

# Changing Paradigm in Indian University Education

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## Abstract

It is pertinent to trace the roots of modern education in India, its transformation, and its present dilemmas, which are rooted in its life through history. History of Indian education is not of revolutions or sudden changes instead, it has dragged itself slowly and continuously on a flattish reform trajectory. Government's support is much needed in the areas of reforms, based on the understanding of needs of modern skill sets, attitudes, nationalism and technology, but above all on the need of human quest for knowledge.

Keywords – Evolution, Indian Universities, Higher Education, Ancient Universities, Gurukula Parampara, Macauley, Magna Carta, Wood's Despatch, Reforms, UGC.

## Introduction

“Universities are important institutions in our national life and their story represents the mainstream of intellectual activities of modern India. The first university of the modern type was founded in this country in the year 1857, but the history of universities in India dates back to the “days of antiquity.” (Basu,1944). Here the story of Indian universities is elaborated era wise.

## Ancient Period

Knowledge creation and knowledge dissemination through Gurukula parampara were traditional in India since written history. India was home to first concepts of universal education “Vishwavidyalay”. Higher Education is a rich testimony of free, enriched HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM wherein innumerable texts and books got written in subjects of Astronomy, Mathematics, Social Order and Governance, Economics, Political Studies, Grammar, Logic, Literature, Metallurgy, Medicine, Surgery, Performing Arts and Aviation when most of the world lived in the Dark Age.

Great scholars of the world came together, to study in India. The ancient Vedic and Brahmanic literature is full with references to many such concourses of teachers and pupils called Parishad. During Vedic times, places like Kuru, Panchala, Videha, Matsya, Ushinara and Takshashilawere prestigious seats of learning. In the Upanishads,

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we find descriptions of the Parishads setting set up in various places. During the period of the Mahabharata, Naimisharanya was famous for its gathering of teachers and pupils in the 7th century B. C.” (Basu,1944)

Some of the Chinese travelers who visited India during the fifth and seventh centuries have also left valuable records on the state of Buddhist education during those days. Amongst them, the names of Fa-Hien, Hieun-Tsang and I-Tsing are well known. The more famous amongst the Buddhist educational centers, which were scattered all over the country, were the universities of Purushapura (modern Peshawar), Takshashila (in Punjab), JayendraVihara (in Kashmir), Nalanda (in Bihar), Vikramashila, Jagaddala, Odantapuri and Tamralipti (in Bengal), Kanchipura (in Madras), Valabhi (in modern Kathiawad) and other places. At the height of its glory, Nalanda had thousand teachers and ten thousand scholars who came from all parts of the Buddhist world, from China to Gandhara, from Tokhara (Central Asia) to Kanyakumarika as Hieun-Tsang mentions.

The first essential feature of these institutions, whether Aryan or Buddhist, was their residential character. Living in close intellectual and spiritual communion with the teachers and professors, was considered in those days, to be essential for higher education. Such close communion between the teacher and the taught made it possible for the development of a characteristic relationship between the teachers and their pupils called Guru Shishya Parampara which is unique in the history of education. Higher education in those days was free. The different centers of learning received the patronage from the princes and the rich people of the country. Charity in the cause of education was looked upon as a pious thing and not only was tuition free, but the scholars were even provided with free boarding and lodging. In universities like Nalanda, with thousands of students, the magnitude of sustained charity fund was unimaginable. This was the most remarkable feature of ancient Indian higher education.

The invasions by Islamic plunderers and tribes from Afghanistan gradually resulted in, cutting off the lifeline – the funding of Vedic centers of learning. Mughal rule caused a death blow to the ancient Indian education system. Muslims did not establish or nurture higher education centers for centuries causing a total wipeout of a credible educational system.

### **British Period**

(Basu, 1944) said that unfortunately there is no data available for Higher Education System during the early nineteenth century. After the British established their rule, initially the territory under their rule was not extensive and the rest of India was divided into smaller Indian kingdoms, from where there are no authentic data, reports or surveys available. Many contradictory research reports are present claiming muslim education system replaced the gurukula system or survival of gurukula system, but it can safely be concluded that there is no authentic report showing existence of or development of systematic educational infrastructure after mughal invasion in India.

In 1781, Warren Hastings, the first Governor General of India established Calcutta Madarassah and in 1791, Jonathon Duncan established the Banaras Sanskrit College. The prime object to establish these educational institutions were to train Indian Assistants to English Judges to explain the principles of Muslim and Hindu Law. Wellesley founded the Fort William College in Calcutta in 1800 for making the Company employees aware of Indian language for the sake of administration.

In 1822, under British Rule, Sir Thomas Munroe ordered an inquiry into the indigenous education system in Madras. In Mumbai, similar inquiry was initiated by Mount-Stuart Elphinstone in 1823. In 1835 similar exercise was carried out in Bengal by William Adams. Adams submitted three reports. All reports from him and others which were submitted, were about the confined areas of given locations within British controls but was generalized for the rest of India due to the absence of any prior statistics on this subject. Though the reliability of the surveys and size of the sample were not sound statistically, all the above reports concluded that the indigenous system of education was in a state of decay.

Due to socio-political developments during 1800-1813, the question of Indian Education came up in the Charter of the East India Company which was due for renewal in 1813. In the Charter Act of 1813, Rupees one lakh per year was sanctioned for the advancement of education in India. The charter act became a big milestone in Indian Education and with this, the agitation of Wilberforce and Grant, which was being carried out for nearly 20 years, came to a successful conclusion that the Indian education would be included in the duties of the company. Indian education got a great fillip between 1813 and 1833 when the second renewal of charter happened. During this time Government initiatives and expenditure on mass education became liberal. Peshwas started the Poona College of Sanskrit in 1821. The charter was again renewed in 1833 and Thomas Babington Macaulay who was renowned educationist became the President of General Committee of Public Instructions. There arose a clear divide in the committee about Oriental and European education. Princep, and Colebrook, Wilson were the supporters of Oriental education. They were known as Orientalists. But people like T.B. Macaulay, Alexander Duff, Sanders, Colvin etc. who supported European education were known as Anglicists.

Macaulay was of the opinion that all oriental schools should be closed. He also supported the English language for medium of instruction. He expressed his strong opinion in favor of English education, as he thought that oriental culture was defective, unholy and corrupted. According to him it was better to give proper teaching to a small number of upper and middle-class students; as a law of infiltration, believing that it would reach to more number of people. This law was known as infiltration theory. He believed that a shelf of European's library was equal to the whole literature of India. This opinion was the result of his complete ignorance of Indian contributions and an unrestricted nationalism. He wanted to create black Europeans who would support the British government. The cost would be minimized and at the same time, western education would spread. Macaulay presented a proposal of the advancement of English education in 1835 A.D. This was known as Macaulay minutes. Lord William Bentinck (1828-1835 A.D.) accepted Macaulay's minutes on 7th March 1835 A.D. English language and science

started spreading quickly. In the same year i.e. 1835, Calcutta Medical College and Elphinstone College at Bombay were established and in 1844 Lord Harding declared that the Indians knowing English would get Government jobs, which attracted Indians towards English education.

In 1842, during the time of Lord Auckland (1836-1842 A.D.), the Public Instruction Committee was rejected and the Council of Education was formed. Few Indian members were taken in this Council. Sir Charles Wood's recommendations in the spreading of higher education became important as the president of 'Board of Control' of England. He recommended combining the streams of both the lowest and the highest form of education in 1854. He gave instruction to regularize the education system from the primary stage to University level. He also instructed to educate pupils in both English and Vernacular.

This came to be known as 'Wood's Dispatch'. This dispatch is called 'Magna Carta' in the history of English education in India. The government sanctioned more money for propagating Anglicized education.

Its recommendations were:

1. To form a separate education department,
2. To establish three universities in Calcutta, Bombay and Madras,
3. To take adequate measures for the teachers and the teaching,
4. To reform the government schools and colleges,
5. To establish new middle schools,
6. To start grants-in-aid in private schools,
7. To improve the native primary schools,
8. To expand mass education, women education, progress in vernacular languages
9. To set up teachers' training,
10. To increase the number of government schools and arranged for their inspection and
11. To initiate a secular educational system, etc.

Thus came the institutionalization of primary, secondary, higher secondary and higher education in modern India.

Soon after the receipt of the Dispatch in the Court of Directors dated 19th July 1854, the Government of India took up the work of organizing universities at Calcutta, Bombay and Madras. In 1857, the Government of India passed the Acts of Incorporation of all the three universities. Except for a few changes of a local nature, the three acts are identical and it is enough to study one of them in order to understand the constitution of the Universities established thereby.

The Constitution of the Bombay Universities as outlined by the Act XXII of 1857-

The Senate of the university consisted of the Chancellor (who was always the Governor of Bombay), the Vice-chancellor (whose appointment was made by the Governor-in-council for a period of two years at that time) and the Fellows both ex-officio and ordinary. The Senate was empowered by the Act as under -

1. To manage and supervise the affairs, concerns, and property of the university;
2. To make and alter any bye-laws or regulations. All such bye-laws and regulations required the previous approval of the Governor-in-council before coming into force;
3. To hold examinations, charge fees for the same and to confer degrees;
4. To appoint or remove all examiners, officers, and servants of the university; and
5. Generally to the act in a manner which would be necessary to promote the purpose of the university.

The Act also prescribed the conditions for the admission to university degrees. No person was to be admitted as a candidate except by special order of the Senate for the degrees of Bachelor of Arts, Master of Arts, Bachelor of Law, Licentiate of Medicine, Doctor of Medicine, or Master of Civil Engineering, unless student has presented to the chancellor, the Vice-chancellor and fellows, a certificate from one of the Institutions which are authorized by the Governor of Bombay-in-council to the effect of, that the student has completed the entry level course of instruction prescribed by the chancellor .

Criticism of the University Acts of 1857:

1. There was no upper limit of numbers of Fellows in the Senate.
2. The Act mentioned no Syndicate for carrying out day to day operations.
3. The preamble of the university limited the role of the university to holding examinations and conferring degrees only.
4. The Act of 1857 created affiliating universities and not teaching universities. Instead of a learning hub, the university was merely an administrative body.

It is the matter of regret that the ultimate disadvantages of the system were ignored in view of its immediate advantages and that it was decided to follow the line of least resistance in preference to a program of intelligent planning in the national interest. The decision was a tragic one because London University itself was remodeled in 1858 and gave up the affiliating type of university as unsatisfactory after which Indian University constitutions were made.



The Acts of Incorporation of the universities named the degrees which University could confer. Afterwards, it was found desirable to add others to the list and hence in 1860 the Indian Universities (Degrees) Act was passed empowering the Universities to confer diplomas or degrees or licenses which were or would be approved by the bye-laws or regulations. In 1884, the Indian universities, (Honorary Degrees) Act was passed which empowered the three universities of Calcutta, Bombay and Madras to confer the Honorary Degree of LLD. In 1882, the Punjab University was established by a special Act of Incorporation. The general framework of this Act was similar to the Acts of 1857 but the Punjab University differed from the older universities in several important matters namely -

- 1) It had a faculty of Oriental learning and conferred the degrees of Bachelor, Masters, and Doctor of Oriental Learning.
- 2) It conferred oriental literacy titles on successful candidates in examinations which it held in Sanskrit, Arabic, and Persian.
- 3) It conducted proficiency and high proficiency examinations in vernacular languages.
- 4) It granted native titles to students of Muslim and Hindi law and medicine
- 5) It conducted various school examinations.
- 6) It maintained an Oriental College and a law college, and other schools and colleges as senate may from time to time direct.
- 7) The Senate advised on educational matters generally.

In 1887, another special Act of incorporation established the fifth Indian University at Allahabad.

#### Indian Universities Commission, 1902:

In London there was a growing concern for reforming the university system of which Indian university system was a copy. There was an opinion that universities ought to take teaching functions itself and also coordinate the education of affiliated colleges. Two Royal commissions recommended reconstruction of university systems of London University. As a result Indian Government constituted a commission in 1902 to advice on problems of reforms in India. The commission submitted its report in the same year adopting the London University Reforms of 1898. The Act of 1904 was passed based on the recommendations of the commission.

#### The Indian Universities Act of 1904:

The first important change proposed by the Act was the enlargement of the functions of a university. The purpose of university among others was to make provision for the instruction for students, with power to appoint University Professors and Lecturers, equip and maintain University Libraries, to hold and manage endowments, to erect Museums and Laboratories, to make regulations for the residence and conduct of students and to do everything, consistent with the Act of Incorporation, which helped in the promotion of study and research.

The second important change proposed by the act aimed at making the university senates of a manageable size.

The third change was a provision for elected fellows in the senate. Earlier provision was for either ex- officio or nominated members only.

The fourth change introduced by the Act was to give statutory recognition to syndicates and also to give an adequate representation to university teachers on the syndicates concerned.

The fifth change introduced by the act was to provide stricter conditions for the affiliation of colleges to a university and that all affiliated colleges would be periodically inspected by the Syndicate to monitor that the proper standards of efficiency were being maintained.

The sixth change introduced by the Act was to empower Government for approving or veto regulations which were to be framed by the Senate. The Indian Universities Act of 1904 provided that while approving the regulations framed by the Senate, Government may make such additions and alternations as may be necessary and even frame regulations by itself, if the Senate failed to do so within a specified period.

Lastly, the Act empowered the Governor-General-in-council to define the territorial limits of the universities. This point was left moot in the acts of 1887. The very next year, the disruption in Victoria University occurred due to the affiliate colleges aspiring to become independent universities. The unforeseen disruption gave rise to discussion on the federal nature of university administration and federal nature was eventually abandoned in England considering it was disruptive to the cause of the education. But ironically the federal structure remained largely intact through the colonial period and later in India.

#### The first Government Grant to Universities –

Punjab University was the first to receive a direct grant-in-aid of Rs. 30,000 in 1904. Prior to this universities expense requirement was so meager that a small office with minimum furniture was sufficient as universities only conducted exams and conferred degrees. Even Fellows traveled with their own money for meetings.

Circumstances changed with the 1904 Act, meetings of Senate and Syndicate became often, inspections for affiliations were carried out, Administrative activities increased resulting in increased employees. First Grant was sanctioned in 1904-05 of 25 Lakh rupees for travel, administration, salaries, inspection, buying land and construction of buildings. It later became a permanent recurring grant and a onetime non-recurring grant to meet corresponding expenses.

In 1921, the government established the Central Advisory Board of Education (CABE) to bring consensus on policy matters among provincial governments. With some interruptions, CABE continues to be the primary policy-making body till date.

Inter-University Board which was later came to be known as Association of Indian Universities (AIU) was established in 1925 to promote university activities through sharing information and cooperation in the field of education, culture, sports and allied areas, and which is functioning till date.

The first attempt to formulate a national system of education in India happened in 1944, when the Report of the Central Advisory Board of Education submitted a report on Post War Educational Development in India which is also known as the Sergeant Report. It recommended the constitution of a University Grants Committee. It was duly formed in 1945 to oversee the work of the three Central Universities of Aligarh, Banaras and Delhi. In 1947, the Committee was given the responsibility of dealing with all the then existing Universities.

Hence during the British Period, Indian universities were shaped up by the concepts of university developed in London minus the periodic reforms that took place. The system did not inherit freedom which was innately inbuilt in the ancient Indian education system; it neither adopted openness of ancient Indian education nor the close proximity of teachers or the learner's autonomy of choice. The death blow to the native system was caused by the deliberate ignorance or avoidance of translating the Sanskrit texts into English, when English was made the language of instruction. Ignoring national interests of India by British was due to -

1. Their ignorance and confusion about Indian culture and local world view,
2. Vested colonial interests were behind the education policy and not the cause of promoting quality education and research opportunities for Indian citizens,
3. Maximizing the profit for the East India Company with a minimal commitment to educational expenses,
4. The motive of deliberate erosion of cultural, national capital and self-esteem of Indian citizens by promoting only western education in the western language i.e. English.

From the British formula, Indian Education gradually inherited -

- 1) University systems which were federal and affiliating in nature simultaneously,
- 2) Had strict norms for affiliation of colleges,
- 3) Periodic inspection culture,
- 4) Dual language system one that was used for the teaching of the native language while simultaneously making English a medium of instruction,
- 5) Dependency on Government grants,
- 6) Pedagogical hierarchy,
- 7) Jurisdiction wise operation,
- 8) Research and new knowledge not being on the agenda of education,
- 9) The sole objective of education was only to secure government jobs,
- 10) Moving away from native culture, history and knowledge capital created before the British rule.



This mindset was carried forward after independence without a rational thought for corrections and structural change. Education became an instrument to keep people away from native culture and bring a hiatus between ancient research work and modern research work. Minimal funds were allocated for education, with the priority being focused on social causes like hospitals and food subsidies.

## **Post-independence –**

### **Nehruvian Period (1947-1964)**

The 1947 draft of Constitution of independent India recommended the transfer of all responsibility for education to the provincial governments. Provincial governments were keen on improving access with top priority, even if it meant sacrificing quality. To ensure this goal, they increased political control over the universities. Fairly soon the government again moved toward centralizing the state's control of higher education initiated by Nehru administration in absence of a clear vision of the future of Indian Education. Under C.A.B.E., two reports—the University Education Commission of 1948 and the Secondary Education Commission of 1952—proposed entry standards into the university system, be standardized nationally and the time periods for transition to university education and completion of degrees also be standardized. C.A.B.E. also called for the promotion of technical education and to meet national standards. The 1948 Commission also recommended the establishment of a national standards regulator. Sarkar Committee and the Education Commission's suggestions led to the formation of All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE)

In 1948, The University Education Commission was constituted under the Chairmanship of Dr. S Radhakrishnan with the aim that it would suggest the improvements for Indian university education and extensions according to the current needs and aspirations of the newly independent country. The University Grants Committee was shaped on the overall model of the University Grants Commission in United Kingdom which would have a full-time Chairman and other members would to be appointed from the eminent educationists.

In 1952, the Central Government made all cases for giving of grants from public funds to the Universities and Institutions of higher learning to be looked into by the University Grants Commission. The University Grants Commission (UGC) was inaugurated by Minister of Education, Natural Resources and Scientific Research Mr. Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, on 28 December 1953. But UGC was formally instituted only by November 1956 as a statutory body of the Government through UGC Act of Parliament which gave UGC the mandate for determination and maintenance of standards and coordination of university education in India.

Nehru brought the existing provincial universities under indirect central control, through the UGC. However, the UGC, though responsible for setting national quality standards, was not empowered to implement them by accreditation or through financial incentives. In practice, UGC guidelines on quality standards were ignored by the

provincial universities since funding for state universities was provided by provincial governments and there was no other lever that the UGC could use.

Whereas enrollment grew significantly, during this period the quality of education by the end of the Nehruvian era became bi-modally distributed. A small clutch of well-funded, high-quality technical institutions were at the top, managed by the National Education Ministry which catered to the best-educated high school graduates. The second line below was a mass of largely non-technical, poorer quality universities catering to the rest. The top institutions were accessible only to an elite population located in the larger urban areas and not to the rural masses.

On one hand, the objective of quality of the nationally controlled unitary institutions was achieved due to adequate funding, autonomy and the absence of conflicts with other objectives; on the other hand, the governance model of the lower tier was initially unchanged since colonial times. The provincial government controlled the university's budget and funding, approved senior staff appointments, staff salaries and tuition fees and influenced academic policy. The university affiliated colleges, prescribed curricula and standards of admission, held examinations and the colleges themselves admitted students and recruited faculty, built the infrastructure and provided the education. In contrast to colonial times, the provincial university actively promoted the formation of new state-owned colleges. This was in response to the state's new post-independence objective of expanding admissions, at the expense of other objectives, such as quality and relevance. This changed the ownership and governance of colleges from a largely privately owned and managed system to a largely public system. The new colleges, like those from colonial times, were located largely in urban areas and offered a general education to the urban elite. The objective of quality of the provincial universities suffered due to the higher priority given to access.

### **Indira Gandhi Period (1966-1984)**

Indira Gandhi focused was on rural and poverty issues more than expansion. Accordingly, national education policy shifted from addressing the needs of large-scale industrialization to creating skills for rural occupations and small-scale industries. The Education Commission report of 1966 and the subsequent National Policy on Education, of 1968 (NPE-68), reflected these priorities, with a new stress on multi-lingual instruction, agricultural education and adult education, while noting the continuing importance of scientific and technical education. NPE-1968 recommended that states charter new universities only after considering funding and quality requirements. In 1969, UGC created a committee on University Governance. Further, a key policy change, the 42nd

Constitutional Amendment of 1976, included education in the Concurrent List i.e., it became a joint responsibility of the national and provincial governments, while earlier it was the sole responsibility of the provinces (states). Under the amendment, the central government's role was to maintain quality and standards, while the states would remain responsible for the provision of education. Mrs. Gandhi made strong efforts to reprioritize higher education towards greater equity.

## **Reform Period (1984-2014)**

The period that began in 1984, with the end of Mrs. Gandhi's rule, is widely identified as the start of economic reforms and liberalization, and the advent of a new political era of coalition governments. During this period quality of education emerged as large concern for policy makers and policy suggestions were focused on quality, politicizing of universities and greater autonomy for colleges.

### Gnanam Committee Report –

In 1986, the government published the second national policy on education (NPE-1986); it was updated in 1992. The policy officially promoted the idea of autonomous colleges for the first time. It noted concerns on the declining quality of higher education, attributing it to a proliferation of universities. UGC published a report on “Alternate Models of Management” In 1990, popularly known as the Gnanam Committee Report, after its chairperson. It discussed the negative impacts of the heavy politicization of university governance. It recommended autonomy to colleges and universities and also recommended decentralization within the university hierarchy. The report recommended that UGC's activities be shared with State Councils for Higher Education. It suggested that most of the powers for regulating universities should pass to the State Council, with UGC playing an advisory role. It stated that a number of Universities are suffering under the weight of affiliated colleges and the burden which it imposes on their meager facilities. On the other hand, many of the affiliated colleges are experiencing difficulties because they felt that the links with the university are far too remote and the university was an obstacle in their progress. The report further noted that the existing organizational structure of universities was a problem. There were many overlaps and duplication. External players in committees of the university did not have any interest in university functions.

In 2005, CABE published a policy paper on the autonomy of higher education institutions (HEIs), making an emphatic argument for autonomy, though the progress of autonomous colleges remained limited. However, only few changes were made and till date UGC website shows only eight State Councils for Higher Education.

### Foreign equity participation and privatization of higher education -

A new Economic Policy was launched during the 1990s with its account on economic liberalization, Privatization and Globalization. This definitely gave vision to bring privatization and globalization in Indian Education System.

Government formulated the Foreign Educational Institutions Regulation for Entry and Operations, (Maintenance of Quality and Prevention of Commercialization) Bill 2010 on 15th March 2010. This enables foreign promoters to set up campuses in India and offer degrees and diplomas to students. The Union human resource ministry announced that 100 per cent foreign direct investment would be allowed under the law proposed for higher education. The Bill took care to check its potential misuse through many clauses. It also facilitated a time-bound format to grant approval to foreign educational institutions to set up campuses in India.

They would be registered with the University Grants Commission (UGC) or any other regulatory body (which supersedes UGC), which will scrutinize proposals of aspiring institutions according to India's priorities. Foreign universities aspiring to set up a campus would also have to deposit Rs. 25 crore as corpus fund and cannot take back the surplus generated from education activities here. Moreover, a foreign education provider shall, out of the income received from the corpus fund, utilize not more than 75 percent of it for the development of its institutions in India. It was made clear that quotas would be implemented if the government allows foreign universities into India.

Private universities can be instituted in India through UGC (Establishment of and Maintenance of Standards in Private Universities) Regulations, 2003 for private State Universities recognized by the University Grants Commission under section 2(f) and 12B of the UGC Act, 1956 which is already in place. Deemed university regulations came in 2010.

### **Modern Trends and Initiatives (2014-2018) –**

India today is one of the largest higher education systems in the world and ranks 2nd in terms of student enrolment in higher education. The following table shows how the Higher Education institutions are growing every year resulting in increase in enrolment ratio in higher education. Around 35.7 million students enrolled in higher education during 2016-17 which is 24.5 percent of the total (GER).

Table No.1 Growth of Universities and Colleges from 2012-2018

Year	Universities	Colleges
2012-13	667	35,525
2013-14	723	36,634
2014-15	760	38,498
2015-16	799	39,071
2016-17	864	40,026

It will also be second largest graduate talent pipeline globally by the end of 2020. The education sector in India is poised to witness major advancements in the years to come as India will have world's largest tertiary-age population with approximately 28.1 percent of India's population in the age group of 0-14 years as of year 2015.

There is still a gap between demand and supply and to prevent it from further widening and ultimately meeting the demand in future, Higher Education System need funds and measures to reduce fund requirements. Government is taking many steps towards this. Promoting technology is a potent way to reduce fund required to build large infrastructures. Building digital libraries, e resources and various other government initiatives are being adopted to

boost the growth of distance education market, besides focusing on new education techniques, such as E-learning and M-learning.

'Pradhan Mantri Gramin Digital Saksharta Abhiyan' (PMGDISHA) is a scheme to make 60 million rural households digitally literate. The outlay for this project is Rs 2,351.38 crore to usher in digital literacy in rural India where rural population will be able to use e learning facilities. The Indian government is encouraging investment in Public and Private Partnership (PPP) mode in higher education and looking at increased flow of FDI's. Government is reducing education budget outlays hoping to garner funds from industry, private players, FDI's and self-sustained models and increasing seats, giving rise to perception that fee will be increased especially for higher education.

Skill development is being taken very rigorously with a separate Ministry for it. Acquisition and Knowledge Awareness for Livelihood Promotion (SANKALP) and Skill Strengthening for Industrial Value Enhancement (STRIVE), Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Kendra (PMKK) for Skilling in Smart Cities are programs launched by Government recently.

Series of reforms are needed to be undertaken, including improvement of quality, recruiting better faculty, improving research activity and industry academia partnership, build relevance to increase employability, and to compete globally. NITI Aayog has replaced the five year planning model by replacing Planning Commission. Formation of NITI Aayog is a step towards over all reform and may affect the regulation of Education also. In a series of proposals for improvement in the higher education infrastructure, NITI Aayog in its Three Year Action Agenda 2017-18 to 2019-20, has said that the government needs to create 20 world-class universities, provide autonomy for top colleges and universities, reform the regulatory system, establish a system of project/researcher-specific grants and increase focus on vocational and profession-led education. The Aayog has suggested a series of measures to improve learning outcomes for improving the quality of higher education.

A committee chaired by a former Cabinet Secretary T.S.R. Subramanian is given the responsibility of drawing a framework for new national education policy. He has recommended that the law that set up University Grants Commission (UGC) be allowed to lapse. The suggestions are to go for a single regulatory platform for higher education. Suggestions to reform UGC have come from Hari Gautam Committee and Prof. Yashpal Committee earlier also.

### **Way Forward for 2030**

Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) has come up with a way forward for Indian higher education system considering the current state of population and demand for higher education and reform, funding and private initiatives and assuming that government will adopt transformative and innovative approaches in Higher education.



1. Have an augmented Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) of 50 percent
2. Reduce state-wise, gender based and social disparity in GER to 5 percent.
3. To become a single largest provider of global talent, with one in four graduates in the world being a product of the Indian Higher Education system.
4. Be among the top 5 countries in the world in terms of research output with an annual R&D spent of US\$ 140 billion.
5. Have more than 20 universities among the global top 200.

## Conclusion

The higher education in India has a glorious history but took the brunt of ill-willed invaders which willfully destroyed the centers of knowledge creation, documents and systematic knowledge. Britishers served education as a weapon to serve its immediate and long term colonial and strategic goals. Now Indian policymakers have a huge task to revive higher education system from the mediocrity to which it has fallen to. There is a renewed effort and focus now on higher education system because if the nation has to grow it needs the fuel of high quality technically updated professionals, credible research work and high human index.

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