

Hindrances in Achieving Quality in Higher Education in India

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Abstract

Each nation's growth plan revolves around education, which is why it has been given an honourable place in society. It is said to have the ability to modify the social stratification structure. India has made great strides in ensuring that everyone has access to basic education, but a much smaller percentage of students stay in the system through higher school. India's expanding educational system faces formidable obstacles. The problems of fairness, access, and quality in the education system as a whole are overwhelming. While the higher education system in India has improved dramatically over the past ten years, it still trails behind in terms of "global relevance and competitiveness". With so few institutions having received international recognition for excellence, ensuring quality in higher education is one of the biggest issues India is now facing. On the national agenda, improving educational achievement is high on the list.

Teachers and students are primarily responsible for the advancement of higher education, but they also require a lot of support. This necessitates the participation of college and university administrators, state and federal representatives, and accrediting organisations that have the ability to influence the climate that is supportive and collaborative of good practise in higher education.

Keywords: Higher Education, Employability, Gross Enrolment Ratio, Curriculum reform, Research and Innovation

Introduction

Education is the key parameter in the growth strategy of any developing nation and has rightly been accorded an honoured place in the society. A nation could develop in case its people make all-round progress believing in the individual dignity and value of human life.¹ Education has vital role to play in the life of an individual as well as the society. Education assumes special significance in the context of a quasi-traditional or transitional society like India where it has to face multifaceted developmental challenges like, “Education and social change, education and national development, education and human rights, education and social justice, education and international understanding, education and equality, education and societal and cultural progress the list could be prolonged indefinitely. Behind each statement has an ideology-about the role that education must play in building minds for the future”.² Particularly in our nation, the value of education for growth has frequently gone unnoticed. Although education was the privilege of a select few, the elite of the society, the connection between development and education has not been obvious or clearly shown in the past. The Education Commission (1964-66) specifically observed, “in a world based on science and technology, it is education that determines the level of prosperity, welfare and security of the people”.³ Importantly, the administration of education is a social process that occurs within the framework of a social structure. Three forms of education made up the Pre-British Indian educational system. This included: At formal level, the education can conveniently be divided into:

1.Elementary Education

2.Secondary Education

3.Higher Education

a.General Education

b. Professional and Technical Education

The importance of education at every level in the hierarchy of education cannot be understated, but higher education is seen as the creator of the upper class in society, which significantly influences the systems of government.

Higher Education and Institutions of Higher Education

Higher education is of vital importance for the country, as it is powerful tool to build knowledge based society of the 21st century.⁴ Higher education refers to instruction given to students after they have finished their secondary education. The phrase is frequently taken to refer to instruction given by colleges or universities. In actuality, professional schools in the fields of law, medicine, business, music, and the arts were included among the higher education institutions in addition to colleges and universities. Institutions including community colleges, technical schools, and teacher training programmes are also considered to be part of higher education. Higher education, to put it simply, is any education that leads to a degree or higher.

Higher Education in India: Background

India can take pride in claiming itself to have one of the largest educational systems among developed countries of the World after China and U.S.⁵ with the reputation of having universities like Nalanda and Taxila in the early times. The references, which are backed up by historians, provide sufficient evidence to support this assertion, proving that higher education in India dates back to ancient times as well. Due to the battles and instability throughout this time, the Mughal era did not have much to offer. The British rulers were sceptical about the expansion of education in India during the early stages of colonial rule because they were more concerned with establishing themselves than with the country's educational system and worried that it may not lead to broad consciousness and awakening in India.

The British were forced to start paying attention to Indian education once their administrative juggernaut in India got going, in part because of pressure from Indian social and political leaders. Of course, there was virtually little access to higher education throughout the period before independence. From 1883 until India gained its independence, there were just a few hundreds of institutions in the country, which led to low enrolment rates for students. The Indian government spent a lot of time dealing with post-partition issues and challenges after independence. Yet, the government was quite clear that the country wouldn't be able to be self-sufficient unless the human resources were developed and groomed in a way to bring about socioeconomic progress. The then-National authorities saw the need to overhaul the whole educational system, and as a consequence, the Radha Krishnan Education Commission was founded in 1948–1949 to examine the nation's entire educational system. Subsequently, the union government

created the Kothari Commission, which served from 1964 to 1968. The New Education Policy, which was implemented in 1986, was based on the findings of these two commissions.

While the Indian higher education system has made considerable progress in terms of capacity creation and enrolment especially in the last decade, it lags significantly in terms of capacity creation and enrolment especially in the last decade, it lags significantly in terms of global relevance and competitiveness. The gross enrolment ratio (GER) in higher education in India has improved to 27.1 per cent in 2019-20 as against 26.3 per cent in 2018-19.⁶

India's development faces formidable obstacles, despite the fact that there is little question that this decade will be one of change of a revolutionary magnitude and velocity. The education system as a whole is beset with issues of quality, access and equity, and change⁷ is happening much faster in some states than others. To meet the vast and rising demand, there are not enough spaces in schools, colleges, or universities. Conventional methods won't be enough in the required time frame to satisfy this demand.

Challenges for Quality Education

There are many different aspects of educational quality, such as curriculum, delivery method, facilities, employability, etc. With so few institutions having received international recognition for excellence, ensuring quality in higher education is one of the biggest issues India is now facing. Among the issues impacting education quality are:

1. **Curriculum and Pedagogy:** Higher education institutions frequently express worry about the lack of autonomy in creating course content, which results in frequently out-of-date course structures. The curriculum is frequently not designed to promote student invention and entrepreneurship. Moreover, the adoption of novel delivery methods, such technologically enhanced learning, has not yet taken off.
2. **Infrastructure:** Public sector-run institutions of higher learning have subpar infrastructure and physical amenities. The higher education system also has a mismatch of supply in that certain courses have more demand than there are seats available, while others have an excess of capacity.
3. **Faculty:** Faculty shortages and the inadequacy of the state educational system to attract and retain well-qualified instructors have been creating obstacles to excellent education for many years. There are difficulties in training the faculty, and the quality of instruction is frequently subpar.

4. **Accreditation:** According to information supplied by the NAAC, not nearly 25% of the nation's higher education institutions were certified (based on the 12th Five-Year Plan (2012–17) of the University Grants Commission, Inclusive and Quality Growth of Higher Education). According to the NAAC's most recent report, as of October 2021, just 50% of authorised universities (211 out of 379) and 21% of colleges (1724 out of 8392) were determined to be of sufficient quality to be ranked at "A" level.
5. **Industry linkages:** Meaningful corporate involvement in areas like faculty exchange programmes, research, and curriculum development is minimal. Several institutions offer relatively few placement services, which makes it difficult for graduates searching for work and potential companies looking for competent applicants to coordinate their efforts.
6. **Employability:** The market's demands for skilled labour and human resources are not met by the Indian educational system as a whole. High levels of graduate unemployment coexist with a skills gap across industries, underscoring the need for employment-related course modules. Graduates are frequently claimed to lack necessary soft skills including communication and interpersonal abilities in addition to job-related capabilities. The ninth edition of the India Skills Report indicated that less than half of Indian graduates are employable (ISR). According to the most recent figures, just 45.9% of graduates are employable in 2021, down from 46.21 percent in 2020 and 47.38 percent in 2019.
7. **Research and innovation:** At higher education institutions, the emphasis on research is insufficient. The factors include a lack of facilities and resources as well as a shortage of qualified professors to guide pupils (Anitha Kurup and Jagdish Arora, National Institute of Advanced Studies, Trends in Higher Education: Creation and Analysis of a Database of PhDs in India).

Conclusion and Suggestions

Higher education in India has expanded very rapidly in the last seven decades after independence yet its accessibility and quality both remain a concern. If India wants economic gains and development to percolate at the grassroots level, it needs to invest in education on a priority basis.⁹

The primary responsibility for enhancing higher education rests on teachers and students. Yet they require a lot of assistance. The ability to create an atmosphere that is conducive to excellent practise in higher education rests on college and university administrators, state and federal officials, and accrediting organisations.

What qualities must this environment have?

1. **Revamping State HEIs:** In order to receive much more funding and support from the State system, State universities would have to commit to delivering lots more to the State and its people where they are located. They must come up with a new vision and programmes specifically addressing the needs of the State, its industry, economy and society, and on the basis of it make the State-level players commit to providing full ownership and support to them.
2. **Foreign Collaboration:** Government must promote collaboration between Indian higher education institutes and top international institutes and also generate linkages between national research laboratories and research centres of top institutions for better quality and collaborative research.
3. **Multidisciplinary Approach:** There should be a multidisciplinary approach in higher education so that students' knowledge may not be restricted only up to their own subjects. HEIs in both public and private must be away from political affiliations, provided with good infrastructure and facilities.

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- ⁴ www.worldbank.org/educationresourc
- ⁵ www.business-standard.com/article/education/ 'India's gross enrolment in higher education rose marginally in 2019-20' published in *Business Standard* on 11th June, 2021.
- ⁶ Khan Babar Ali, *Quality Improvement of Higher Education in India*, *International Journal of Science and Research*, pp. 2167-2171.
- ⁷ www.economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/india "Nearly 0.7 pc of GDP spent on R&D, strengthening of S&T infra from 2014-15 to 2018-19: Govt" published in *The Economic Times* on 10th August, 2021
- ⁸ www.thehindu.com/ "Need for re-orientation" which was published in *The Hindu* on 20th March, 2020.