

EVALUATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN INDIA CHALLENGES AND SUGGESTIONS

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Our university system is, in many parts, in a state of disrepair...In almost half the districts in the country, higher education enrollments are abysmally low, almost two-third of our universities and 90 per cent of our colleges are rated as below average on quality parameters... I am concerned that in many states university appointments, including that of vice-chancellors, have been politicized and have become subject to caste and communal considerations, there are complaints of favoritism and corruption.

– **Dr. Manmohan Singh (2007)**

Abstract: Although there have been many challenges to higher education in the past, these most recent challenges calls for reform which may bring about a fundamental change in higher education. This change may not occur as a direct response to calls for greater transparency and accountability, but rather because of the opportunity to reflect on the purpose of higher education, the role of colleges and universities in the new world, and emerging scientific research on how people learn. The literatures have not been tied together in a way that would examine the impact of fundamental change from the policy level to the institutional level and to the everyday lives of college and university administrators, faculty and students. Now the time has come to create a new wave of institution building and of excellence in the fields of education, research and capability building. We need higher educated people who are skilled and who can drive our economy forward to achieve excellence. When India can provide skilled people to the outside world then we can transfer our country from a developing nation to a developed nation easily and quickly.

Keywords: Higher Education, Challenges, Suggestions.

Introduction: Higher education in India was already started in ancient period but in its modern form it began during the British rule. As far as its progress is concerned, it was very slow during the British rule. When our country became independent in 1947 there were only 19 Universities, 452 Colleges and number of students in them was only 2,40,000. After achieving Independence we started the expansion and qualitative reform in education at every level. Due to the expansion of primary and there after secondary education, the pressure for admission in higher education went on increasing and new colleges and universities were established according to this demand. India's higher education system is the world's third largest in terms of students, next to China and the United States. Unlike China, however, India has the advantage of English being the primary language of higher education and research. India is educating approximately 11 per cent of its youth in higher education as compared to 20 per cent in China. The main governing body in India 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. Universities and its constituent colleges are the main institutes of higher education in India. At present, there are around 227 government-recognized Universities in India. Out of them 20 are central universities, 109 are deemed universities and 11 are Open Universities and rest are state universities.

According to the London Times Higher Education (2009)- Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) World University rankings, no Indian university features among the first 100. But universities in East Asia – Hong Kong, Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan and China have been included in the first hundred. It is only when one moves on to the next 100 that we find the Indian Institute of Technology, Kanpur at 237; IIT Madras at 284 and the University of Delhi at 291. A recent evaluation of universities and research institutes all over the world, conducted by a Shanghai university, has no Indian university in the world's top 300 while China has six. The Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore, comes in the top 400 and IIT, Kharagpur, makes an appearance after that. Today, Knowledge is power. The more knowledge one has, the more empowered one is. The country lacks the critical mass in higher education. Its gross enrolment ratio (GER) is a merely 11 per cent compared to China's 20 per cent, the USA's 83 per cent and South Korea's 91 per cent. This means that China has double the number of students pursuing higher education in comparison to India. The Eleventh Five Year Plan envisages increase in the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in higher education to 15 per cent of the population in the age cohort group of 18-24 years by 2011-12. This requires a substantial increase in the number of research institutions and consequently would require an adequate number of teachers for imparting education. The overall scenario of higher education in India does not match with the global

Quality standards. Hence, there is enough justification for an increased assessment of the Quality of the country's educational institutions. Traditionally, these institutions assumed that Quality could be determined by their internal resources, viz., faculty with an impressive set of degrees and experience detailed at the end of the institute's admission brochure, number of books and journals in the library, an ultra-modern campus, and size of the endowment, etc., or by its definable and assessable outputs, viz., efficient use of resources, producing uniquely educated, highly satisfied and employable graduates. Critical appraisals undertaken by the governmental committees and independent academicians have highlighted the crisis confronting the system: 'increasing unrest; weakening of student motivation and indiscipline on the campuses; increasing educated unemployment; frequent collapse of administration; deterioration of standards; and above all, the demoralizing effect of the irrelevance and purposelessness of most of what is being done.' While the politicians and policy makers have often spoken about the need for radical reconstruction of the system, what has been achieved in reality is only moderate reformism. At present, the world-class institutions in India are mainly limited. Most of the Indian colleges and universities lack in high-end research facilities. Along with UGC, 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), the Central Council of Indian Medicine (CCIM) and such other regulatory bodies from time to time need to accommodate latest development and maintain quality students in higher education. It is time for all those who are concerned with policymaking, planning, administration and implementation of Higher Education to revitalize the very thinking on the subject and put it on the right track. The prospects and development in the higher education sector in India needs a critical examination in a rapidly globalizing world. Expansion, inclusion and excellence were the three objectives of higher education policy of Government of India. While there is a need for an expansion of the higher education sector, resource constraint for both the Centre and the states poses challenge to ensure quality education even in the existing institutions. The government after pursuing neo-liberal policies for the last 17 odd years is keen to open the higher education sector to the private providers, either through public-private participation or foreign direct investment in higher

education. The society is divided. While one section is opposed to commodification of education, the other section thinks that involving the private sector is the only way out. How would the higher education sector evolve in response to these challenges is a crucial issue for us to understand and anticipate. How is the sector contemplating changes to engage with the world? If India is to be a global economic powerhouse it is essential to nurture this higher education sector.

Challenges of Present Higher Educational System in India: Since we have got independence we are facing challenges to establish a great and strong education system. India recognizes that the new global scenario poses unprecedented challenges for the higher education system. The University Grants Commission has appropriately stated that a whole range of skills will be demanded from the graduates of humanities, social sciences, natural sciences and commerce, as well as from the various professional disciplines such as agriculture, law, management, medicine or engineering. India can no longer continue the model of general education as it has been persisting in for the large bulk of the student population. Rather, it requires a major investment to make human resource productive by coupling the older general disciplines of humanities, social sciences, natural sciences and commerce to their applications in the new economy and having adequate field based experience to enhance knowledge with skills and develop appropriate attitudes. Responding to these emerging needs, the UGC stated: "The University has a crucial role to play in promoting social change. It must make an impact on the community if it is to retain its legitimacy and gain public support". It seeks to do so by a new emphasis on community based programs and work on social issues. Concepts of access, equity, relevance and quality can be operationalized only if the system is both effective and efficient. Hence, the management of higher education and the total networking of the system has become an important issue for effective management. The shift can occur only through a systemic approach to change as also the development of its human resource, and networking the system through information and communication technology. There are many basic problems facing higher education in India today. These include inadequate infrastructure and facilities, large vacancies in faculty positions and poor faculty thereof, low student enrolment rate, outmoded teaching methods, declining research standards, unmotivated students, overcrowded classrooms and widespread geographic, income, gender, and ethnic imbalances. Apart from concerns relating to deteriorating standards, there is reported exploitation of students by many private providers. Ensuring

equitable access to quality higher education for students coming from poor families is a major challenge. Students from poor background are put to further disadvantage since they are not academically prepared to crack highly competitive entrance examinations that have bias towards urban elite and rich students having access to private tuitions and coaching. Education in basic sciences and subjects that are not market friendly has suffered. Research in higher education institutions is at its lowest ebb. There is an inadequate and diminishing financial support for higher education from the government and from society. Many colleges established in rural areas are non-viable, are under-enrolled and have extremely poor infrastructure and facilities with just a few teachers.

Some of the leading challenges before the higher education system are continuous upgradation of curriculum to keep in pace with rapid growth of science and technology; globalization and the resultant challenges from the international universities; grooming of many private institutions without any method of ensuring maintenance of quality and standard; need for adequate funding to meet the demands of various novel innovative programs; developing a meaningful and purposeful inter-face between the universities, National Research Laboratories, industries, government and society, etc. ICT in higher education policy may not be able to completely overcome all these challenges though it may play a role in information and resource sharing. There are so many people in various parts of country which are still out of reach. This is when we have emphasize more on our education programs and made our system reachable to all areas. Government has to rethink on these areas to implement more on the policies. Money also plays a vital role for the education system which needs to unique for all globally recognized syllabus and curricula. Take a look on our constitution which says that this is the responsibility of central and state government to build good education system. For that we need to have funds. But despite there was a large expenditure on the funds every year on Education where the fund goes and our system remains intact. Central government prepares policies and plan while responsibility of State government is run those policies on ground. Majority of fund goes in the pockets of officials working for this. There is a vast need to improve the quality and standards. The time now is to modernize our education system so that our country can get much more technically graduated people which can help our country to developed state. Today's youth always try to go foreign for his higher education as they have much better facilities and quality of their system. Can't we get that quality here itself? We have to stop this brain drainage so as

avoid students to run away from country. Our governments trying for various challenges faced but no one is doing well for that. Government came and goes but system remains intact. Higher education is extremely diverse and the challenges and issues faced by higher education institutions are just as diverse. The process of education is not merely digesting books. It is also about doing several co-curricular and extra-curricular activities that give a broader meaning to life in general and education in particular. There is a lack of universities and institutes for education but one most important fact is that the quality of education is absent in higher education. There are very few teachers and their knowledge is very insufficient. Most of the teachers are making money with tuitions. I have seen my places where there tuitions. The teachers are not having proper knowledge of subject even and resources to student community are very poor. Students do not have any student-ship ethics, they just want marks in the subject and they study only for grabbing jobs. There is no creativity in students. Our top class students are hard-worker but not innovative. They are not capable enough to produce new technology. There is a great need to revolution in higher education. These are just some challenges which should cover all the aspect in the present scenario of education and we have to implement hard on them.

Suggestions for Improving Quality of Higher Education: There are some suggestions and Expectations from Government, Industry, Educational Institutions, Parents and Students for improving quality of higher education-

Towards a Learning Society: As we move towards a learning society, every human activity will require contributions from experts, and this will place the entire sector of higher education in sharp focus. Although the priorities, which are being assigned today to the task of Education for All, will continue to be preponderant, the country will have to prepare itself to invest more and more on higher education and, simultaneously, measures will have to be taken to refine, diversify and upgrade higher education and research programs.

Incentives to Teachers and Researchers: Industry and students are expecting specialized courses to be offered so that they get the latest and best in education and they are also industry ready and employable. Vocational and Diploma courses need to be made more attractive to facilitate specialized programs being offered to students. Incentives should be provided to teachers and researchers to make these professions more attractive for the younger generation.

Industry and Academia Connection: Industry and Academia connect necessary to ensure curriculum and skills in line with requirements. Skill building is

really very crucial to ensure employability of academia to understand and make sure good jobs (knowledge + skills+ global professional skills = good jobs).

Innovative Practices: The new technologies offers opportunities for economic growth, improved health, better service delivery, improved learning and socio-cultural advances. Though efforts are required to improve the country's innovative capacity, efforts should be to build on the existing strengths in light of new understanding of the research innovation-growth.

Coming of Information Age: The world is entering into an Information Age and developments in communication, information and technology will open up new and cost-effective approaches for providing the reach of higher education to the youth as well as to those who need continuing education for meeting the demands of explosion of information, fast-changing nature of occupations, and lifelong education.

To Mobilize Resources: Effective measures will have to be adopted to mobilize resources for higher education. There is also a need to relate the fee structure to the student's capacity to pay for the cost. So that, students at lower economic levels can be given highly subsidized and fully subsidized education.

Student-Centered Education: Methods of higher education also have to be appropriate to the needs of learning to learn, learning to do, learning to be and learning to become. Student-centered education and employment of dynamic methods of education will require from teachers new attitudes and new skills. Methods of self-study, personal consultation between teachers and pupils, and dynamic sessions of seminars and workshops should be incorporated. Methods of distance education will have to be employed on a vast scale.

To Provide Need Based Job-Oriented Courses: All round development of personality is the purpose of education. But the present day education is neither imparting true knowledge of life and nor improving the talent of a student by which one can achieve laurels in the field one is interested. So, combination of arts subjects and computer science and science and humanities or literature should be introduced so that such courses could be useful for the students to do jobs after recruitment in some companies which would reduce unnecessary rush to higher education. The program must be focused on graduate studies and research and developing strategies and mechanisms for the rapid and efficient transfer of knowledge and for its application to specific national and local conditions and needs.

Public Private Partnership: PPP is most essential to bring in quality in the higher education system.

Governments can ensure PPP through an appropriate policy. University Grants Commission and Ministry of HRD should play a major role in developing a purposeful interface between the Universities, Industries and National Research Laboratories (NRLs) as a step towards PPP. There has been some effort both by the government and the private education institutions to develop the teaching staff at various levels.

International Cooperation: Universities in India have been a primary conduit for the advancement and transmission of knowledge through traditional functions such as research, innovation, teaching, human resource development, and continuing education. International cooperation is gaining importance as yet another function. With the increased development of transport and communication, the global village is witnessing a growing emphasis on international cooperation and action to find satisfactory solutions to problems that have global dimensions and higher education is one of them.

Cross Culture Programs: After education, tour to all the places in India and world as far as possible with the cooperation of government is necessary so that one can understand about people, culture, arts, literature, religions, technological developments and progress of human society in the world.

Towards a New vision: India realizes, like other nations of the world, that humanity stands today at the head of a new age of a large synthesis of knowledge, and that the East and the West have to collaborate in bringing about concerted action for universal upliftment, and lasting peace and unity. In this new age, great cultural achievements of the past have to be recovered and enriched in the context of the contemporary advancement so that humanity can successfully meet the evolutionary and revolutionary challenges and bring about a new type of humanity and society marked by integrated powers of physical, emotional, dynamic, intellectual, ethical, aesthetic and spiritual potentialities.

Action Plan for Improving Quality: Academic and administrative audit should be conducted once in three years in colleges by external experts for ensuring quality in all aspects of academic activities. The self-finance colleges should come forward for accreditation and fulfill the requirements of accreditation.

Individuality: The life of one will not be interesting but rather boring, monotonous and frustrating. This is mainly due to parental interference in the education of the children. Parental guidance is necessary but it should not interfere in the creativity or individuality of the students. Higher education is necessary for one to achieve excellence in the line one is best. But one should be selected for higher

education on the basis of merit only. Further, fees for education in general should not be high; especially, the fees for higher studies should be within the reach of every class of people in the nation.

Privatization of Higher Education: In any nation education is the basic necessity for the socio-economic development of the individuals and the society. In reality only 20% of the population is educated in India. So, improved standard of education as first priority should be offered to the majority by the govt. authorities with sincere political will. Also, privatization of higher education is absolutely necessary in a vast country like India as government alone is helpless to do so.

Quality Development: Quality depends on its all functions and activities: teaching and academic programs, research and scholarship, staffing, students, building, facilities, equipments, services to the community and the academic environment. It also requires that higher education should be characterized by its international dimensions: exchange of knowledge, interactive networking, mobility of teachers and students and international research projects, while taking into account the national cultural values and circumstances. The level of education and knowledge being imparted by many colleges...is not up to the mark. Instead of concentrating on quantity, these institutions should concentrate on quality. A study conducted on Social Science Research Capacity in South Asia (2002) showed that the share of the Indian universities in the special articles published in the Economic and Political Weekly was only about a 25 percent. This too was dominated by only three universities, namely Jawaharlal Nehru University, University of Mumbai & University of Delhi.

World Class Education: Indian government is not giving priority to the development of Standard in education. India should aspire for the international standard in education. Many national universities like in the USA, UK, Australia, etc. allow studies in higher education for foreign students in their countries and through correspondence courses as well. In the same way India Universities of world class education can also offer courses of studies to foreign students taking advantage of the globalization process. To achieve that goal it should adopt uniform international syllabus in its educational institutions.

Personality Development: Finally, education should be for the flowering of personality but not for the suppression of creativity or natural skill. In the globalized world opportunities for the educated people are naturally ample in scope. As a result business process outsourcing (BPO) activities have increased competition in the world trade leading towards the production of quality goods and their easy availability everywhere in the world market.

That is the way the world can be developed for peace, prosperity and progress by able and skillful men.

Fair Quality Assurance System: Colleges and Private institutes should set up Internal Quality Assurance Cell and must follow a minimum standard to give degrees. The quality assurance system must be independent of political and institutional interaction and it must have a basis in the legislation. There should be operational, financial and academic autonomy coupled with accountability. There is a need of an independent accreditation agency with a conglomerate of government, industry, academia, society etc. means all stakeholders of the education to ensure that the stakeholders particularly the students are not taken for a ride.

To Increase Quantity of Universities: We need more universities because we are more in number and present number of universities is too less. On 13th June, 2005 Government of India constituted a high level advisory body known as National Knowledge Commission (NKC) to advise the PM about the state of education in India and measures needed to reform this sector. It was headed by Sam Pitroda and submitted its report in November 2007. NKC has recommended setting up of 1500 universities by 2015 so that gross enrollment ratio increases to 15 percent. It has also called for establishing an Independent Regulatory Authority for Higher Education (IRAHE) to monitor the quality of overall higher education in India.

Conclusion: Today India is 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. To achieve the future requirements, there is an urgent need to relook at the Financial Resources, Access and Equity, Quality Standards, Relevance and at the end the Responsiveness. To attain and sustain national, regional or international quality, certain components are particularly relevant, notably careful selection of staff and continuous staff development, in particular through the promotion of appropriate programs for academic development, including teaching/learning methodology and mobility between countries, between higher education institutions and the world of work, as well as student mobility within and between countries. Internal self-evaluation and external review must be conducted openly by independent specialists, if possible with international experts. When India can provide skilled people to the outside world then we can transfer our country from a developing nation to a developed nation very easily and quickly.

In the words of **Dr. Manmohan Singh** 'The time has come to create a second wave of institution building

and of excellence in the fields of education, research and capability building’.

We need an educational system that is modern, liberal and can adapt to the changing needs of a changing society, a changing economy and a changing world. The thrust of public policy for higher education in India has to be to address these

challenges. However, one university can't make much difference. If the government welcomes more such initiatives, the future will be ours. We will be able to match and compete with other countries and the dream to be the world's greatest economy won't be difficult to achieve.

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