productive must have avenues for excellence to flourish and develop. There will be a premium on quality with bench making of programmes assuming importance. The impact of technologies will progressively increase. So Indian universities need to look and a head and prepare themselves for far reaching changes. Unless the quality aspect is not taken care of the malady that exists in higher education will never be eliminated.

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