



## Higher Education in India: Recent Issues and Trends

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### Abstract

*In this review paper we have discussed the ambiguous concepts of higher education that is used in the literatures all over world. The study has tried to trace the higher education in India from the long past. Then we have discussed present status of higher education in India and the recent trend in Indian higher education. The issues like Quantity of Institution, Fields of Education, Enrolment Pattern, Teacher Availability, Constitutional Provision on Higher Education, Disparity in Access to Higher Education, Governance Practice, Quality Control Mechanism, Trend in Finance has been discussed briefly. Recent trends like privatization and globalization emerging in the field of Indian higher education was also highlighted in this analysis.*

**Keyword:** Higher Education, Quality Control, Privatization, Globalization.

### Introduction

The importance of higher education has been clearly expressed by our first Prime Minister Mr. Jawaharlal Nehru in the following words: "A university stands for humanism, for tolerance, for reason, for the adventure of the ideas and for the search of truth. It stands for onward march of human race towards even higher objectives. If the universities discharge their duties adequately, then it well with the nation and the people". It indicates that higher education occupies a crucial position in education system of a nation as it affects the overall development of a country<sup>1</sup>.

### Higher education: Concepts and Meaning

The term Higher Education is ambiguous in nature because it is used in variety of way by different people, different country and in different point of time. In fact, there is no straight forward definition of Higher Education.

Internationally after school education can be divided into Higher Education and Further Education and is known as Tertiary Education<sup>1</sup>. Higher Education qualification implies Higher Diplomas, Foundation Degrees to Honours Degrees and takes a minimum of 3 years to maximum of 4 years to complete. Further Education on the other hand refers to Post Graduate or Master and Doctorate degrees. In a single word Tertiary Education means colleges and university level education.

Indian education ladder starts at 6 years of age. It comprise of 10 years of primary or elementary and secondary stages, 2 years of higher secondary stages, 3 years bachelor's degree, 2 years of masters degree and at least 3 years beyond masters degree for a Ph.D. According to NEP 1968, 1986 this is known as 10+2+3

system. The Post Higher Secondary Education is known as Higher Education in India.

### History of higher education in India

In the long past the institution of higher education has been given an important position in the Indian society. There were perhaps three streams of tradition- i. Ancient and medieval Sanskrit and Buddhist tradition. ii. The medieval Arabic and Persian tradition. iii. East and South Indian such as Tamil tradition.

It has been found from the writings of Chinese travellers like Fi-Hien, Hiuen-Tsang that there exist ancient seats of learning at Takshashila (5<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> Century B.C), Kanchipura, Nalanda (5<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> Century A.D), Odantapuri, Sri Dharryakataka, Kashmir, Vikramashila (800A.D). Among the subjects studied here were grammar, metaphysics, logic etc. In both Sanskrit and Arabic higher learning much secular and scientific learning in law, medicine, mathematics, astronomy etc. was cultivated besides literature, philosophy with the help of books, discussion and memorization.

Indian Higher Education in its present form begun to appear from the time when British parliament renewed the Charter Act (1813) for educational development in India. College to disseminate English education was established in 1818 at Serampore, Calcutta. McCauley's minute (1835) to promote English education, Charls Woods' Dispatch (1854) to establish the universities of Calcutta, Bombay, and Madras in 1857 and the introduction of grants-in-aid for these universities were the major events. Indian Education Commission or Hunter Commission's (1882-83) recommendation to finance University Education in India provided a major impetus to higher

educational development in India. Calcutta University Commission (1917) called as Saddler Commission also recommended for autonomy of universities. The Hartog Committee (1929) report suggested for improvement of quality and standards at the University level education in India. The Abbot-Wood Report (1937) recommendation suggested that English should be the medium of Instruction and encourages the establishment of Polytechnics Colleges, Central Technical Board and Vocational Teacher Training Colleges. Finally Sargent Report (1944) recommendation for the establishment of U.G.C and formulation of blue print for Indian Higher Education structure was the major landmark.

At the time of independence there were almost 20 universities and 500 affiliated colleges with the students of near about 0.1 million in India. After independence India made various efforts to improve higher education system. The first education commission in independent India, Radhakrishnan Commission (1948-49) also recommended for the establishment of UGC. Secondary Education Commission (1952) pioneered a system of 3 year secondary and 4 year higher education. Indian Education Commission (1964) recommended for the introduction of 3 year Degree course and 4 year Honours Degree course. The National Policy on Education (1968) demanded for qualitative improvement at higher education level. The National Policy on Education (1986) recommended 10+2+3 pattern of educational system. The effects of the recommendation of such commissions can be observed from the present status of higher education in India.

### Present scenario of Higher Education in India

The development of higher education in India after independence has been remarkable. Following facts and figure represents the development of the higher education system in India. India is after the China and the United States in terms of size of higher education.

**Quantity of Institution:** There exist different kinds of higher educational institution operating into the land. Universities established by an Act of Parliament known as Central Universities and of a State Legislature known as State Universities. Universities which have been given the status of a university with the power to award their degrees by central government notification are known as Deemed Universities. Prestigious institutions recognized as higher educational institutes by Parliament are known as Institutes of National Importance. These Institutions may be both government-aided – unaided and public –private.

UGC report 2012 shows that there exist near about 43 central universities, 272 state universities, 130 deemed universities, 95 private universities, 5 institutions of National Importance and more over 34,000 colleges functioning in India.

**Fields of Education:** Higher education system in India imparts education in almost all fields of knowledge viz.: Arts, Science, Commerce/Management, Education, Teachers training, Engineering/technology/architecture, Medical, Law /Agriculture /Veterinary, music and performing arts; national and foreign languages; culture; communications etc.

**Enrolment pattern:** In Pre-Independence era elitist nature of higher education has prevailed and was very narrow in base. After independence the base has been widened and the enrolment in higher education has increased to near about 140 lakhs as on 2011.

There exist three type of index to measure the enrolment rate in higher education viz. Gross Enrolment ratio (GER), Net enrolment ratio (NER) and Enrolment of Eligible ratio (EER). The GER is the ratio of students of all age group enrolled to total population in age group of 18 to 23. The NER is the ratio of student enrolment in age group of 18 to 23 to total population in age group of 18 to 23. While the EER is the ratio of students enrolment in higher education those who completed higher secondary level education to total population in age group of 18 to 23. According to NSSO the GER/NER/EER is 13.2/13.2/59 in 2003-2004<sup>2</sup>. With a GER of 13.2 India is below the world average and also below the average of developing nations. The low levels of enrolment in undergraduate level (86 % of H.S students), high drop out in postgraduate level from undergraduate level (only about 12% of undergraduate student), high dependency on distance education and shifting enrolment from traditional courses to professional courses becomes the nature of Indian higher education.

**Teachers availability:** According to the UGC Annual Report, 2004-05 the student/teacher ratio in University is 18:1 and in colleges is 23:1.

**Constitutional provision on higher education:** The university education commission (1948) made a recommendation to government that it should make education concurrent subjects. In India there is a central list, a state list and a third list which shows the concurrent power of centre and state.

Entry 63, 64, 65 and 66 dealt with the issues regarding higher education. Entry 63 is concerned with the control of national library, central universities etc. Entry 64 dealt with the scientific and technical institution. Entry 65 is related to the establishment of professional, technical and vocational education. Entry 66 is concerned with the coordination and determination of standards in institution for higher education or research or scientific and technical institution. In terms of this entry UGC Act of 1956 was passed and other coordinating bodies of higher education were established. The Colleges with the recognition of the University Grants Commission (UGC) receives grants from the UGC. Under list 3 Entry 20, 25 are also related to the higher education. Entry 20 is regarding to the establishment of planning commission which determines the finance of higher

education. Entry 25 is referred to the vocational and technical training of labour.

**Disparity in access to higher education:** Mostly 4 kinds of Inequity in higher education are visible in India: gender disparity, geographical inequity, minority-majority based inequity, and inequity based on economic class.

The constitution of India through its fundamental right and directive principles of state policy guarantees equal right and opportunities to women. Article 14, Article 15(3), Article 39(e) and Article 51 A (e) confers equal opportunity to women in political-economical-social sphere, means of livelihood, pay and dignity etc. Gender discrimination in education has been national concern since independence. In this connection some important commission like Durga Bai Deshmukh commission (1958-59), Hans Meheta Comission (1962-64), N.P.E (1986) and P.O.A (1992) was appointed. There was a pronounced policy shift from equalization of educational opportunity to women empowerment. Recently the government has enacted the national policy for empowerment of women 2001. As a result the gender disparity remains alarming even in present decades. The following table shows the gender disparity in higher education in India according to selected educational statistics 2001-02<sup>3</sup>.

**Table-1**  
**Disparity in enrolment in different course**

| Course   | Boys enrolment % | Girls enrolment % |
|--|------------------|-------------------|
| Ph.d/D.Sc/D.Phil                                   | 64.8             | 358.2             |
| M.A  | 63.4             | 36.6              |
| M.Sc   | 55.5             | 44.5              |
| M.Com  | 62.3             | 37.7              |
| B.A/B.A(Hons)                                      | 61.9             | 37.7              |
| B.Sc/B.Sc(Hons)                                    | 62.5             | 37.5              |
| B.Com/B.Com(Hons)                                  | 64.6             | 35.4              |
| B.E/B.Sc/B.Arch                                    | 77.7             | 22.3              |
| B.Ed/B.T   | 57.2             | 42.8              |
| M.B.B.S  | 59.4             | 40.6              |
| Intermediate/Jr College/Pre Degree/ Pre University | 65.4             | 34.6              |
| H.S (10+2)   | 60.5             | 39.5              |

Minority-majority based inequity is also visible in higher education. There exists constitutional provision to safeguard the right to participate equally in higher education of religious and language minority, SC and ST. Article 29 gave the right to admit in any educational institution and Article 30 gave the right to establish educational institution by the minorities with their language and culture. Article 350A has given the facility to minorities to be instructed in their mother tongue. Article 46 promotes educational and economic interest of weaker section of the population like SC and ST. Article 15(4), Article 16(4), Article 332, Article 334 laid down the provision of reservation of seats in educational institution, Lokshava, Bidhan Shava and in employment for SC and ST. In spite of that provisions Muslim enrolments in engineering college is only 12.44% and in medical college is 9.55%. Total literacy of SC and ST is 37.4% and 29.6% respectively.

**Governance practice:** Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) is the highest body of governance. Actually University Grants Commission controls higher education in India. The accreditation to the institutes for higher education is given by 12 autonomous institutions Under University Grants Commission viz. All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE), Distance Education Council (DEC), Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR), Bar Council of India (BCI), National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC), 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), Dental Council of India (DCI), Central Council of Homeopathy (CCH), Central Council of Indian Medicine (CCIM) and Veterinary Council of India (VCI). The functioning of these institutions some time becomes complicated and coinciding.

**Quality control mechanism:** Quality control implies maintaining certain levels of quality. After evaluating the higher educational institution the status of the institution is determined. If the institution qualifies for certain status regarding quality accreditation may be given for the institution itself e.g., permission to operate and/or its students e.g., eligibility for grants and/or I graduates qualified for certain employments. This accreditation process is consisting of two activities: one is quality assurance; determining standard of quality and performance for minimum acceptability in the interest of public; and the other is quality improvement; providing the service that is designed to improve institution and programmes through an external review process.

The main agency which assesses and accredits University and Colleges is the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) established by the UGC in 1994. Whereas some other agencies like National Board of Accreditation (NBA), Accreditation Board (AB), Distance Education Council (DEC) also performs similar function. In addition to National accreditation local quality inspection to colleges is also done by

the affiliating University. NAAC has formulated 3 stages accreditation process. At first it receives self study report from the institutions, second it inspects the institution for validation of the self study report and finally it makes recommendation on the basis of reports and inspection. NAAC has identified 7 criteria for assessment procedure- i. Curricular aspect, ii. Teaching learning and evaluation, iii. Research, consultancy and extension, iv. Infrastructure and learning resources, v. Students reports and progress, vi. Organisation and management, vii. Healthy practices

The emergence of the internationalization in education created major challenges to quality assurance. A global effort is thus needed to meet these challenges.

There are different parameters on the basis of which we can judge the quality of higher education. According to Stella, 2002 NAAC has given A grade to 10 % of colleges and 32 % universities, B grade to 66 % colleges and 52 % universities and C grade to 24 % of colleges and 16 % universities<sup>4</sup>.

**Trend in Finance:** Higher education is the most developing sectors of the education system in India. This development can't

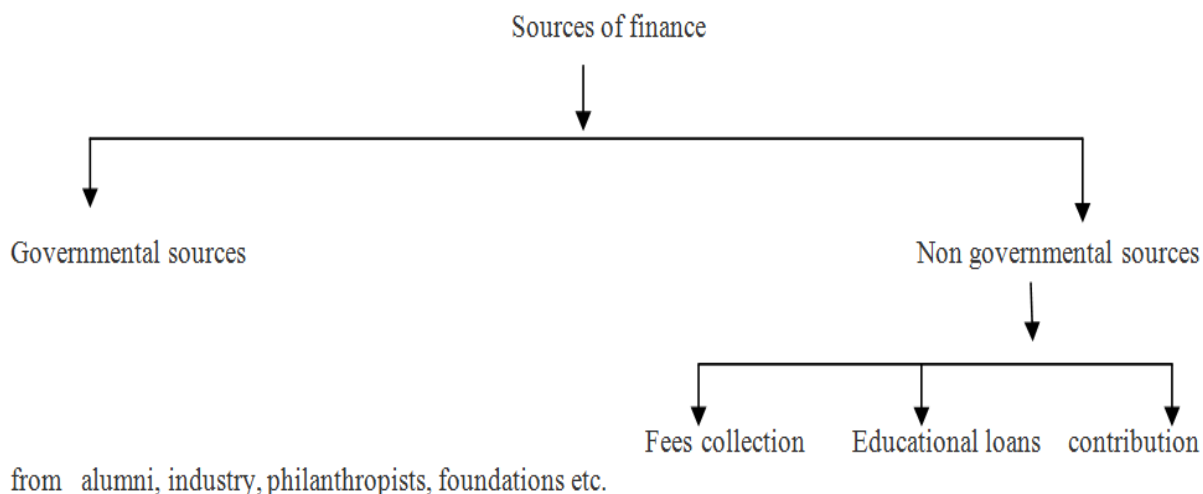
be possible without financial assistance of government. Government is the major financier of higher education. As education is basically a public goods markets cannot ensure the equity and efficiency alone. In a full-fledged market economy governments bears large part of cost of public institutions and as well as some part of the cost of private institutions. This is because education generates externalities necessary for economic development. The sources of finance in higher education sector are given in the following table.

Today the government funding in higher education becomes a huge burden of national budget in the context of curtailing fiscal deficit. At the start of 1<sup>st</sup> 5 year plan the total allocation for higher education was only Rs.170 million which has now gone beyond Rs.90, 000million in 2004-05. This impressive increase is offset to some extent by the rise in prices (inflation) and rise in enrolment in higher education. The share of education in Gross National Product (GNP) is the most widely used indicator of priority given to education in a country. The following table shows how share of education as percentages of GNP changes from 1950 to 2004-05 but it never reaches the target of 6% as recommended by the New Education Policy (1986) and the revised Programme of Action (1992)<sup>5</sup>.

**Table-2**  
**Government expenditure on higher education**

| Year      | Percentage of GNP | Plan period               | Plan expenditure on higher education in million (percentages of total allocation in education) |
|-----------|-------------------|---------------------------|--|
| 1950-51   | .19               | 1 <sup>st</sup> 1951-56   | 140(9%)  |
| 1960-61   | .39               | 2 <sup>nd</sup> 1956-61   | 480(18%)   |
| 1970-71   | .77               | 3 <sup>rd</sup> 1961-66   | 870(15%)   |
| 1980-81   | .98               | 4 <sup>th</sup> 1969-74   | 1950(25%)  |
| 1990-91   | .46               | 5 <sup>th</sup> 1974-79   | 2050(55%)  |
| 1991-92   | .42               | 6 <sup>th</sup> 1980-85   | 5590(22%)  |
| 1992-93   | .41               | 7 <sup>th</sup> 1985-90   | 12010(16%)   |
| 1993-94   | .40               | 8 <sup>th</sup> 1992-97   | 15160(8%)  |
| 1994-95   | .39               | 9 <sup>th</sup> 1997-2002 | 25000(12%)   |
| 1995-96   | .37               | 10 <sup>th</sup> 2002-07  | 5615   |
| 1996-97   | .35               |                           |  |
| 1997-98   | .35               |                           |  |
| 1998-99   | .43               |                           |  |
| 1999-2000 | .47               |                           |  |
| 2000-01   | .49               |                           |  |
| 2001-02   | .39               |                           |  |
| 2002-03   | .40               |                           |  |
| 2003-04   | .37               |                           |  |

Source: CABE Report on Financing of Higher and Technical Education, June 2005.



**Figure-1**  
**Sources of finance in higher education**

The state wise allocation for higher education differs widely across the states of India. The share of budgetary expenditure was at 11% on an average across all the states. Bihar, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Rajasthan and U.P remains far below the national average. The performance of other states is quite satisfactory<sup>6</sup>. Allocation to education in five year plans denotes government's commitment to new initiatives. The above table shows the plan expenditure on higher education in million at different 5 year plans.

It is apparent that the government allocated expenditure on education in a country like India is substantial where 1/3 rd of population is illiterate. The following concern remains critical in the context of higher education of India. i. Inadequate expenditure with respect to increased enrolment. ii. Inflationary pressure. iii. Rising staff salary. iv. Declining developmental expenditure. v. Immobilization of additional resources. vi. Declining share of fees etc.

In view of these concerns UGC has constituted different committee to restructure the financial system of higher education institution. The important among them are i. Punnayya committee (1992-93), ii. Anandkrishnan committee (1999), iii. Mahmood ur rahaman committee (2000) etc.

This committee suggested a revision of fees structure of educational institution in order to generate funds. They also recommended for privatization of educational sector as a strategy to deal with the problem of budget deficit and declining share of educational expenditure of budget.

### Recent trend in Indian higher education

**Privatization: Concept:** Privatization means initiation of private ownership, management and control of organizations. The control is in terms of decision making and responsibility of

money and administration. In education privatization can be seen as expansion of private sector's control.

Privatization of higher education has emerged in several forms and types in the recent decade in India<sup>7</sup>. Privatization within government higher education institutions takes place in the form of introducing self-financing courses within government institutions. Converting government aided private institution in to private self financing institution. Allowing self financing private institution with recognition and also without recognition. This may be termed as commercial private higher education institutions. Private players are mainly engaged themselves in setting up of state private universities, deemed university and academic institution with foreign collaboration.

**Need to privatize higher education:** i. To increase competitive efficiency of public sector. ii. To meet the growing demand of higher education with rapid growth in population. iii. To reduce financial burden on government and for decentralization of educational institutions. iv. For imparting quality education and training and shaping of the curriculum according to global, national and local needs. v. To fulfil the need for skilled manpower and to fulfil the need of the country in liberalization, privatization, and globalization. vi. To facilitate technological developments and information based economic development

In India, the thrust on privatization in higher education started in the early 90s under the LPG

(Liberalization, privatization and globalization) policy<sup>8</sup>. The last two decades has witnessed an exponential growth in Indian higher education system. But there remain lots of challenges to privatization. Privatization of higher education has badly affected the poor, undermined equity, diversity and openness

and could not ensure the knowledge about the providers; and price and quality of the product.

**Globalization: Concept:** The term globalization and internationalization is used interchangeably. There exist narrow difference between globalization and internationalization. Globalization refers to involvements of large number of countries and internationalization refers to involvement of two or more countries.

With the developments of information and communication technology the barriers of national boundary has been broken. As a result there has been considerable development in the social, economical and educational fields at international and global level. This is termed as internationalization and globalization.

The development in education has resulted in the following events. i. Increased practice of international comparison of educational development. ii. Mobility of students from one country to another. iii. Mobility of scholars from one country to another. iv. Setting up of educational institution from one country to another. v. Marketing of education world wide. vi. Development of framework for globalization of education through GATT (general agreement on tariff and trade), GATS (general agreement on trade in services) under WTO (world trade organisation).

### **GATS (General Agreement on Trade in Services) in Educational services**

**Important aspects:** i. This is a multilateral agreement as much as 144 countries have signed. ii. These services cover all services (19 services) including educational services which are not entirely provided by the government. iii. There should be no discrimination between all members of the WTO called most favoured nation. iv. When a members country is providing services in a nation the other members country need to go with consultation of host country to enter into the market. v. Each member country has to ensure judicial, arbitral and administrative provision in an impartial manner. vi. GATS include following educational service trade<sup>9</sup>. i. Cross boarder supply of services – it includes any type of educational courses through distance mode, internet (testing services and course material), ii. Consumption abroad- involves education of foreign students, iii. Commercial presence – refers to presence of foreign investor in education in host country, iv. Presence of natural person – refers to mobility of scholars students between countries. vii. Educational services meant for primary education, secondary education, adult education etc are allowed to be traded under GATS in the following forms of educational activities- i. transitional education, ii. On line education, iii. Online distance education, iv. Collaborative education.

**Impact:** 1990 The impacts of globalization on Indian higher education since are not clear. There exists no database available

on the status of foreign players in the field of Indian higher education. Following issues has emerged- i. Government policy of non profit motto of setting up of educational institution has changed. Free proposed to be charged by the foreign players are considerably high. ii. Government norms with respect to management and administration of educational institution have changed. Instead of public trust and society private, public-private ownership has been encouraged. iii. With respect to quality of curriculum transaction, course duration and setting up of admission criterion government rules has been violated. iv. Educational finance has undergone a radical changes private finance is encouraged and FDI (foreign direct investment) under GATS is allowed in to the educational sector.

### **Conclusion**

Though India has a long heritage of quality higher education system it has failed to solve the problems of Access, Equity, and Quality until recent past. The deteriorating administration, unproductive practice, corruption and fund availability leads to break down of indigenous educational system. Recently with the introduction LPG i.e. liberalization, privatization and globalization an avenue to revive the system has evolved. On the one hand globalization may help to improve the quality of education it can also affect the indigenous development of educational sector. A domestic regulatory mechanism should be put into place to avoid negative impact of globalization.

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