

RECENT TRENDS IN HIGHER EDUCATION SECTOR IN INDIA: ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

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The Third world countries were still facing socio-economic problems like poverty, unemployment, inflation, regional imbalances, low productivity, low incomes, lack of food security etc. Education sector plays a vital role in overall development of the any country. Especially, development of Higher Education Sector is the key to growth of the economy.

Like other developing countries, in India, Education sector plays an important role in the development of the country. Government of India has allowed 100% Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in the education sector through the automatic route since 2002. From April 2000 to June 2021, Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) equity flows stood at US\$ 6,154.87 million. In India, EdTech Market is expected to reach US\$ 3.5 billion by 2022. Higher Education sector contributes is significantly to the development the country through skills and intellectual capabilities of highly educated people like eminent Academicians, Professors, Scientists, Researchers, Engineers, Doctors, Economists, Entrepreneurs, IT and Management Professionals etc.

Since last two, three years entire the world facing the Covid-19 pandemic problem. The impact of Covid-19 can be seen in every sphere of life. The out break of the Covid-19 has forced many big countries to enforce lock down that brought everything to standstill including teaching and learning process. In India, the education sector suffered most due to this pandemic. This pandemic has made the world to observe physical distancing and social distancing in the public place. Covid-19, was first identified in Wuhan City, China in November 2019 and then it gradually started spreading other parts of the world. It was only in 2020, the World Health Organisation (WHO) declared it as pandemic. It has claimed millions of lives across the world

According to the UNSECO Report, more than 90 per cent of total student population in the world was affected due to this pandemic during the initial phases of its outbreak. It has caused a serious and very deep rooted impact on the social, economic and also psychological life of people in the different parts of the world. Due to guidelines of WHO, most of the countries in the world to shut down the institutions of mass gatherings. So along with all educational institutions the academic year end exams and also competitive exams were postpone indefinitely. This step was taken in order to slow down and contain the spread of Corona virus in India by segregating the people who were infected with Covid-19. This process is came to known as Lockdown, in this the Government had imposed severe restrictions on the movement and gathering of the people in order to control the Spread of Corona virus. So ultimately in this process all the educational institutions suffered a massive setback in India. All the educational institutions in India had to be closed down right from primary schools to universities, all the educational institutions in India had to be closed down. The regular classes were suspended citing threat to the lives of the learners and teachers. It also affected the lives of aspirants who are preparing the competitive and entrance exams.

The economy has suffered severe setback which can be reflected in different sectors. It is led sudden shift of education from classroom teaching to the online mode of teaching and learning that has affected the teaching and learning process in Universities, colleges and schools and thus it had significantly disrupted the higher education sector in India. This shift in education has bought a great change in the pattern of the learning with certain advantages and disadvantages.

The country like India, the online teaching has registered devastating effect on the lives of those students, who are under privileged and coming from very poor economic background. In India, it has also brought some severe effects on the conventional learning process of face to face interaction even when some technical aid introduced in the class rooms and also it is important to note that there are still some educational institutions in India which are not well equipped with modern technological facilities in the class rooms. That's why we can say that with the introduction of new method of learning through the digital mode of learning, leaning became very easy to the students as they can sit at home and get access, but same time some student also had to face the problem due to the poor internet connectivity which brings to the notice that even after India is

adapting to online learning methods, still there lies an obstacles as entire population do no have access to internet and E-learning facility. Rural people are still deprived to technology. Therefore, it is important understand that there are positive and negative impact on Indian society. It include online classes, online assignments and online examinations etc., consequently it give the birth to online meeting and teaching apps like Zoom, Google Meet, Jio Meet and Webex Meet etc. During the pandemic time valuable inputs like E-Gyankosh, Gyandhara,Swayam are developed in Education sector. One of them is online teaching method. It creates the new dimensions in the teaching in future. As we can see, the Post Covid-19 period will demand too much from the ICT in education system. The evaluation system would be also changed according to changes in education system.

Gross Enrolment Ratio in India Pre-Pandemic Period

Gross enrolment ratio in higher education recorded at 27.1 percent in 2019-20, slightly higher from 26.3 percent in 2018-19. For males, it has also increased from 26.3 percent in 2018-19 to 26.9 percent in 2019-20, while for females it has increased from 26.4 percent to 27.3 percent respectively. Following Table-1, indicates volatility in Gross Enrolment Ratios in Higher Education in India during 2013 to 2020. Gross Enrolment Ratio in Males (23.9%) slight lower than Females(25.3%) in 2013-14 and in year 2015-16 GER in Males increased to 26.9% and GER in Females dropped to 22.0%. In the year 2019-20, there is rise in both Male and Female GERs. Where as Overall GER increased from 25.4 per cent in 2013-14 to 27.1 per cent in 2019-20

Table-1: Gross Enrolment Ratio in Higher Education in India 2013 – 2020
(for age 18 to 23 years)

| Year | Male (Per cent) | Female (Per cent) | Overall (Per cent) |
|---------|-----------------|-------------------|--------------------|
| 2013-14 | 23.9 | 25.3 | 25.4 |
| 2014-15 | 26.0 | 26.3 | 26.3 |
| 2015-16 | 26.9 | 22.0 | 23.2 |
| 2016-17 | 23.5 | 24.5 | 25.4 |
| 2017-18 | 26.4 | 27.3 | 23.0 |
| 2018-19 | 24.3 | 24.5 | 25.2 |
| 2019-20 | 25.8 | 26.3 | 27.1 |

Source: All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) report 2019-20, Ministry of Education, Government of India.

To unlock the demographic dividend, several steps have been taken to increase the skill levels in population. Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) 2019-20 shows that formal vocational / technical training among youth (age 15-29 years) and working population (age 15-59 years) have improved in 2019-20 over 2018-19. The improvement in skills has also been for males and females, both in rural and urban sectors. However, formal training for males and females is lower in rural than in urban areas. Following table indicate that thing.

Table-2: Distribution of Persons received formal vocational/technical training (in percent)

| Year | Age Group | Rural | Urban | All India | Male | Female | Total | Male | Female | Total |
|---------|-----------|-------|-------|-----------|------|--------|-------|------|--------|-------|
| 2017-18 | 15-29 | .0 | .3 | .7 | .6 | .2 | .4 | .8 | .2 | .5 |
| | 15-59 | .5 | .9 | .2 | .0 | .3 | .7 | .3 | .7 | .0 |
| 2018-19 | 15-29 | .4 | .5 | .0 | .8 | .6 | .7 | .2 | .5 | .8 |
| | 15-59 | .8 | .1 | .5 | .9 | .9 | .4 | .8 | .0 | .4 |

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|-------------|------|----|----|----|---------|----|----|----|----|---------|
| 2 019-20 | 5-29 | .1 | .7 | .9 | 2 .0 | .5 | .8 | .3 | .8 | 3 .1 |
| | 5-59 | .2 | .7 | .0 | 2 .3 | .4 | .8 | .5 | .9 | 2 .2 |

Source: Annual PLFS Reports, 2017-18 to 2019-20 and Economic Survey 2021-22

As per the report of first quarter (April-June, 2021) of Quarterly Employment Survey (QES) in respect of establishments employing at least 10 workers in major nine sectors, 17.9 percent of estimated establishments were imparting formal skill training. Sectors such as IT/BPO imparted skill training in 29.8 percent of estimated establishments, followed by 22.6 percent financial services and 21.1 percent education sector's establishments. Further, about 24.3 percent estimated establishments were found to be imparting 'On-the-Job' training, which is higher in IT/ BPO sector (36.1 percent of establishments) and financial services sector (34.8 percent).

New Education Policy 2020

The implementation previous policies on education (NPE 1986 and NPE 1992) has mainly focused on issues of access and equity with a lesser emphasis on quality of education. The unfinished agenda of the National Policy on Education 1986 and it was modified in 1992 (NPE 1986/1992) is appropriately dealt with in the New Education Policy. The New Education Policy is introduced after 34 years from the last Education Policy i.e., the National Educational Policy 2020 (NEP-2020). A major development of since the last Education Policy of 1986 or 1992 has been the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act 2009, which laid down the legal underpinnings for achieving universal elementary education.

The Union Cabinet on 31st July, 2020 gave nod to India's new education policy – The National Educational Policy 2020, which provides for major reforms in higher education, increased focus on non-academic skills and increased inclusion through language diversity and course fluidity. The union cabinet approved a new educational policy after 34 years. This policy (NPE 2020) aims to facilitate an inclusive, participatory and holistic approach, which takes into consideration field experiences, empirical research, stake holder feedback, as well as lessons learned from best practices. This policy is meant to provide overarching vision (360° flexibility) and comprehensive framework for both School and Higher Education across the country.

With the National Educational Policy 2020 coming to effect, there is a hope to transform education and putting a significant thrust on learning about how to think critically and solve the problems; how to be innovative, adapt and absorb new material in novel and changing fields. The new curricula will include basic arts, crafts, games, humanities, sports and fitness, language, literature, culture and values in addition to science and capabilities of learners and make education more effective, useful, well rounded and fulfilling to the learner and it will be learner centric policy. The Policy NEP 2020 based on the following principles. They are flexibility, multi-disciplinary, no hard separation, focus on conceptual understanding, emphasis on creativity and critical thinking, stress on ethics and human values, life skills, regular formative assessment for learning rather than the summative assessment, respect for the local context, full equity and inclusion, resource efficiency, light but tight oversight and regulatory system, continuous policy, education is a public service, substantial investment and the vision this policy. The National Education Policy 2020 aims to building a global best education system, which is rooted in Indian ethos and aligned with the principles enunciated above, thereby transforming India into a global knowledge power. This policy (NEP 2020) divided into four major sections; they are school education, higher education, and other key areas on focus, make it happen reforms at school level.

Recent Initiatives undertaken by Government of India

Government has taken multiple initiatives aimed at revolutionizing the higher education ecosystem by (i) enabling higher vocationalisation, (ii) greater multi-disciplinary research, (iii) providing multiple entry and exit points, (iv) promoting globalisation of education, (v) leveraging the potential of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in teaching and learning process for all learners. For integration of vocational education into the higher education system, University Grant Commission (Institutions Deemed to be University) Regulation 2019 has been amended; and

guidelines have been issued by UGC and All India Council for Technical Education to enable Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) to offer Apprenticeship/Internship embedded degree programme and National Apprenticeship Training Scheme (NATS) has been extended for the next five years with an outlay of Rs.3054 crore which will make, through apprenticeship, around 9 lakh students employable. Under the scheme students will be given apprenticeship in the emerging and frontier technology such as Artificial Intelligence, drone technology, new evolving and emergent areas including expertise required for Production Linked Incentive Scheme, and PM Gati Shakti Programme of the Government. The scope of the NATS has been broadened to give apprentices to students from humanities, commerce and science besides engineering stream. Academic Bank of Credit, launched on 29.07.2021, would digitally store the academic credits earned from various recognized Higher Educational Institutions (HEI) such that credits so earned can be accounted for award of degree by any given HEI. Appropriate amendments in regulations by University Grants Commission (UGC) have been affected to facilitate multiple entry/exit in academic programmes at HEIs and offering of offshore courses by Institutions of Eminence (IOE). Under Social Infrastructure and Employment, 361 e-PGPathshala with 154 Universities have come on board for accepting credit transfer for courses offered through SWAYAM platform till now, thereby boosting mainstreaming of Massive Online Open Courses (MOOCs). In this regard, the e-PGPathshala has been offered as an Online Gateway of Post Graduate Courses; 778 papers, with 23000 plus e-modules in 67 Subjects have been developed, out of which 23 subjects cover the entire syllabus/curriculum. Due to COVID-19 induced lockdown and restrictions, ePGPathshala website has been used widely across all Universities and several Universities have used ePGPathshala content as a flip class room. Apart from that, Unnat Bharat Abhiyan (UBA) has been launched to cater the rural local needs by leveraging higher education. The objective of the scheme is to engage reputed higher educational institutions (central and state; public and private) to understand and work in rural areas. As of now 2897 institutions are participating and they have adopted close to 14500 villages. To address the issue of access to higher education by students from weaker sections, scholarship schemes (such as Central Sector Scheme of Scholarship for College and University Students which has benefited over 1.5 lakh students in 2021-22 as of November, Special Scholarship Scheme for J&K which has benefited close to 15000 students in 2021-22 as of November) have been operationalized.

NEP-2020 and Its Targets and Initiatives taken by Government of India

Re-imagining vocational education Initiatives/targets. At least 50 percent of school learners to get exposure to vocational education by 2025. Considering students in vocational education while arriving at the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) targets. Secondary schools to collaborate with ITIs, polytechnics, local industry. Setting up of Skill labs and creating hub & spoke model in the schools to allow other schools to use the facility. To offer vocational education by higher education institutions or in partnership with industry and NGOs. Offering vocational courses to students enrolled in all other Bachelor's degree programmes, including the 4-year multidisciplinary Bachelor's programmes. Social Infrastructure and Employment 363. Higher educational institutions to conduct short-term certificate courses in various skills including soft skills. Making vocational knowledge developed - 'Lok Vidya' to students through integration into vocational education courses. Vocational courses through Open Distance Learning (ODL) mode. Integrating vocational education into all school and higher education institutions in a phased manner over the next decade. Ministry of Education to constitute a National Committee for the Integration of Vocational Education (NCIVE), consisting of experts in vocational education and representatives from across Ministries, in collaboration with industry, to oversee this effort. Setting up incubation centres in higher education institutions in partnership with industries. National Skills Qualifications Framework for each discipline vocation and profession. Aligning Indian standards to the International Standard Classification of Occupations maintained by the International Labour Organization. Skill India Mission Launched in 2015, Skill India Mission focuses on re-skilling and up-skilling in prominent trades. Under the Mission government implements Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY), Jan Shikshan Sansthan (JSS) Scheme and National Apprenticeship Promotion Scheme (NAPS), for providing short term Skill Development training and Craftsman Training Scheme

(CTS), for long term training, to the youth. Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY) PMKVY has two training components, viz., Short Term Training (STT) and Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL). Between 2016-17 and 2021-22 (as on 15 January 2022), under PMKVY 2.0 about 1.10 crore persons were trained (inclusive of the placement-linked and non-placement-linked components of the PMKVY): 83 percent certified and about 21 lakhs placed. In 2021-22, under PMKVY 3.0, 3.48 lakh persons have been trained: 50 percent certified and 16,321 placed. Under Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Kendras (PMKKs), from 2016- 17 to 2021-22, 16.35 lakh persons were trained and over 78 percent of them were certified. PMKVY also provided training to Shramiks (migrant labourers) affected by COVID-19. This component covered 116 districts of 6 States, viz., Assam, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh. As on 15.01.2022, 1.26 lakh migrants have been trained / oriented (0.88 lakh in STT and 0.38 lakh in RPL). Several micro-programmes under PMKVY have also been formulated for targeting artisans' clusters in partnership with private sector, also to ensure employment to all artisans. Special project has been launched to revive the traditional Namda craft of Jammu & Kashmir and upskilling of Weavers & Artisans of traditional crafts of Nagaland and Jammu and Kashmir. Jan Shikshan Sansthan (JSS) Scheme JSS aims to provide vocational skills to non-literate, neo-literates, persons with rudimentary level of education up to 8th and school dropouts up to 12th standard in the age group of 15-45 years. The priority groups are women, SC, ST, minorities, divyangjan and other backward sections of the society. The Jan Shikshan Sansthans work at the doorstep of the beneficiaries with minimum infrastructure and resources. Under the scheme grant is released to Jan Shikshan Sansthans (NGOs) for Skill Development. National Apprenticeship Promotion Scheme (NAPS) This Scheme promotes apprenticeship training and the engagement of apprentices by providing financial support to industrial establishments undertaking apprenticeship program under The Apprentices Act, 1961. As on 31 October 2021, 4.3 lakh apprentices engaged under the scheme. Craftsmen Training Scheme (CTS) CTS is for providing long-term training in 137 trades through 14,604 Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs) across the country. For session 2020, 13.36 lakh trainees were enrolled. Aatmanirbhar Skilled Employees Employer Mapping (ASEEM) portal 10.44 ASEEM, a digital platform, created to match supply of skilled workforce with the market demand, acts as a directory of skilled workforce. As on 31.12.2021, 1.38 crore candidates have been registered on the portal including candidates registered on Skill India Portal (SIP). As on 31.12.2021, around 26.7 lakh migrant's data/profile are also available on the portal. The Portal consists of three IT based AI (artificial intelligence) driven interfaces for stakeholder interactions: A job application for individuals with access to hyper local jobs using machine learning and automated match based on personal. Indian International Skill Centre (IISC) Network is catering to the needs of foreign countries where Indian manpower is in demand. The IISC Network is a fee-based market driven model; based on global workforce supply and demand dynamics. It provides incremental skill training on international standards and assessment of skills for overseas employment. India has agreements with Germany, Belarus, United Kingdom, France, Australia, Japan and Qatar in the field of apprentices/training. Pradhan Mantri Dakshta Aur Kushalta Sampann Hitgrahi Yojana (PM-DAKSH) 10.46 PM-DAKSH Yojana is a national action plan for skilling of marginalized persons including scheduled castes, backward classes and safai karamcharis. The eligible target group are being Social Infrastructure and Employment 365 provided skill development training programmes on (i) up-skilling/re-skilling (ii) short term training programme (iii) long term training programme and (iv) entrepreneurship development program. During the year 2021-22, a target has been set to provide skill development training to approximately 50,000 persons of the target groups.

Conclusion

Like other developing countries, in India, Education sector plays an important role in the development of the country. Since last two, three years entire the world facing the Covid-19 pandemic problem. India also passed through the three waves of pandemic Covid-19. During first two phases of Covid-19, some sectors are badly effected due to the lockdown, loss of employment, loss of livelihood, migration of labour etc. Education Sector also badly effected from the pandemic close down of schools, colleges, universities and other educational institutions. During the Covid period, educational institutions started new trend in teaching through Online teaching. During the

pandemic time valuable inputs are developed in Education sector. One of them is online teaching method. It creates the new dimensions in the teaching in future. As we can see, the Post Covid-19 period will demand too much from the ICT in education system. The evaluation system would be also changed according to changes in education system. Skill development efforts of the Government aim at the removal of disconnect between demand and supply of skilled manpower, building the vocational and technical training framework, skill up-gradation, building of new skills and innovative thinking not only for existing jobs but also jobs that are to be created.

With the National Educational Policy 2020 coming to effect, there is a hope to transform education and putting a significant thrust on learning about how to think critically and solve the problems; how to be innovative, adapt and absorb new material in novel and changing fields. The new curricula will include basic arts, crafts, games, humanities, sports and fitness, language, literature, culture and values in addition to science and capabilities of learners and make education more effective, useful, well rounded and fulfilling to the learner and it will be learner centric policy. But, in practice, we have some problems, unless address all these problems, we cannot achieve an effective and successful education system in India.

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