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**PRIVATIZATION AND LIBERALIZATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM IN INDIA: NEED IMPROVEMENT IN CURRENT SCENARIO**

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**ABSTRACT**

Availability of right knowledge and skills to the youth can ensure the overall national progress and economic growth. But the complicated nature of Indian polity and policy process make Indian higher education a very complex enterprise and it suffers from several systemic deficiencies. As a result, it continues to provide graduates that are unemployable. Privatization expected to provide the much needed capacity, skill, quality and new ideas on higher education. The Current Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) is 18% and is targeted 21% by end of the 12th Plan and 30% by year 2020, which cannot be achieved by the public sector alone. In 2012, private unaided institutions and universities accounted for 59 % share of total enrolments with 64% share of institutions. It needs to further expand at an accelerated rate in order to achieve the targeted GER. To do so, Govt. has to take action on development of a new national policy and regulatory framework for higher education, make them more liberal and attract big leaders of private sector. This may results in constant stream of funding which will facilitate quality based education.

**KEYWORDS**

higher education, educational reforms.

**1. INTRODUCTION**

Higher education is a vital tool for empowerment, individual creativity and societal progress and a crucial input for access to better opportunities in life. In India, education is the key to the task of nation-building. It is now widely accepted that higher education has been critical to India’s emergence in the global knowledge economy.

Due to rising income level in India, middle class is focusing more on providing quality education to their children. Spending on education has figured as the single largest outlay for a middle class household after food and groceries. With its rapidly expanding middle class, India’s private expenditure on education is set to increase manifold.

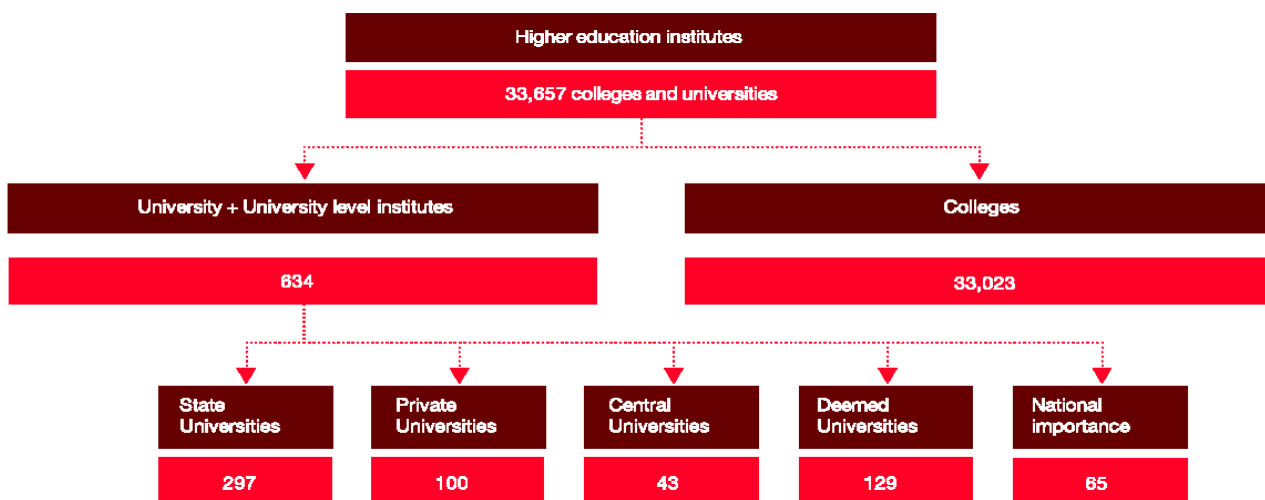
Over the past few years, India’s higher education sector has witnessed tremendous growth. Today, the country has the largest higher education system in the world in terms of the number of institutions. It is the second-largest in terms of enrollment. Economic growth has been a major feature of India’s development over recent decades. Yet, the capacity and quality of higher education has not kept pace with many of the essentials for India’s modernization.

India’s large size, long history, diverse culture and the complicated nature of Indian polity and policy process make Indian higher education a very complex enterprise. Higher education institutions in India have a quality issue, as evidenced by a lack of presence on world ranking measures and low employment rates of graduates. Enrollment ratios for the college age population are also low and face increasing pressure from population growth and greater completion rates at the secondary level.

**2. CURRENT HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM**

Apart from higher education institutes (State Universities, Deemed Universities, Central Universities, Private Universities) there are several private institutes in India that offer various professional courses. Distance learning, Open University are also features of the Indian higher education system. The current regulations allow only not-for-profit entities in higher education. There is an absence of clear regulations for foreign education providers, although legislation is under discussion. While the government has introduced various bills in the Parliament, each of these seems to be stuck at various levels, if passed can bring much needed structural changes.

**3. STATISTICS - UNIVERSITIES, COLLEGES, STUDENT ENROLLMENT ETC. - CURRENT SCENARIO**



Total students enrolment during the academic year 2011-12 accounted to 203.27 lakhs (provisional) students enrolled in various courses at all levels in universities/colleges and other institutions of higher education as compared to the revised figure 186.70 lakhs in the previous year, registering an increase of 8.87%. The demand is expected to increase at a compounded rate of 11–12 % till 2022. This requires more investment — public and private.

Private unaided institutions and universities are the fastest growing segment of Indian higher education and accounted for 64% of the total number of institutions and 59% of enrollment in the country, as in 2012.

The higher education sector is plagued with various challenges such as low Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) and lack of quality research and education, this situation is despite 11% increase in student enrolments in higher education and a 9% growth in institutions during the last decade.

#### 4. TARGET

The current Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) is 18% targeted 21% by the end of 12th Plan and 30% by the year 2020 cannot be achieved by the public sector alone. While the intention of making higher education accessible to the masses is noble, yet it must not be at the cost of the quality of education.

To achieve this, the country needs an education system that can deliver quality in terms of a skilled and industry-ready workforce, without diluting focus on world-class research and innovation. Unless it is able to get its act together and put in place a wide range of mechanisms, the system will not have the capacity to meet the demand.

#### 5. QUALITY & STANDARD IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Growth is driven by the increasing propensity of the middle class to spend on education. To productively engage this huge pool of human resources, India would require revamping the higher education sector.

Many steps need to be taken to augment supply, improve quality and fix many of the problems faced by higher education to match it with international standards.

It is necessary for India to re-evaluate productivity both in terms of quality and quantity in order to maintain the competitive edge in the field of higher education.

#### 6. SHORTCOMINGS OF CURRENT SYSTEM

Higher education in India has many shortcomings. The standards of academic research are low and declining. Many other concerns like low level of public funding, improvement of academic structure, regulatory environment, accreditation system that has low coverage and the unjust policies are also affected the system.

Only 0.7% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is being spent on higher and technical education (as against a target of 1.5% of GDP) (MHRD 2011). Most of the public expenditure on higher education is used up on salaries and maintenance of existing institutions. Very little is spent on curriculum, research and technology.

Policy-makers are opposed to setting up of higher educational institutions as for-profit corporate entities. Multiple approvals are required. Policies are also inconsistent. Absence of 'political-will' is also a major issue. Course contents are not in line with the expectations of the industry, leading to poor employability. Many reports have been issued, but the accompanying recommendations for reform of higher education not meet the realities.

The situation is further complicated by the rigidities of the higher education system, allotment of inadequate fund, the political pressures from regional, religious and caste-based groups etc.

#### 7. CONSEQUENCES OF SHORTCOMINGS

Resource constraints are severe and the quality of education available to most Indian students is questionable in terms of its ability to face the global challenges and current market scenario. As a result, it continues to provide graduates that are unemployable despite emerging shortages of skilled manpower in an increasing number of sectors.

Position of Indian universities also not met with international rankings. For instance none of the Indian universities figure in the latest (2013) Time Higher Education (THE) ranking of the top 100 world universities.

Academic salaries are uncompetitive by international standards. Many of India's top academics are teaching in the United States, Britain, and elsewhere.

Most of the Indian colleges and universities lack in high-end research facilities because of under-investment in infrastructure development that makes it very difficult to engage top quality students in cutting-edge research. Statistics shows that the percentage of students enrolled for Master's level courses (PG) is 12.26% while a very small proportion i.e. 0.79% of the total number of students enrolled for research.

As stated above, this large gap has to be bridged if we want to speed up our path to development.

#### 8. NEED FOR IMPROVEMENT IN SYSTEM

For any nation, education is the basic necessity for the socio-economic development of the individuals and the society. Improved standard of education as first priority by the Govt. authorities should be offered to the majority with sincere political will is the need of the hour.

Government funding needs to be significantly enhanced. A vibrant credit market for financing higher education must be developed along with increase in provision for subsidised loans and scholarships. For the students higher education loans and further business scheme backed with the guarantee by the State Govt. (as recently steps taken by MadhyaPradesh Govt.).

Further expectation is to improve co-ordination across ministries and agencies. It is expected from the Govt. for Special drive in back-word regions for infrastructure development in order to increase GER. Government should encourage private sector investment in education and develop the innovative and enhanced PPP models.

It is imperative for education institutions to scale up their teaching and learning processes, keeping in view the current and future needs of the job market.

Further privatization and liberalization are also a major issue. Besides going forward on the way, there is a need for a kind of regulatory mechanisms which can monitor and control activities with the objective of ensuring quality and social accountability.

Being the second largest nation in terms of population, India is rich in manpower resources. It would require a thorough in-depth evaluation of the present state of affairs of the higher education and also suitable plans need to be converted into actions in order to achieve higher levels of productivity.

It is the demand of current scenario to identify the deficiencies of higher education system and explore the possibilities of revamping and revitalizing the core functional areas so that growth in this crucial sector becomes qualitative and sustainable.

#### 9. EXPECTED GROWTH & FUTURE REQUIREMENTS

Further, according to the report released by Ernst & Young, the higher education sector in India is expected to witness a growth of 18% CAGR (Compounded Annual Growth Rate) till 2020. At present, the sector witnesses spends of more than Rs 46,200 crore, which is estimated to grow at an average rate of more than 18% to over Rs 232,500 crore in 10 years.

Keeping in view, to achieves the future requirements there is an urgent need to re-look at the Financial Resources, Quality Standards and at the end, the Responsiveness.

Govt has to take action on enhancing institutional autonomy and transparency, increasing public & private funding and linking them to outcomes. Government resource allocation is inadequate to meet targeted 30% GER by 2020, leaving enough scope for private participation.



## 10. NEED OF FURTHER PRIVATIZATION

There is a huge demand-supply gap in the Indian education sector. As a "Sunrise Sector" for investment this has attracted many private players to invest in education and training institutions. The sector offers a huge untapped market in regulated and non-regulated segments due to low literacy rate and growing per capita income. The Indian economy will get a boost with expansion in its education sector by growing private investment. Privatization of higher education is absolutely necessary in a vast country like India as Govt. alone is helpless to do so.

The private education sector is estimated to reach US\$ 115 billion by 2018 against US\$ 70 billion in 2013, according to consulting firm Technopak. The education sector has attracted foreign direct investments worth Rs 3,332.97 crore during April 2000 to March 2013, according to the data released by the Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion. To realise this fast growth of education sector in India, many private companies are looking for relevant acquisitions and alliances in this space.

The need of the hour is to make every possible effort to attract serious private sector players who can enter in the higher education sector and build high-quality institutions. Also, in order to achieve the rising GER target there is an urgent need to further expand private sector role at an accelerated rate. The policy environment needs to encourage genuine private investment, within the framework of education.

## 11. EXPECTATION FROM PRIVATIZATION

1. Enhanced students' choices.
2. Increase motivation and accountability.
3. Benefits of corporate-backed institutions.
4. Strengthening research and development activity.
5. Create new opportunities for the large population.
6. Accelerate and enhance the development of higher education.
7. To attract and retain talent by paying competitive compensation.
8. Ensuring excellence and equity driven expansion of higher education.
9. Promote necessary changes and activities that may lead to excellence.
10. Development of Information, Communication and Technological requirements.
11. Capacity-building (Personality Development, Skill enhancement, Infrastructure building).
12. Investment at accelerated rate and improve higher education by linking funding to quality.
13. To add prestige around the globe.
14. Further collaboration, marketing and brand building.
15. New types of degrees and courses, new ideas and innovation on higher education management, curriculum, teaching and research methods etc.
16. Promotion of innovative and knowledge-based enterprises by deployment of cutting-edge technologies, careful planning and strategic implementation.
17. To ensure excellence and reasonable match between demands for and supply of globally acceptable labour by promoting career and market oriented education.

Thus the privatization expected to provide the much needed capacity, skill, quality and new ideas on higher education. The private sector can be expected to play an instrumental role in the achievement of these outcomes.

## 12. NEED FOR FURTHER LIBERALIZATION

The emergence of a global economy has forced the nation to adapt their systems of higher education to the changed global realities. There is a need for greater adaptability in the higher education system so that it continues to provide the needed skills and trained workforce to the economy as it integrates with the world economy.

Further Liberalization is required in order to attract private domestic and overseas investments on a large scale to cope up with the challenges of expansion and excellence. This will bring a constant stream of funding which will also facilitate a research-based career and make it a viable option for the future of Indian teachers and students. It will expand the supply and the competition among educational institutions, may results in less expenditure on education.

Higher education system is even more complex due to its political and legal environment. Many foreign institutions interested in India but are confused to enter because of uncertain policies.

There are several systemic barriers that restrict entry of private higher education providers. The demand for quality skilled workforce and an environment for adoption of recommended policies and regulatory change will encourage greater private sector participation. Opportunities to grow and engage are very high if we go forward with action.

The role played by private enterprise in transforming sectors, such as Information Technology and Information Technology Enabled Services, telecom, banking, etc., is evident. Today, IT's growth story has put India on the global economic map. These sectors are shining examples of the progress that can be made when private enterprise is allowed to function in a free and encouraging manner.

## 13. ACHIEVING TARGET

The policy environment needs to encourage genuine private investment, within the framework of education. Priority should be given to continuous upgradation of curriculum to keep in pace with rapid growth of science & technology. Industry and Academia connection required in order to ensure curriculum and skills in line with requirements. Measures will have to be taken to refine, diversify & upgrade different regulations, research programmes and infrastructure.

## 14. CONCLUSION

India's higher education needs are significant. The system needs systemic reform. To do so, Govt. has to take action on development of a new national policy and regulatory framework for higher education, make them more liberal and by doing this, attract big leaders of private sector.

Private sector can play an important role in pushing overall growth of Indian Higher Education. This may results in constant stream of funding which will facilitate quality based education and make these professions more attractive for the younger generation. Unfortunately, the higher education operating environment provides certain challenges which dissuade serious players from entering the field. Entry of foreign education providers into India would reduce rates of Indian students going abroad for higher education at exorbitant fees and expenses.

Policy measures required to promote, sustain, and enhance world-class research. There is a need of methodical study to review and identify the specific problems and the scope for improvement. The country would not be able to sustain its growth momentum and maintain competitiveness unless problems with higher education are fixed. In current and emerging contexts, such a policy framework should be developed by an independent, high-powered commission contains representatives of related field in order to ensure the right mix of technical, business and functional skills in the work place.

Going forward with further privatization & liberalization, it should be mandatory for private investment to meet minimum standards in scrutiny of students, providing degrees, course contents, faculty recruitment, infrastructure availability, technology usage etc. in order to avoid malpractices in the field. There is an urgent need for extra-ordinary increase in the Govt. funding, acceleration in private investment and further efforts to improve the country's innovative capacity.

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