HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM IN INDIA

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ABSTRACT:

Higher Education sector has witnessed a tremendous increase in the number of Universities/University level Institutions & Colleges since Independence. The Government should undertake some measures to improve the quality of higher education. Indian higher education is in need of radical reforms. A focus on enforcing higher standards of transparency, strengthening of the vocational and doctoral education pipeline, and professionalization of the sector through stronger institutional responsibility would help in reprioritizing efforts and working around the complexities. The rise of IT sector and engineering education in India has boxed students into linear path without giving them a chance to explore and discover their passions. Concerted and collaborative efforts are needed in broaden student choices through liberal arts education.

Introduction:

India's higher education system is the third largest in the world, next to the United States and China.[1] The main governing body at the tertiary level is the University Grants Commission, which enforces its standards, advises the government, and helps coordinate between the centre and the state. Accreditation for higher learning is overseen by 15 autonomous institutions established by the University Grants Commission (UGC).

As per the latest 2011 Census, about 8.15% (68 millions) of Indians are graduates, with Union Territories of Chandigarh and Delhi topping the list with 24.65% and 22.56% of their population being graduates respectively. Indian higher education system has expanded at a fast pace by adding nearly 20,000 colleges and more than 8 million students in a decade from 2000–01 to 2010–11. As of 2016, India has 799 universities, with a break up of 44 central universities, 540 state universities, 122 deemed universities, 90 private universities, 5 institutions established and functioning under the State Act, and 75 Institutes of National Importance which include AIIMS, IIT's and NIT's among others. Other institutions include 39,071 colleges as Government Degree Colleges and Private Degree Colleges, including 1800 exclusive women's colleges, functioning under these universities and institutions as reported by the UGC in 2016. Colleges may be Autonomous, i.e. empowered to examine their own degrees, up to PhD level in some cases, or non-autonomous, in which case their examinations are under the supervision of the university to which they are affiliated; in either case, however, degrees are awarded in the name of the university rather than the college.

Objectives: The main objectives of the paper are as follows:

1) To understand the Historical background of Higher education system in India.

2) To know the recent developments in India's higher education system.

Historical background of Higher education

Development of any nation solely depends on the quality of human resources; and good human resource is produced through quality education. Education provides people with an opportunity to reflect on the social, cultural, moral, economic, and spiritual issues and contributes towards the development through propagation of specialized knowledge and skills. The initial education system in India gradually got obscured due to subsequent invasions and disorder in the country. In the early modern age, the Islamic influences enriched the traditional learning centers and brought in the disciplines of Geography, Administration, Law, and Arabic Mathematics to India.

The British style University was established in Calcutta, Mumbai and Chennai in the year 1857 based on the model of University of London which has been the foundation of the modern higher education system in India. Modern Science and engineering education which flourished in Europe and America during the late 1800 weren't the main focus under the British rule. By 1903 the Indian Institute of

Science was established by Tata with focus on research in science and engineering which is the first higher technical learning system in modern India. The British model of University system continued expand across India leading to growing number of higher learning centers by 1947.

The higher education system in India grew rapidly after independence. By 1980, there were 132 universities and 4738 colleges, enrolling around five per cent of the eligible age group in higher education. The number of institutions in India is four times more than the number of institutions both in the United States and the entire Europe.

Present Scenario of Higher Education

Higher Education sector has witnessed a tremendous increase in the number of Universities/University level Institutions & Colleges since Independence. The number of Universities has increased 34 times from 20 in 1950 to 677 in 2014. The sector boasts of 45 Central Universities of which 40 are under the purview of Ministry of Human Resource Development, 318 State Universities, 185 State Private universities, 129 Deemed to be Universities, 51 Institutions of National Importance (established under Acts of Parliament) under MHRD (IITs - 16, NITs – 30 and IISERs – 5) and four Institutions (established under various State legislations). The number of colleges has also registered manifold increase of 74 times with just 500 in 1950 growing to 37,204, as on 31st March, 2013.

At present, the main categories of University/University-level Institutions are:- Central Universities, State Universities, Deemed-to-be Universities and University-level institutions. These are described as follows:

i)Central University: A university established or incorporated by a Central Act.

ii) State University: A university established or incorporated by a Provincial Act or by a State Act.   iii) Private University: A university established through a State/Central Act by a sponsoring body viz. A Society registered under the Societies Registration Act 1860, or any other corresponding law for the time being in force in a State or a Public Trust or a Company registered under Section 25 of the Companies Act, 1956.

1.1 iv) Deemed-to-be University:

An Institution Deemed to be University, commonly known as Deemed University, refers o a high-performing institution, which has been so declared by Central Government under Section 3 of the University Grants Commission (UGC) Act, 1956.

v) Institution of National Importance: An Institution established by Act of Parliament and declared as Institution of National Importance.vi) Institution under State Legislature Act: An Institution established or incorporated by a State Legislature Act. Accreditation : Indian law requires that universities be accredited unless created through an act of Parliament. Without accreditation, the government notes, "These fake institutions have no legal entity to call themselves as University/Vishwvidyalaya and to award 'degree' which is not treated as valid for academic/employment purposes." The University Grants Commission Act 1956 explains, "the right of conferring or granting degrees shall be exercised only by a University established or incorporated by or under a Central Act carlo bon tempo, or a State Act, or an Institution deemed to be University or an institution specially empowered by an Act of the Parliament to confer or grant degrees. Thus, any institution which has not been created by an enactment of Parliament or a State Legislature or has not been granted the status of a Deemed to be University, is not entitled to award a degree."

Accreditation for higher learning is overseen by autonomous institutions established by the University Grants Commission:

- 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)

- Veterinary Council of India (VCI)

The issue of assessing and assuring quality of Indian higher education is a challenge. Instead of aiming for 'world-class' universities through rankings, policy framework must improve the processes that enable accountability through data collection and reporting on parameters of institutional quality. The government should leverage this tool to improve quality of the overall system.

Measures to Improve the Quality of Higher Education

The Government should undertake the following measures to improve the quality of higher education: 1) Encouraging Individuality, 2) Tech-Savvy Methods of Teaching, 3) Making the Curriculum Dynamic, 4) High-Tech Libraries & 5) The Power of Alumni.

Recent developments in Higher education

In a recent update, the the Human Resources Development (HRD) Ministry which is responsible for higher education has proposed a new body--Higher Education Empowerment Regulation Agency (HEERA)--which will merge two leading regulatory bodies. In its current regulatory structure, the two regulatory bodies--University Grants Commission (UGC) and All India Council of Technical Education (AICTE)--are often at loggerheads in terms of their jurisdictions and approaches. UGC is primarily responsible for universities sector while AICTE is responsible for engineering and business colleges which are affiliated to universities.

Indian higher education is in a dire need to improve the quality and transparency of its higher education institutions on students, economy, and society. The charts below indicate the dramatic growth Indian higher education has witnessed. However, this expansion has come at the cost of quality which in turn has resulted in many students graduating with credentials without any job relevant skill sets.

Highlights from the data: a) Number of "State Private Universities" increased from just 14 in 2008 to 235 in 2016. These institutions are enacted by the State legislature but funded by private promoters (often business groups). b) In eight years, India added over 18,000 new colleges. These teaching colleges (public or private) are affiliated with universities which conduct tests and awards degrees. Following chart indicates the growth by level of education and field of study. c) In eight years, number of students in Indian universities and colleges doubled to reach 28.5 million students. The growth in master's and doctorate level is slower that the overall enrollment growth. The quality and supply of high quality faculty is suffering.

Table No: 1 , **Growth in Universities and Colleges in India (2008-2016)**

Sl.No	Institutions	2008	2016
1	Central Universities	25	47
2	State Universities	228	345
3	State Private universities	14	235
4	Institutions Deemed to be Universities	103	123
	Total	**370**	**750**
	Colleges	**23,206**	**41,435**

Source: UGC India I Analyzed by DrEducation.com

Table No. 1.1, **Growth in Student Enrollment by level of Education & Field of Study in India (2008-2016)**

Sl.No	Level of Education	2008	2016
1	Bachelor's (Graduate)	11,908,151	24,593,321
2	Master's (Post-graduate)	1,489,685	2,764,886
3	Doctorate	95,872	180,957
4	Others	148,100	945,582
	Total	**13,641,808**	**28,484,746**

Source: UGC India I Analyzed by DrEducation.com

Universities in India have evolved in divergent streams with each stream monitored by an apex body, indirectly controlled by the Ministry of Human Resource Development and funded jointly by the state governments. There are most universities are administered by the States, however, there are 18 important universities called Central Universities, which are maintained by the Union Government. The increased funding of the central universities give them an advantage over their state competitors.

The University Grants Commission estimated that in 2013–14, an estimated 22849 PhDs and 20425 MPhil degrees were awarded. Over half of these were in the fields of Science, Engineering/Technology, Medicine and Agriculture. As of 2014–15, over 178,000 students were enrolled in research programs . Apart from the several hundred state universities, there is a network of research institutions that provide opportunities for advanced learning and research leading up to a PhD in branches of science, technology and agriculture. Several have won international recognition.

Across the country, tertiary enrollment rates have increased at a compound annual growth rate of 3.5% in the 5 years preceding 2016. Current enrollment stands at 34.58 million, over 15% more than the 29.2 million enrolled in 2011.International league tables produced in 2006 by the London-based Times Higher Education Supplement(THES) confirmed Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU)'s place among the world's top 200 universities. Likewise, THES 2006 ranked JNU's School of Social Sciences at the 57th position among the world's top 100 institutes for social sciences. In 2017, THES ranked the Indian Institute of Science as the eighth best "small university" in the world. A small university was defined as one with less than 5000 students. In 2015, the institute also became the first Indian institute to make it to the top hundred in the THES list of engineering institutes. It was ranked 99.

Conclusion

To conclude, the Higher education system in India grew rapidly after independence. The number of institutions in India is four times more than the number of institutions both in the United States and the entire Europe. Yet the weakness clearly outweighs the strengths. India educates approximately 10 per cent of its youths in higher education. Even though, none of its universities occupy a solid position at the top. A few of the best universities have some excellent departments and centers, and there are a small number of outstanding undergraduate colleges. UGC recently released a report describing the current scenario of the Indian Higher Education System. It shows that despite the growing numbers of colleges and enrollments, it is not adequate enough to cater to the educational needs of the increasing young population.

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