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An overview of Higher Education in India**Vishwas**

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Abstract

While our country is still focusing on the elementary education and giving emphasis to access, retention and achievement, the higher education is also facing multiple challenges. These challenges cannot be met in a fortnight and may not occur as a direct response to the call of accountability and transparency. The purpose of higher education, the role of colleges and universities, the recent scientific researches; all this has already been taken in view while deciding the policies and amendments but still not much improvement has been seen in the higher education system in India. Keeping this in consideration, the present paper seeks to find the status of higher education system in India and other countries. Also, the researcher has suggested some possible recommendations to make higher education system more efficient and eradicate its shortcomings.

Keywords: Accountability, Achievement, Higher Education, Transparency

Introduction

"We can do better in higher education. And it is more than just technology. It's also an attitude on the part of faculty. We need to think through how we can produce a better quality product at less cost"

~Roy Romer

With the advent of Right to Education Act, 2009; we are focusing on elementary education and struggling for it, the improvement in the higher education remains a distant dream. In ancient India, two important centers of higher learning were at Taxila, Nalanda and Vikramasila. At the initial stage, these institutions were only the associations of sages and their disciples who lived and studied together. Also, they later developed into well-organized academic institutions of higher education and became gradually the largest centers of learning in Asia. The subjects of study at Taxila were the three Vedas, grammar, philosophy and eighteen sippas were the principal subjects selected for specialization. Among other subjects were medicine, surgery, astronomy, astrology, accountancy, archery and allied military arts, commerce, divination, agriculture, magic, snake charming, the art of finding treasures, music, dancing and painting. It is said that most probably, Taxila perished in the fifth century A.D. Nalanda, a center of Buddhist learning, was not destroyed until the end of the twelfth century. The students here also studied the Vedas, Upanishads and sacred books of Jainism. During the medieval period, the Madrasas were established as institutions of higher education by Muslim conquerors of India. The medium of instruction here was Arabic and Persian literature was also studied here. The curriculum included religious as well as secular education while the teaching methods comprised of lecture method and self-study (Altekar, 1957). We can still see the influence of the Madrasas in higher education in India.

Historically, if we look in the past of Indian Education System; the Indian university movement took concrete shape with coming of the famous Wood's Despatch, 1854 (also known as the Magna Carta of Indian Education). The three provincial universities at Calcutta, Madras and Bombay were founded by

the immediate effect of this Despatch. Sir Charles Wood, then President of the Board of Control of the East India Company, forwarded to India from London a plan for "creating a properly articulated scheme of education, from the primary school to the university." These Universities were modeled on the lines of the London University. They examined students, granted affiliation to colleges, conducted examinations and conferred degrees and diplomas (Johri& Pathak, 2014)

After independence, the number of universities and students receiving education increased so; to reorganize university education according to the new demands of the country the University Education Commission was appointed. The Commission made a full-fledged study of the various dimensions of the University education and made important recommendation about improving them. But still, when we look at the present scenario we find that the higher education constitutes merely 0.37 per cent of the country's gross domestic product (GDP) as compared to 1.41 per cent in the US, 1.07 per cent in the UK and 0.50 percent in China. At the same level of India are the countries like Japan and Korea, where more than 80 per cent of students are in largely unsubsidized private institutions. According to the news published in *IndiaToday* (6 Sept., 2017) there is no Indian University in the top 200 list of the World University Ranking. The World University Ranking is the only global university performance table to judge research-intensive universities across their entire core missions like teaching, research, knowledge transfer and international outlook.

Objectives:

The following objectives can be stated-

1. To explore about the status of higher education system in India and other countries.
2. To suggest some possible recommendations to make higher education system more efficient and eradicate its shortcomings.

Higher Education in other countries

In the United States, the regulations and procedures for establishing an institution of higher education are determined by each state. A higher education institution is considered as a post-secondary education institution which offers programs that will lead to a higher degree. It includes two and four-year duration programs in public and private colleges and universities. Depending on the degree level a student is pursuing, the institution must meet the required hours of course instruction per semester and faculty members also need to have certain educational qualifications. A faculty member who teaches at the undergraduate level is required to have at least a master's degree from an accredited institution. The Department of Education requires that the library and its resources play a large role in students' education, have an up-to-date, diverse, and accessible collection of resources, with a system of acquiring new resources with regard to the Library and Learning Resources section. The library must have qualified staff, must be of adequate size and should provide for the needs of the student body. In context of finances, the institution should provide a list of all projected expenses and sources of income should be included in a five-year plan. The projected expenses of this five-year plan include instructor, administrator and support service, and other expected expenses and projected sources of income include tuition, funds from fundraising, gifts and grants, borrowed amounts, and other expected expenses. The institution must have the resources to continue the program/s for a minimum of five years (Siva, G.S. & Hariharan, N.P., 2016).

At the present times, UK currently exercises post-study employment regulations in the strict manner. In fact, UK has made a series of reforms made on student migration and possibly sending mixed signals regarding its frankness to receive international students. It has also resulted in a growing irresolution amongst Indian and other international students. A decline in the popularity of UK universities among Indian students has been reported that has shown a significant drop of nearly 30

percent in applications from Indian students in the courses offered by reputed universities including the Cambridge and Oxford Universities. Matters have only deteriorated in recent times with the crisis involving the withdrawal of the 'highly trusted sponsor' status of the London Metropolitan University (LMU).

Germany, being a popular educational destination, offers various courses in higher education programs. In fact, Germany holds a significant position after UK and US when it comes to receiving applications from international students. It has the excellent educational system, experienced and renowned faculty and also has diversity in subjects that grasps the interests of international students to come for studies. Germany has a multiplicity of universities like Universities of Applied Sciences, Universities of Technology, B-schools, Law colleges and Universities offering social sciences and language courses. A wide diversity of institutions helps students to choose the best course fulfilling their needs. Universities of Applied Sciences will prove useful for gaining practical knowledge and if students wish to gain theoretical knowledge, then Universities of Technology will be apt (Brindha, Kumar, Rickman 2015).

The aim of Singaporean education system is to provide students with a holistic and broad-based education. The bilingual policy is a key feature of the Singapore's education system; also it has multi-cultural and multi-racial characteristics. Every student has to learn English, under the bilingual policy which is the common working language there. The students' mother tongue language is Chinese, Malay or Tamil which helps them to retain their ethnic heritage, identity, values and culture. In fact, it is the aim of the Ministry of Education to help their students so that they can discover and make the best of their own talents, realize their full potential, to develop a passion for learning that lasts through life. Their education system has become more flexible and diverse in recent years. Students are provided with greater choice to choose their ways of learning according to their varied interests. By being in the power to choose what and how they learn will encourage them to take a large possession of their learning. Singapore is giving their students an all-round, more broad-based education which ensures their holistic development both in and out of the classroom (Venkatesh, 2012)

Programmes for Higher Education in India

Global Initiative of Academic Networks (GIAN): Global Initiative of Academic Networks (GIAN) in Higher Education is a programme launched on 30th November, 2015 to acquire the best international experience into our systems of education, enable interaction of students and faculty with the best academic and industry experts from all over the world. Under this programme the international faculty would conduct one week or two week course at an Indian institution. The upper limit of overall expenditure allowed for each such course is \$8000 for 12-14 hours and \$12000 for 20-28 hours course. A GIAN Implementation Committee headed by Secretary (HE), Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) has been constituted to finalize and approve various courses and also decide on budget allocation. Till 31st March, 2016, 1248 course proposals were received from over 160 institutions in the country, out of which 403 have already been approved. Collaboration with over 40 countries is going on to attract the best international talent. All such courses are also expected to be transmitted online and/or video recorded for others to view later through the local and national GIAN portal and the National Digital Library.

The Unnat Bharat Abhiyan (UBA) program was formally launched by Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) in November, 2014. It aims to influence the process of sustainable rural development with effective support from institutes of higher education. It is inspired by the vision of transformational change in rural development processes by influencing institutions to help build the structure of an Inclusive India. It is a process that connects institutes of higher education with local

community's to address the development challenges of rural India which also accelerates sustainable growth through participatory processes and appropriate technologies. Under this program, professional and higher educational institutions of the country are to be involved in the development of self-sufficient and sustainable village clusters in accordance with the notion of Gram Swaraj propounded by Mahatma Gandhi.

Legislative & Policy Reform: To meet the present challenge and restructure the Higher Education system, various legislative & policy reform are being taken which include: IIT Act, 2014 was notified in Gazette of India (Extraordinary) Part II Section 1 (Act 30 of 2014) on 8th December, 2014 and came into force w.e.f. 5th January, 2015. Grants statutory status to the four existing Indian Institutes of Information Technology (IIITs) at Allahabad, Gwalior, Jabalpur and Kancheepuram and bring them under a single umbrella.

IMPRINT (para 6 on p.12. p.110)

IMPacting Research INnovation and Technology (IMPRINT) is a flagship national initiative of the Government, launched by the President, Prime Minister and Human Resource Minister on November 5, 2015 which aims at providing and addressing solutions to the most relevant engineering challenges faced by the nation by the means of translating knowledge into viable technology (products or processes) in selected technology domains to enable, empower and embolden the nation for inclusive growth and self-reliance. It is a joint initiative of IITs and IISc to develop a roadmap for research. The domain areas identified for the focus of the IMPRINT Initiative are as follows: (1) health care, (2) energy, (3) sustainable habitat, (4) nano technology hardware, (5) water resources and river systems, (6) advanced materials, (7) Information and Communication technology, (8) manufacturing, (9) security and defence, and (10) environmental science and climate change. IIT Kanpur is the National Coordinator of this Initiative. A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) has been signed between 25 Participating Ministries/Departments on 31st March, 2016 to ensure that a coordinated action is taken to support research under IMPRINT.

Ishan Uday - Special Scholarship Scheme for North Eastern Region:

The UGC has launched a special programme called 'Ishan Uday' for improving the Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER), promoting higher education and for encouraging children belonging to Economically Weaker Sections (EWS) of the North Eastern region. It is envisaged to provide 10,000 fresh scholarships every year beginning from 2014-15 for General Degree courses, Technical and Professional courses including Medical and Para-medical. Students having domicile of NER and who have passed Class XII or equivalent exam from a school situated within NER through any recognized Board of Education including CBSE, ICSE, NIOS within NER only and have secured admission in General Degree courses, and Para-medical courses (integrated courses included) in Universities/Colleges/Institutions recognized by UGC under Section 2(f) of the UGC Act, within or outside the States of NER will be eligible for availing the scholarship under the scheme, the income of parents should not exceed 4.5 lakh per annum. An amount of Rs. 5400 per month for the general degree courses and Rs. 7800 per month for technical and professional courses (including medical and paramedical courses) will be given through Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) to the beneficiary students.

Ishan Vikas: Ishan Vikas is a comprehensive plan to bring selected school children from the North-Eastern states into close contact with the IITs, IISERs and NIAS during their vacation periods to motivate them to pursue science, technology, engineering and mathematics and to encourage internship for the engineering college students of North-Eastern states in various institutes of national importance.

Apex Bodies of Higher Education in India**A) Regulatory Bodies****(i) University Grants Commission (UGC)**

UGC is a statutory organization established by an Act of Parliament in 1956 for the promotion and coordination of University Education and for the determination of teaching, examination, research and extension in Universities and maintenance of standards. Apart from providing grants to universities and colleges, the Commission also advises the Central and State Governments on the measures necessary for development of higher education. It functions from New Delhi as well as through its six Regional Offices located in Hyderabad, Bangalore, Guwahati, Kolkata, Bhopal and Pune.

ii) All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE)

All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) has a view to ensure proper planning and coordinated development of the technical education system throughout the country. It ascertains qualitative improvement of technical education in context to planned qualitative growth and proper maintenance of norms and standards in the technical education system and for matters connected with it.

iii) Council of Architecture, New Delhi

Council of Architecture (COA) has been constituted by the Government of India under the provisions of the Architects Act, 1972, enacted by Parliament. It came into force on September 1, 1972 and provides for registration of Architects and matters connected there with. The COA, oversees the maintenance of standards, periodically of recognized qualifications under the Act by way of conducting inspection through Committees of Experts, besides maintaining a Register of Architects. Based on the inspections, the COA can make representation to appropriate Governments with regard to inadequacy of standards maintained by the institutions. The Central Government after further inquiry as deemed fit and keeping in view the comments of the appropriate Governments and the architecture institutions is required to take decision regarding notifying derecognition of the architectural qualification. The recommendations of the COA are taken before any architectural qualification is notified as recognized under the Act by the Central Government.

B) Research Councils**i) Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR), New Delhi**

The Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR) was established by Government of India, in the year 1969. The ICSSR an autonomous organization has Six Regional Centres and provides maintenance and development grant to 25 Research Institutes. Under its 'International Collaboration Programme' the ICSSR has instituted bilateral collaboration and research networking in the field of social sciences with a number of countries under the framework of Cultural Exchange Programmes (CEP)/ Educational Exchange Programmes (EEP)/ Bi lateral/ Multi lateral Programmes. Besides this, it is also associated with several International Agencies – International Federation of Social Science Organizations (IFSSO), Association of Asian Social Science Research Councils (AASSREC), International Social Science Council (ISSC), Science Council of Asia (SCA), UNESCO, etc. The ICSSR organizes International & National Seminars/Conferences in India in order to promote social sciences research and provides financial assistance for the same.

ii) Indian Council of Philosophical Research (ICPR), New Delhi

The Indian Council of Philosophical Research was set up by the Government of India, as a registered society in March 1977 under the Societies Registration Act, 1860. However, it actually started functioning in July 1981. The Council was set up with the following main aims and objectives such as: (i) to review the progress of research in Philosophy from time to time; (ii) to sponsor or assist projects or programmes of research in Philosophy; (iii) to give financial support to institutions and organizations engaged in the conduct of research in Philosophy; (iv) to provide technical assistance or guidance for the

formulation of research projects and programmes in Philosophy, by individuals or institutions, and/or organize and support institutional or other arrangements for training in research methodology; and (v) to indicate periodically areas in and topics on which research in Philosophy should be promoted and to adopt special measures for the development of research in neglected or developing areas in Philosophy.

iii) Indian Council of Historical Research (ICHR)

Indian Council of Historical Research (ICHR) was established under Societies Registration Act (Act XXI of 1860) in 1972. It is an autonomous organization whose prime objective is to give a proper direction to historical research and to encourage and foster objective and scientific writing of history. The broad aims of the Council are to bring historians together, provide a forum for exchange of views between them, give a national direction to an objective and rational presentation/interpretation of history, to sponsor historical research programmes and projects and to assist institutions and organizations engaged in historical research. It has a broad view of history so as to include in its fold the history of Science and Technology, Economy, Art, Literature, Philosophy, Epigraphy, Numismatics, Archaeology, Socio-Economic formation processes and allied subjects containing strong historical bias and contents.

iv) National Council of Rural Institutes (NCRI), Hyderabad

The National Council of Rural Institutes (NCRI) is an autonomous organization under the Ministry as per the Programme of Action (PoA) on National Policy on Education (NPE)-1986. It was established in 1995 to promote Rural Higher Education on the lines of Mahatma Gandhi's revolutionary ideas on education as per NPE, consolidate network and develop Rural Institutes and endow them for recognition, develop Rural Institutes into Regional Development Institutes and Rural Universities, regulate the quality of education of rural institutes and educational programmes in the area of rural higher education of all the Universities in India. The Council is also supposed to design a variety of courses at the tertiary level around emerging rural occupations, strengthen teacher training facilities for Gandhian Basic Education, strengthen the content of all rural institutions with emphasis on science, technology and management on the one hand and traditional wisdom on the other, promote vocational training programmes and initiatives for self-reliance and advise the Government on all such matters pertaining to rural institutes as may be referred from time to time.

Status of Higher Education in India

The sixth report on *All India Survey on Higher Education 2015-16* provides data on higher education in higher education sector. According to it the "higher education institutions are categorized into 3 broad Categories; University, College and Stand-Alone Institutions. There are 799 Universities, 39071 colleges and 11923 Stand Alone Institutions listed on AISHE web portal and out of them 754 Universities, 33903 Colleges and 7154 Stand Alone Institutions have responded during the survey. 268 Universities are affiliating i.e. having Colleges. 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, Uttarakhand 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. College density, i.e. the number of colleges per lakh eligible population (population in the age-group 18-23 years) varies from 7 in Bihar to 60 in Telangana as compared to All India average of 28.60%

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. There are 40% Colleges, which run only single programme, out of which 75% are privately managed. Among these, 30% colleges run B.Ed. Courses only. 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%. Distance enrolment constitutes about 11.05% of the total enrolment in higher education, of which 46.3% are female students. 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. Maximum numbers of Students are enrolled in B.A. programme followed by B.Sc. and B.Com. programmes. Only 10 Programmes out of approximately 180 cover 83% of the total students enrolled in higher education. At Undergraduate level the highest number (40%) of students is enrolled in Arts/Humanities/Social Sciences courses followed by Science (16%), Engineering and Technology (15.6%) and Commerce (14.1%). At Ph.D. level, maximum number of students is enrolled in Science stream followed by Engineering and Technology. On the other hand at Post Graduate level maximum students are enrolled in Social Science stream and Management comes at number two. Uttar Pradesh comes at number one with the highest student enrolment followed by Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu. Scheduled Castes students constitute 13.9% and Scheduled Tribes students 4.9% of the total enrolment. 33.75% students belong to Other Backward Classes. 4.7% students belong to Muslim Minority and 1.97% from other Minority Community. The total number of foreign students enrolled in higher education is 45,424. The foreign students come from 165 different countries from across the globe. The top 10 countries constitute 62% of the total foreign students enrolled."*

Skill Development by the means of Higher Education

In the Sargent Committee Report of 1944, the defects of University Education System are mentioned which states that in University education much emphasis is given to examinations and incapable students are admitted who do not have the aptitude for higher studies. Also, the failure of students here is much more as compared to other countries. Thus, we elucidate that the defects that were before independence are existing even after so many years of the Sargent Committee Report which clearly implies that not much improvement has been done to eradicate the defects of the education system of Universities. The students are just gaining degrees but not the education which can develop their skills. Hence, the question arises that how should we develop skills among students in our country? What methodology and procedures should they follow? Should some special schemes and programmes to be initiated or is there a need to revise the existing ones? The students need to learn skills- based education which is productive and can help them in future. In this regard, we can again go back to past and revitalize Gandhiji's Basic system of education which encourages skill- based and productive work.

Aspirations from Higher Education

In India, it is most important to restoring the credibility of higher education. India needs to work towards the collaboration of its academic standards with internationally accepted practices so that it can attain global recognition of its courses and qualifications. In India while we have made domestic rules and quite investment-friendly and forward-looking, but still the loopholes in the existing system need to

be plucked out to enhance the credibility of an academic qualification. In totality, the country requires innovative and forward- looking policies on higher education. Still, there is a need for investment and coordination both from public and private sources in Indian higher education in which the private sources could even be foreign sources. At present times, our country needs an environment that is friendly for more domestic as well as foreign competition which would require a review of the regulatory arrangements and adopting a pragmatic approach.

Suggestions

The following suggestions can be stated for higher education system in India which is as follows:

1. To upgrade higher education and research programmes, measures will have to be taken to refine, diversify and prioritize it.
2. A strong connection between industry and academia is necessary to ensure that curriculum and skills are in coordination with the requirements.
3. Teachers and researchers need to be provided incentives so that these professions can attract more young talent.
4. Efforts should be made to improve the innovative practices in accordance with the existing strengths so that a new understanding of research-innovation linkage can be formulated.
5. To mobilize resources in higher education, effective measures should be taken up so that decline in resources could not affect the learning of students.
6. The advent of Information Age and development of communication has opened new facets for attaining education by means of higher studies, so demand of continuing education and distance education can be fulfilled by it.
7. To bring quality in education, public-private partnership (PPP) should be ensured so that it can provide high-tech industries with skilled workers.
8. The need based job-oriented courses should be provided keeping in view the future of the students.
9. International cooperation for the advancement and transmission of knowledge through research, innovation, teaching, human resource development etc. can also help in enhancing prospects for the students.
10. Examination reforms should also be implemented, gradually shifting from the terminal, annual and semester examinations to regular and continuous assessment.

Conclusion

In the end, we can conclude that even after so many years of independence and the framing of Commissions the higher education in India is still in the need of a drastic reform. The policymakers and Government both should guard against unintended effects in framing of policy's reforms and should coordinate policy actions. Also, the reservation system in promoting access to higher education should be inhibited and instead of that students with more need and aptitude for higher education should be taken into consideration. For improving quality of higher education the policy makers should consider the historical, social, economic, political and cultural characteristics of the country. India is a multicultural society so we should not blindly follow the action plans of other countries and compare ourselves with them.

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