

## **CHANGING HIGHER EDUCATION SCENARIO IN INDIA**

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### **Abstract**

The higher education scene in the country is set to experience a dramatic change but the ability of the state universities to cope with this change is extremely doubtful. The success of the new central universities and the proposed national universities will come about at the cost of the state universities, which cater to the majority of students in the country. This article proposes that postgraduate teaching and research in state universities will have to be taken over by the central government to ensure the survival of this important part of the higher education system. An academic revolution has taken place in higher education particularly in the past half century marked by a paradigm shift in scope and opportunity. Over the year's higher education system has become an enterprise having much of business orientation with all its exposure to fierce competition at different levels of stakeholders. Indian education system considered as one of the largest of its kind in the world also faces/encounters enormous challenges in the new millennium. These challenges are diversified and manifold stretching from contemporary curriculum development, quality assurance and accreditation and ethical value propositions to policy planning and governance.

**Key words:** private education; higher education; Indian economy; third world; education financing

### **Introduction**

India has a rich and glorious tradition of higher education from ancient times. Nalanda, Takshashila, Vikramshila and Vallabhi were some of the important and well-known universities of ancient India and they occupy a special place in history of higher education in the country. The Nalanda University was the oldest university-system of education in the world. Western education became ingrained into Indian society with the establishment of the British Raj. Education in India falls under the control of both the union government and the states having autonomy for others. The various articles of the right for education being authenticated constitutionally is one of the fundamental right. Most universities in India are run and controlled by the union or the state government. In India, the system of higher education has grown in a remarkable way, particularly in the post-independence period, to become one of the largest systems of its kind in the world. But the system has many issues of concern at present. We are living in a society dominated by change. The technical, economic and social evolution has shaped people's way of living and thinking. The global markets and technological revolution are transforming the modern economy into a 'knowledge based society' in which new ways of organizing the work are governing the world, demanding a perpetual build-up of competences, a rapid spread of high performance technologies, solid knowledge and increasing responsibility.

The massive expansion during the post-independence period was unavoidable because access to higher education had been restricted to a select few in the pre-independence period. Independence brought with it a huge rise in the social demand for higher education and the democratic government had to respond in a fitting manner. Secondly, the requirements of building a new socio-economic order, were large, and the skills required were varied. The government could not but expand the higher education system. Third, like in many other countries, India has also expanded its horizon of the higher education to establish its own legitimacy. The system of higher education has grown remarkably in the post-independent period, and it has contributed to socio-economic and political transformation of the country. However, both the problems associated with higher education and their intensity have multiplied. Access, equity and quality are the three major themes in higher education that continue to attract the attention of researcher and policymakers. A serious problem in the higher education system is a very high degree of inequity –between different social groups, between men and women, between rural and urban areas, and between the rich and the poor. Gender differences have narrowed down over the years to a substantial extent.

**History of higher Education** The history of education is a part of the past and present teaching and learning. Each generation, since the beginning of human existence, has sought to pass on culture and social value, traditions, morality, religion and skills to the next generation. The passing on of culture is also known as enculturation and the learning of social values and behaviors is socialization. The history of the curricula of such education reflects human history itself, the history of knowledge, beliefs, skills and cultures of humanity. With the development of writing, it became possible for stories, poetry, knowledge, beliefs, and customs to be recorded and passed on more accurately to people out of earshot and to future generations.

In many societies, the spread of literacy was slow; orality and illiteracy remained predominant for much of the population for centuries. Literacy in preindustrial societies was associated with civil administration, law, long distance trade or commerce, and religion. A formal schooling in literacy was often only available to a small part of the population, either at religious institutions or for the wealthy who could afford to pay for their tutors. The earliest known universities, or places of higher education, started teaching prior to many centuries. In ancient India, during the Vedic period from about 1500 BC to 600 BC, most education was –oral tradition of the Vedas and related textual tradition.

Vedic education included proper pronunciation and recitation of the Veda, the rules of sacrifice, grammar and derivations, composition, versification and meter, understanding raga, reasoning including logic, the sciences, and the skills necessary for an occupation. Education, at first freely available in Vedic society, became over time more discriminatory as the caste system, originally based on occupation, evolved, with the Brahman being the most privileged of the caste. The oldest of the Upanishads-another part of Hindu scriptures-date from around 500 BC. These texts encouraged an exploratory learning process where teachers and students were co-travelers in their search for truth. The Gurukul system of education supported traditional Hindu residential schools of learning; typically, the teacher's house or a monastery. Education was free, but students from well-to-do families paid "Gurudakshina" a voluntary contribution after the completion of their studies. Two epic poems formed part of ancient Indian education. The Mahabharat a, part of which may date back to the 8th century BC, discusses human goals attempting to explain the relationship of the individual to society and the world and the doctrine Karma. The other epic poem, Ramayana is shorter, although it has 24,000 verses. It is thought to have been compiled approximately between about 400 BC and 200 AD. The epics explore themes of human existence and the concept of dharma. British record shows that indigenous education was widespread in India in the 18th century, with a school for every temple, mosque or village in most regions of the country. The subject taught included Reading, Writing, Arithmetic, Theology, Law, Astronomy, Metaphysics, Ethics, Medical Science and Religion. The current system of education, with its western style and content, was introduced and founded by the British during British Raj, following recommendation by Lord Macaulay. Lord Curzon, the viceroy 1899-1905, made mass education a high priority after finding that only 20% of India's children attended school. His reforms centered on literacy training and on restructuring of the university systems. Nowadays some kind of education is compulsory to all people. Due to population growth and the proliferation of compulsory education, UNESCO has calculated that in the next 30 years more people will receive formal education than in all of human history thus far.

**The purpose of higher Education** The meaning of higher education and universities cannot be found in the content of their teaching and research, how they undertake these, or their admission policies. Instead, the core purpose of higher education and universities reside elsewhere. The first purpose of universities is the production of knowledge which advances understanding of the natural and social worlds, and enriches humanity's accumulated scientific and cultural inheritance and heritage. The second purpose of universities is the dissemination of knowledge and the formation and cultivation of the cognitive character of students. The goal is to produce graduates that ideally: "can think effectively and critically"; have "achieved depth in some field of knowledge", and have a critical appreciation of the ways in which we gain knowledge and understanding of the universe of society, and of ourselves". Our graduates should also have "a broad knowledge of other cultures and other times"; be able to make decisions based on reference to the wider world and to the historical forces that have shaped it"; have "some understanding of and experience in thinking systematically

about moral and ethical problems”; and be able to communicate with cogency.” The final, if somewhat newer but increasingly accepted, purpose of university is to undertaken community engagement. We must make a distinction between a university being responsive to its political, economic and social contexts and community engagement.

Changing scenario of higher Education an academic revolution has taken place in higher education particularly in the past half century marked by a paradigm shift in scope and opportunity. Over the year’s higher education system has become an enterprise having much of business orientation with all its exposure to fierce competition at different level of stakeholders. Indian education system considered as one of the largest of its kind in the world also faced/encounters enormous challenges in the new millennium. These challenges are diversified and manifold stretching from contemporary curriculum development, quality assurance and accreditation and ethical value propositions to policy planning and governance. In a technology driven society knowledge rewrites the fate of a nation and so does higher education. One of the major reasons for India’s performance for being not that encouraging was due to suboptimal investment on higher education in the recent past. With unprecedented growth of knowledge typically in the area of information and communication followed by globalization shrinking the world into a global village, competitiveness has become a decisive force of growth.

This necessitates massive investment on higher education so that availability of internationally acceptable highly skilled manpower can be ensured. But this drive for internationalization of higher education is a highly ticklish and dedicate move and should not be accomplished at the cost of identity of the nation as rightly quoted “internationalization of higher education is one of the ways a country responds to the impact of globalization yet, at the same time respects the individuality of the nation.” As a part of India’s integration into the world economy the role played by potential foreign participants need a special mention. The impact of potential entrants on Indian higher education system can be felt in most of the functional areas like access, equality and quality.

Privatization of Higher Education Higher education in India is being facto privatized on a massive scale. But this privatization is not a result of changing ideological commitments of the key actors- the state, the judiciary or India’s propertied classes. Rather, this privatization has resulted from a breakdown of the state system. As a result, it is a form of privatization who’s ideological and institutional underpinnings remain very weak. At present India has more than 15,000 colleges and just fever than 10 million students. More than two thirds of these colleges are classified by the University Grants Commission as “Arts, Science, Commerce and oriental Learning Colleges”. Recent growth is much greater in professional colleges, as well as in private vocational courses catering especially to the IT sector. There has been a rapid expansion in higher education, with student’s enrolment growing at about 5 percent annually over the past two decades. Enrolment ratios vary across Indian states, with the southern and western states faring better than their Eastern counterparts.

## **Conclusion**

We are living in a society dominated by change. The technical, economic and social evolution has shaped people’s way of living and thinking. The globalization markets, the technical and technological revolution are transforming the modern economy into a ‘knowledge based society’ in which new ways of organizing the work are governing the world, demanding a organizing the work are governing the world, demanding a perceptual build up competences, a rapid spread of high performance technologies, solid knowledge and increasing responsibilities.

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