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**ENGINEERING EDUCATION IN INDIA: YESTERDAY AND TODAY**

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**ABSTRACT**

*The importance of education, especially in higher education, has been continuously growing and the knowledge based industries are now occupying the centre stage in development. Though the modern higher education system in India is almost 135 years old, its growth has been much faster after India became independent. Over the past 50 years, there has been a significant growth in the number of new universities and institutions of higher learning in specialized areas. Modern society is technology based and the quality of life of the people is directly or indirectly related to the quality and level of technical education in vogue. In this fast changing world, technology is the pivot around which the human needs and services revolve. Technical education in India contributes a major share to the overall education system and plays a vital role in the social and economic development of our nation. This paper suggests that highest growth in basic occupation that has large base and in high skill category having a very small base. A large number of people require vocational skills and their number is also growing.*

**KEYWORDS**

engineering & technical education, professional education, growth and development of technical education.

**INTRODUCTION**

The number of institutes has grown phenomenally. In 1947, there were only 46 engineering colleges and 53 polytechnics with an annual intake of 6,240 students. By the end of the 1980s, higher education in India has become one of the largest systems in the world, with about 10 million students enrolled in 188 universities and about 14 thousand colleges and with 400 thousand teachers. More than Rs.10 thousand million is invested every year in higher education, which forms 0.9% of GNP. There were a total of 85 college grade engineering schools in 1880, 63 of them had been founded between 1862 and 1876. And the institution of Engineers in India AMIE was established in 1920 in Kolkata, West Bengal and is acclaimed to have pioneered non- formal education in Engineering. Due to initiatives taken during successive Plan periods, and particularly because of large-scale private sector participation, the number of All India Council of Technical Education (AICTE) approved technical and management institutions has risen to 4,791 in 2001-02 with an annual intake of 6.7 million students. The individual NITs, after the introduction of the NIT Act, have been functioning as autonomous technical universities and hence can draft their own curriculum and functioning policies. In India, there are several engineering colleges imparting undergraduate and graduate courses in engineering, applied engineering and sciences. The Government of India has introduced the National Institutes of Technology (NIT) Act 2010 to bring 30 such institutions within the ambit of the act and to provide them with complete autonomy in their functioning. The NITs are deliberately scattered throughout the country in line with the government norm of an NIT in every major state of India to promote regional development. Nearly one- third of the total education budget goes for higher education with about one-twentieth of the total student population in the country. The National Institutes of Technology (NIT) is premier colleges of engineering and technology education in India. They were originally called Regional Engineering Colleges (RECs). In 2002, the Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India, decided to upgrade, in phases, all the original 17 Regional Engineering Colleges (RECs) as National Institutes of Technology (NITs). There are currently 30 NITs, with the inception of 10 new NITs in the year 2010.

The Indian higher education system is one of the largest in the world in terms of the number of colleges and universities. From 350 universities and 16,982 colleges in 2005-06, the numbers have gone up to 713 universities, 36,739 colleges, and 11,343 diploma-level institutions in 2013-14. There is need to match the supply with demand and to dovetail education policy to employment opportunities. Therefore, higher education needs to be futuristic and envision areas that will generate future employment opportunities and accordingly offer suitable courses for students. The gross enrolment ratio (GER) in higher education has nearly doubled from around 11.6 per cent in 2005- 06 to 21.1 per cent in 2012-13 (Provisional), with 29.6 million students enrolled in 2012-13 as compared to 14.3 million in 2005-06. However, the lower penetration into higher levels of education leads to higher dropouts, especially among the secondary and upper primary students, consequently to accumulation of less educated and less skilled job seekers at the bottom of the pyramid. The percentage educated also falls progressively with higher levels of education.

While only 73 per cent literacy has been achieved as per Census 2011, there has been marked improvement in female literacy. Male literacy at 80.9 per cent is still higher than female literacy at 64.6 per cent but the latter has increased by 10.9 percentage points compared to 5.6 percentage points for the former. The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act 2009 was enacted by the centre to increase the quality as well as accessibility of elementary education in India in April 2010. Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) is the designated scheme for implementation of the RTE Act. The framework of the SSA has been revised to include reimbursement for expenditure incurred for at least 25 per cent admissions of children belonging to disadvantaged and weaker sections in private unaided schools from the academic year 2014- 15. Between 2007-08 and 2013-14, according to the DISE (District Information System for Education), total enrolment in primary schools increased from 134 million to 137 million in 2011- 12 and then declined to 132 million in 2013-14 while upper primary enrolment grew from 51 million to about 67 million. This is in line with the changing demographic age structure. India has achieved near universal enrolment and enhanced hard and soft infrastructure (schools, teachers, and academic support staff).

**LITERATURE REVIEW**

The history of Technical education and its challenges has been the focus of a number of studies carried out in recent times. A brief review of some of these studies has been made here.

Though the contribution of higher education to develop is quite significant, India, like many other developing countries, has not paid adequate attention to it. There has been a strong tendency in the country to neglect higher education, focusing rather exclusively on elementary, more particularly, and primary education. While a major positive outcome of the 1990 Education for All conference in Jomtien, Thailand, was that elementary education received the somewhat serious attention of the national government, culminating in the passing of the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act (2009), it has had an undesirable effect on other levels of education, particularly higher education (Tilak 2012). Future engineers should receive knowledge of basic principles, which consent to them to progress on their own in studies in non- technical subjects. This should lead to the chance of treating systems from a holistic point of view. Technical goals and decisions must be seen with all possible implications in a broad general sense. Science is not neutral the development of science and technology is strongly coupled to the development of society (Davis and Schaufelberger 2007). The history of technical and vocational education in African countries has in many ways been characterized by conflict and controversy: disputes and failures always seeming to achieve more prominence than achievements and successes. The discrepancy between manpower supply and demand has always been acute, particularly in skilled trades and the more senior levels of management (Godwin 2007). Equality of educational opportunity in higher education is considered essential because higher education is a powerful tool for reducing or eliminating income and wealth disparities. If higher education is fully privatized and priced at its full cost, only those who can afford will buy it. The stability of the society will be disturbed



if it consists of sections of the population which get higher education obtain income and assets at increasing rate while large proportion of the population remains deprived of higher education and remain poor. The idea of equalizing educational opportunities also lies in the fact that "the ability to profit by higher education is spread among all classes of people. There are great reserves of untapped ability in the society; if offered the chance they can rise to the top. A great deal of talent of the highest level is, in fact, lost by an egalitarian system of education (Balachander 1986).

### OBJECTIVES AND RELEVANCE OF THE STUDY

Technical Education is one of the most significant components of human resource development spectrum in improving the quality of life of the people. In recognition of the importance of this sector, the planners have accorded priority to this sector. There has been phenomenal growth in the field of technical education during the previous plan periods. The established the Indian Institutes of Technology, Indian Institutes of Management and Indian Institutes of Science were a vital step in the development of technical education in the Indian subcontinent. The ability of these institutions to produce competent and hard core intelligent scientists and engineers had managed to change the outlook of Indian on the global front. India was earlier known for yoga, meditation and holy places, but now it is reckoned for computer engineers. The technical and management education sector has made immense contribution to the country's economic and industrial development. It has produced high quality skilled, technical and managerial manpower. Therefore, the major objectives of this paper are:

1. To analyze the need of education in India.
2. To examine the coordination between higher education and labour market.

### METHODOLOGY

For analyzing such facts, data for the study has been gathered from secondary sources including Tenth Five Year Plan 2002-07, Economic Survey 2014-15, Books on technical education and other articles written by eminent authors.

### ROLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION

Education has a vital role in economic development of societies and nations. Development of education benefits individuals, societies as well as the nation. The educational development makes rising demands for human resources and the quality of education. Education may influence economic development of the world and also it influences the process of skill formation. Education is not for earn a huge benefit but it is regarded as a great equalizer. With the help of education, the society can improve the income distributions and reduce poverty and disparity.

On the other hand, the financing of higher education has been a critical issue. Especially in the case of fee structure, but in the universities the fees are dreadfully low and have remained the same. The state universities seem to the UGC for academic guidance as well as financial support. In the case of other universities, academic guidance is available, but in most cases financial support is usually tentative as well as inadequate. Some universities get state support, some others do not. Many of the colleges are having financial problems, the students and the colleges need more financial support from the government. Especially for the weaker sections of the society, the state should provide financial support by offering loans repayable in easy installments. If it is available for the students, it will make possible to choose from a wider option of courses. In any case the government should take proper decision, regarding the financial support; otherwise it will affect the student's feature.

The Twelfth Five Year Plan's proposal is for an explanation of higher education system in private sector and suggests strategies for value development in it. With the objectives and suggestion of the plan, the report mentions that the private sector has played an active role in the growth of the sector. India has one of the largest higher education systems in the world, with 25.9 million students enrolled in more than 45,000 degree and diploma institutions in the country. It has witnessed mainly high growth of 9% in the last decade. Moreover, the Government intends to attain enrollment of 35.9 million students in higher education institutions, with a GER of 25.2%, by the end of the Twelfth Five Year Plan period. The private sector can be predictable to play an influential role in the success of these outcomes through the creation of knowledge networks.

### HIGHER EDUCATION AND LABOUR MARKET

There have been three key developments in the Indian Labour market in recent years. First the country's high economic growth created new jobs in the IT and IT enabled services, pharmaceuticals, biotechnology and engineering design sectors. In addition, several new economy sectors such as finance, insurance, organized retail; aviation, hospitality, animation, media, real estate and infrastructure opened up a wide variety of Job opportunities, not all necessarily requiring graduate qualification. Secondly many Indians are new hired for jobs abroad and a wide range of jobs are offshore to India. At the same time, Indian companies are also hiring foreign nationals. Thus, there is a global labour market. More and better jobs are being created for Indians, who are playing an important role in this global labour market. Finally, due to technical changes, most jobs in both developed and services sector are new clustered at the low productivity end, while some are at the high productivity end, with the middle hollowing out. Thus, a majority of the work force is engaged in jobs requiring basic of intermediate skills.

In the coming year, real GDP growth at market prices is estimated to be about 0.6-1.1 percentage points higher vis-a-vis 2014-15. This increase is warranted by four factors. First, the government has undertaken a number of reforms and is planning several more. Their cumulative growth impact will be positive. A further impetus to growth will be provided by declining oil prices and increasing monetary easing facilitated by ongoing moderation in inflation. Simulating the effects of tax cuts, declining oil prices will add spending power to households, thereby boosting consumption and growth. Oil is also a significant input in production, and declining prices will shore up profit margins and hence balance sheets of the corporate sector. Declining input costs are reflected in the wholesale price index which moved to deflation territory in January 2015.

Higher education in India is skewed of favours of humanities and arts and about 4/5th of the graduates do not have any employable skills with rigid academic structures, there is little student choice and large variation in quality across institutions. Ordinary graduates that the country's higher education system churns out (Produce mechanically and in Large quantities) are unfit for the new jobs being created.

This opening has arisen because facts and luck have aligned in India's favour. The macro-economy has been rendered more stable, reforms have been launched, the deceleration in growth has ended and the economy appears now to be recovering, the external environment is benign, and challenges in other major economies have made India the near-cynosure of eager investors. Daunting challenges endure, which this Survey will not ignore, but the strong political mandate for economic change has imbued optimism that they can be overcome. India, in short, seems poised for propulsion.

In sum, in overall terms, India does not have a problem of supply of graduates; the problem lies in the uneven quality of graduate and skill mismatch and small number of people with rapid economic growth, investment boom and accompanying structural changes, the situation had aggravated in certain segments, bringing focus on higher education and skill development in recent years.

Now with slowdown, with media reporting job losses and weak placements, people are voluntarily opting for further education and skill up gradation. Thus skill shortages are not general, but specific and often temporary and cyclical. The solution may, therefore, not lie in large scale expansion of higher education, but in identifying the shortages and finding context specific solutions and building adaptive capacity in the system.

Linkage between higher education and the labour market are tenuous. Addressing the problem of unemployment and underemployment of graduates on the one hand, and the problem of skill shortages on the other requires interventions that make the connections between higher education and the jobs more efficient.

### OUTLOOK INTO A BRIGHT FUTURE

To ensure the quality of education, it is necessary to make our accreditation process more transparent, time-bound and free from the regime of controls. Institutions like the NAAC and AICTE should make public the benchmarks as well as other normative standards, which are absolute minimum requirements for starting colleges and institutes of technical education. There is a need to enforce these minimum standards without any dilution or compromise. Modernization of syllabi, examination reforms and greater attention to issues of governance of universities and colleges, all require urgent attention. There is found that the students of

Engineering Colleges of each state of this country should be given apprenticeship, and on job training opportunities. The result is that students either drop out after class ten or twelve or enroll in degree colleges for want of anything better to do. We thus spend huge amount on producing a large number of unemployable youth who hold university degrees. Any employer will tell you how trying it is to get the right people for available jobs. Construction companies do not get adequately trained masons, carpenters, blacksmiths, electricians, etc. offices cannot get good stenographers, computer operators, accountants, etc. Factories and workshops cannot get mechanics and technicians. These graduates do not possess employable skills even if they are considered educated.

All the inventions and innovations stem out from the developed nations, which is a result of tremendous effort that they put in R & D. Thus R & D facilities have to promote in the industries. Globalization has compelled industries to produce standardized, calibrated and quality products, here; Institutes can help industries of the region in providing easy access to this.

In times of rapid change, institutions have to become more responsive to changing labour markets and students interests. This will lead to availability of trained human resources to the industries of the region. Further, it will also widen the placement opportunities of the students in the industries, and service sector. Unfortunately, universities are not particularly innovative institutions they are not well suited to quickly pulling together whatever resources are needed to respond to a new problem or challenge. This problem is more serious in India due to the structural rigidities of the system, near absence of competition between institutions, and mindset problems.

Economic growth is good for the poor, both directly because it raises incomes and because it generates resources to invest in the public services and social safety nets that the poor need. Growth – and the prospects and opportunities that it brings – also encourages individuals to invest in their own human capital. A recent study found strikingly that merely informing families in villages outside Bangalore that call centres were hiring educated women increased the likelihood that teenager girls in those villages completed school. However, growth must be complemented with effective state-delivered programs that raise the living standards of the most weak in society. To be successful, anti-poverty programs must recognize that policies shape the incentives of individuals and firms, and also acknowledge the limited completion capacity of the state to target and deliver public services to the poor. Since technology has become the key factor in deciding the course of development of any nation, there is a need to encourage technology up-gradation of the industries, therefore enhancing the research potential of the industries.

It is indisputable that higher education, it leads to modern technological development in the society. And also it provides a large number of job-oriented courses which should be attractive to thousands of Young people to get a career of employment or self-employment. The Previous Prime Minister, Dr. Manmohan Singh (2005) has positively predicted that the 21<sup>st</sup> century will be the “knowledge century”, which refers to the socio-economic transformation that the century is projected to go through in the 21<sup>st</sup> century as a result of knowledge revolution. Experience has shown that private institutions are for more adaptable and non-formal provision is better in responding to the students’ demand. Thus, a suitable mix of the public and the private, the formal and the non formal provision for higher education and training provides an optimal solution and would meet the changing needs of economy and society. The problem lies in the fact that our education system is designed for those who wish to pursue higher studies in universities or in technical institutions [medicine /engineering etc.] making no allowance for those who do not have the aptitude for higher studies. Deemed Universities have also mushroomed and it does not belong to the same class as those familiar as such twenty years ago. This provision was kept for a few truly wonderful education and research institutions, with a deliberation that they would bring deepness and diversity into the education system.

## CONCLUSION

Pure specialist knowledge gained through study is often not enough for this. Basic knowledge in method and system expertise for the entire value chain are now also required – starting from the business idea through to realization, distribution, operation and on to the disposal of devices, equipment and systems of technical applications. Business acumen, methods of system and project management, basic company management skills and process-oriented action in broader contexts are also becoming important. Science, vocational and technical education revolves around the advancement of technological, industrial and entrepreneurial objectives that will eventually manifest in employment generation, poverty eradication and self reliance. No nation can make any meaningful socioeconomic stride without functional vocational-technical institutions. What is required now is to begin to empower our students for self-employment through vocational-technical education. Therefore, it is important to understand technology not as an isolated discipline, but as a solution embedded in different contexts. Engineers of today are more than technical tinkerers, because the working environment has become much more complex. They are managers who develop solutions according to customer requirements as part of the team, develop market-oriented thinking and take social contexts into account. While the task previously consisted of developing new technical components, devices and equipment, it now includes designing, implementing and integrating complex hardware and software systems.

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