

# INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF RESEARCH IN COMMERCE, IT & MANAGEMENT

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**HIGHER EDUCATION: EXPLORATION OF OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES**

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**ABSTRACT**

*Education is an essential part of human's life. The motive of education is to enlighten the life of an individual by imparting knowledge in the relevant field. The relevance of education is not confined to enhance knowledge as well it also explores social and moral values, spiritual attitude, and moral character of an individual. Education is the only mean which gives the real spirit of life to human beings. There are various important elements of higher education which plays significant role in overall growth and personality development of an individual. No doubt, Higher Education has attained a key position in the knowledge based society under advanced tech economy. But in this modern era of technology education has lost its relevance to the modern and highly sophisticated youth. Today's highly advanced youth finds little interest in primary aim of education and just gets high degrees and certificates for sake of formality. The major misfortune of Indian education system is corruption caused by politicians and this leads to frustration and idleness among the young generation. Insufficient teaching infrastructure and lack of awareness for innovative teaching methods also leads to various flaws in higher education system. There is need in this concern to transform the education system. This paper reflects the important elements and opportunities of higher education system which plays great relevance in life of an individual. The present paper also focuses on major challenges or problems for higher education and also explores some measures to meet these challenges.*

**KEYWORDS**

Education, Higher education, Challenges, Opportunities.

**INTRODUCTION**

Education is an important element of our life. Education act as significant for human life and bring peace, progress and development. It provides roots to everyone for strengthening the culture and civilization. It is a passport for freedom and liberty and a higher calling in life. In today's time of advancement, it is an unquestionable fact that quality education is mandatory to fulfilling one's potential and is the key for vertical mobility and economic growth, and an educated population is the precondition for economic prosperity of any nation. Education in general and particularly higher education is a factor of great importance to the development of an energetic transnational economy. Higher education acts as a foundation in the development and support of economic, social and cultural development for the economy. Higher education institutions represent the most meaningful character of economical, cultural and social, intellectual life of the community in general. The main objective of a higher education system is to add real value to human resources, and produce wealth creators and leaders in all fields business, professions, politics, administration, and creative pursuits. The definition of higher education includes a hierarchy of institutions and programmes. Many diverse categories of university level institutions such as central universities, state universities, private universities, IITs, NITs, IIITs, IIMs, IISERs, occupy the upper end of the higher education spectrum. The various colleges offering general or specialized system of education, professional education system, provide higher education to nearly eighty percent of students. In general our higher education system has divided these institutions and programs into two broad categories: one for scholarly pursuits and achievements and the other for work-force requirements. Then, there are several other post secondary institutions such as community colleges and technical training institutions. In a sense the polytechnics and vocational institutions, which are not stringently post-secondary, are also considered as higher education. Higher education principally and usually means university level education. It proposes a number of qualifications choices from Higher National Diplomas and Foundation Degrees to Honors Degrees and as advance step, Postgraduate programmes such as Masters Degrees and Doctorates. These courses are recognized throughout the world as representing specialist expertise supported by a wide range of skills that employers discover it as very useful. Further it is termed as system of education which generally includes those post graduate studies in where you can gain your Master and Doctorate degrees.

**ORIGIN AND GROWTH**

The achievements of Indian education in ancient times were fascinating – the sages and scholars orally imparting education in the Gurukul system (students staying at Guru's or teacher's home to complete education). While the original Vedic education was confined to upper strata of society in a complicated stratified social order, later spread of Buddhism and Jainism enriched education and was available to everyone in society. The problems of lack of inclusiveness though, in some measure, persist till present day. The famous institutions at Nalanda, Vikramshila and Takshashila were celebrated symbols of educational and cultural achievements of India. Nalanda University, during fifth to thirteenth century AD was known for its educational excellence. The university was a convergence point for international scholars. The contribution of India in the field of education during ancient and medieval times was thus very significant. The system of higher education now existing in India was originally implanted by the British rulers in the mid-19th century to serve the colonial economic, political and administrative benefit, and in particular, to merge and preserve their dominance in the country. It was innate by the state managers after independence (in 1947) as a colonial legacy, and has been extended incredibly during the last five decades. Before Independence, access to higher education was very restricted and exclusive, with enrolment of less than a million students in 500 colleges and 20 universities. Since independence, the expansion has been very impressive. The number of universities (as on 31st March 2006) has increased by 18 times, (from 27 in 1950-51 to 367 in 2005-06). The number of total colleges has increased by 35 times (i.e. from 578 in 1950-51 to 18064 in 2005-06). The colleges for general education has increased from 370 in 1950-51 to 14400 in 2005-06, while the colleges for professional education has increased from 208 in 1950-51 to 3664 in 2005-06. At presently there are 659 universities and university level institutions out of which 152 are central, 316 at state and 191 at private level. There are 33023 college are established out of which 669 colleges are established at central level. 13,024 colleges established at state level and 19,930 private colleges are established till the end of 12<sup>th</sup> plan.

**OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

- To study the academic framework and scenario of higher education in India.
- To find out the opportunities and challenges in the field of higher education.
- To explore the measures to meet the challenges in the field of higher education.

**METHODOLOGY**

The study is based on secondary sources and necessary information is based on secondary sources such as journals, magazines, annual reports, websites etc.

**ACADEMIC QUALIFICATION FRAMEWORK OF HIGHER EDUCATION**

There are three main principle levels of qualifications within the higher education system in the country which are as under:

- a) **BACHELOR/ UNDERGRADUATE LEVEL:** Bachelor's degree to students is offered after 12 years of school education. Generally it is offered in two streams:

- Scholar or Liberal field of education
- Professional or workforce oriented field of education

The liberal studies are generally three years programme offered in arts, commerce and sciences. Some bodies offer bachelor courses with honors in liberal studies which are not essentially longer in period but indicate greater depth of study. Bachelor degree in professional studies is generally a four years programme offered in agriculture, dentistry, engineering, medicine, pharmacy, technology, and veterinary. The bachelors in architecture and medicine take five and five and a half years respectively. There are other bachelor programmes which are offered only after completion of first bachelor degree. These comprise one year bachelors in education, journalism and library and information science. Similarly a Bachelor's degree in law can be pursued only after completion of first bachelor degree but is of three years bachelor programme. The bachelor degree in field of law is also offered as an integrated degree lasting five years.

- b) **MASTER'S / POST-GRADUATE LEVEL:** The duration of Master's degree is normally of two-year in both the liberal and professional fields of study. This includes coursework based with or without thesis or research. In these days to match the expertise requirement, speedy programmes in professional streams such as Executive MBA are also available to those having 3 to 5 years of experience at managerial level. Some Master's degree such as in Library and Information Science lasts for one year while in Computer Science lasts for three years.
- c) **PRE-DOCTORAL / DOCTORAL LEVEL:** A pre-doctoral programme - Master of Philosophy (M.Phil.) is taken after completion of the Master's Degree. This programme can either be completely research based or can include course work as well which is generally of one and half year duration. Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) is pursued after masters or pre-doctoral programme and generally takes three to five years to be rewarded. Students are expected to write a extensive thesis based on original research with or without course work.

There are few other academic frameworks of higher education which are as follows:

- a) **DIPLOMA:** These Diploma Courses are also available at the undergraduate and postgraduate level. At the undergraduate level, it varies between one to three years in duration while postgraduate diplomas are usually awarded after one year's study.
- b) **DISTANCE LEARNING PROGRAMMES:** At all the levels, programmes in both liberal and professional field are offered through distance learning mode which normally takes longer duration than their equivalent regular programme.
- c) **ONLINE EDUCATION:** Online education is a good medium of having a professional education or a simple education or a smart education. It is defined as an internet based education system which provides platform for delivering educational content and facilitating instructor-student interaction over a computer network. Learner is not restricted to attending the lectures on fixed time or fixed location which may be far off from the residence. These programme also contain provides education for professional fields at the convenience of learner.

### IMPORTANCE OF HIGHER EDUCATION

With an advanced education one can have more choices in the life and more chances to make a difference for the community. Higher education gives you return graduates of higher education programs to earn more, to have more leisure time, and to live happier and healthier lives.

- Firstly education can help an individual to lead a successful life. Success is defined as the accomplishment of something most wanted or attempted. By means of an education, a person discovers several things, which he or she uses later on in life particularly in a career. The fact is that quality and more education a person has, the superior the chances that person will have a higher paying job. With that, their family will be well maintained and hopefully happier.
- Secondly, an education can help in development of society into a healthier place. There are a number of persons who are illiterate or have low literacy skills. With the help of education these people could get a work and make some funds. The money earned could help them to pay for food or a place to live. As a result, quantity of fewer malnourished people would be fewer and fewer people living on the roadside. In short, breaking down level of poverty would benefit in upholding our nation.
- Furthermore, with an education a person can satisfy his or her dreams. An education offers people with information and awareness for getting occupation and pursuing their dreams. There are various careers and work opportunities that can help to satisfy what a person want out of life. Many people want to have a work that provides them enough money to pay their bills without struggling. They might be contented with the job they have, but to escalate the career-ladder, and work in a situation they would make more wealth in, they need education. Most people would like to work in a job that pays a higher salary than the work they have right now. To achieve that goal they prefer to continue education.

### SUCCESSFUL SCENARIO OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN INDIA

Over the past few years, the global economy has shifted which leads to transformation of education system. Global scenario leads to development and progress of economy and the success in leveraging knowledge and innovation is only possible with a sound infrastructure of higher education. A flourishing education policy outlines the foundation of all fields of national development including political system, social system, economic system, technical and scientific system, and environmental system. Thus, the superior the excellence of university education in a country, the natives of that country would more flourishing and competitive and even that country too. Here is a list of Current transformational changes in higher education systems which are as follows:

- Higher Education in India is decentralized under the DHE with separate councils (e.g. AICTE, MCI etc.) responsible for the regulation of different streams
- The UGC has allocated a general budget of Rs.5,244 crores for the year 2011-2012 to be distributed under eight broad categories
- GER has increased to 15% in 2009-2010 from 11.5% in 2005-2006. GER for 2010-2011 has been estimated at 16%
- Many private institutions in India are spotlighting more on professional courses such as engineering, medical and MBA
- Faculty-wise the figure of enrolment of higher education for the year 2006-2007 & 2010-2011 has been increased in specific streams. These include arts, science, commerce/management, medicine and agriculture. It has increased by 17.88%, 31.68%, 38.89%, 77.82% and 38.33% respectively.
- 150 million with GER of around 15% of estimated population in 18-23 age group

### OPPORTUNITIES IN HIGHER EDUCATION

These are some opportunities in the path of higher education system which are as follows:

- Participate in high-level masters or doctoral courses.
- Receive double or multiple or joint degree from consortium of excellent universities.
- Develop linguistic skills, intercultural experience.
- Advances employability of students through appreciation of qualifications and study held in abroad.
- Exchange of knowledge, ideas, contacts academically.
- Proper revision of textbooks and representation of courses which correspond to the content of global community knowledge and international problems.
- Expansion and utilization of humanistic resources for the realization of social, economic, cultural consequences of universities internationalization.
- Application of the comparative studies to understands the content of existing educational programs.
- Prominence of inter-cultural skills for planning in Higher Education.
- Acquaint students with aptitude and skills in the international arena.
- The planning of exceptional textbooks for foreign students.
- Exchange significant experiences among various universities.
- Improvement of university environments for educational and research activities according to the universal standards.
- The planning of quality educational programs according to the time needed through regional and international cooperation among universities.
- The acceptance of additional numbers of scientific boards and foreign students in universities.



- The defensive system for researchers, scientific boards and young managers in Higher Education.
- The effectual collaboration in planning, performing, admittance of the international research projects.
- Preparation of amenities for scientific boards to use new technologies.

## CHALLENGES

There are endless problems with the Indian higher education system. No doubt India has created commendable positions of higher education systems in the world. Quality of many top institutions is recognized to be comparable to the best in the world. However, Indian education system countenances troubles and issues that originate from disparities and developmental models adopted. The higher education system produces graduates that are unemployable, though there are growing skill shortages in a number of sectors. Though there is impressive development in the areas of Information Technology sector, space science, nuclear technology, oil exploration, and industrial production etc., India could not resolve its troubles of poverty, ignorance of financial aids, and lack of advanced due to various reasons. Nearly 25% people are still below poverty line; one-third is illiterates and disparities amongst rich-poor, urban-rural, educated uneducated are far above the ground, which are creating enormous social tensions. The country has to face challenges of globalization and pressures of liberalization while continuing its fight against poverty, unemployment and literacy.

The main Challenges facing the Indian Higher education are:

- 1) **COMMODITIZATION OF EDUCATION:** Now days, higher education is becoming a marketing commodity, rather than a social element. It is a multi-billion dollar trade system. Foreign universities are trying to have a share of Indian educational markets. The transformation of education as a social good to marketable commodity is adversely affecting the Indian culture, and victims in this transformation will be poor and disadvantaged people of India.
- 2) **GLOBAL COMPETITIVENESS:** We need to have a higher education system that is recognized at the International level and relevant to the local needs. The major concern is how to raise the quality and standards of Indian education and make it internationally competitive, locally pertinent and authorize it to offer marketing paradigm appropriate for developing societies. India being a signatory of WTO is bound to open up its market for trade in services including education but it does not have a clear policy for strengthening its education sector to compete with the giants in the world. Policy restrictions in the country stop the competent institutions from making necessary changes in the processes of admittance, recruitment and salaries of faculty/ staff and opening campuses abroad. In lack of proper policy requirements in time, higher education sector in the country is unfavorably affected.
- 3) **DIFFICULTY IN SURVIVAL OF WEAKER INSTITUTIONS:** A high disparity in educational standards and quality of education offered by Indian universities and colleges is of great apprehension to all. National and international competition may create problems of survival of weaker universities and colleges.
- 4) **EDUCATION NOT SUCCEEDS TO INCULCATE MORAL VALUES:** Man and values that may be social, moral, ethical or spiritual are indissoluble and their bond is the strongest one ever possible. If education not succeeds to instill etiquettes or values then it are inconceivable. Values cannot be taught as the subjects like Math or Science in the classroom but values that are practiced can prove to be the strongest destroyer if not guided properly on the right track. This is also a great issue that must be discussed and solved together. There is nothing great as the human brain that is the supreme creativity of the almighty but this can be proved to be the strongest destroyer if not guided properly on the right track. This is also a great issue that must be discussed and solved.
- 5) **DEVELOPMENTAL DISPARITIES AND UNSOLVED INDIAN PROBLEMS:** Many colleges and universities were started in India for removing regional imbalances and for supporting education of weaker and underprivileged classes, mainly of women. These institutions and other developmental programs for weaker classes are still facing resource limitation, which are further provoked by ignorance and poverty of the people they serve. The challenge of these marginalized and deprived to the system of education is enormous.
- 6) **WEAK LINKAGE OF EDUCATION WITH DEVELOPMENTAL PROCESSES:** This drawback is creating frustration amongst graduates when they find that education is not so useful in employment and in occupation situations. A challenge is to convert the system from its current model of education to progressive education linking education to developments in society, industry and services sectors.
- 7) **HIGH COST OF HIGHER EDUCATION:** The unit cost of traditional education, mainly of professional education, is relatively high and has disappeared from the Indian middle and lower class people. Many private entrepreneurs have started educational institutions for offering creamy courses with marketing approach; and have raised a fee which is not affordable to majority people in India. Subsidy to the education by the state is not the right solution in the present situation, when numbers aspiring for higher education is large and still increasing. The destitute are already generating pressure on the state to make education accessible; and have raised an issue of socioeconomic equity and justice.
- 8) **POOR RECOGNITION OF INDIAN COURSES ABROAD:** There are lots of regulatory and bureaucratic hurdles in the admission procedure of foreign students from different countries as per the policy of Government of India towards those nations. Indian courses do not have a very superior reputation abroad. They are predictable poor internationally due to quality and curriculum contents.
- 9) **INEFFECTIVE CAREER PLACEMENT/LOW INDUSTRY PARTICIPATION IN EDUCATION:** As Indian higher education does not have good market linkages internationally; the foreign based career placement of students is not effective except from the few institutions that have international recognition. During the course of study also, Industry participation is very minute. Theoretical portion of the course does not get the practical approach.
- 10) **LACK OF FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE:** There are very few schemes for the financial assistance that is available to the students from the university or the government of India for acquiring the higher education. This is one of the big challenges for higher education in India.

## MEASURES TO MEET THE CHALLENGES

There are few measures with the help of which we can try to overcome the challenges in higher education system in India which are as follows:

- 1) **PROVIDE NEED BASED JOB-ORIENTED COURSES:** The purpose of education is all round development of personality. But here education is neither acquaintance of life and nor improving the aptitude of a student by which glory in the field one is interested. So, combination of arts, science and humanities or literature should be introduced so that such courses could be useful for the students to do jobs after recruitment in some companies. The programme must be focused on graduate studies and research and developing strategies and mechanisms for the rapid and efficient transfer of knowledge and for its application to specific national and local conditions and needs.
- 2) **QUALITY DEVELOPMENT:** Quality depends on the efficient teaching and educational programs, research and scholarship, staffing, students, infrastructure, services to the community and the academic environment. There is a requirement that Higher education system in India should be characterized by its worldwide dimensions, swapping of knowledge, interactive networking, mobility of teachers and students in international research projects, while enchanting into description of the national cultural values and circumstances.
- 3) **HIGH-TECH LIBRARIES:** Our university libraries have a very good collection of books, but still they are insufficient to support higher education in India. A library must be online and conducive for serious study. Indian universities should focus more on providing quality education which is equivalent to that of international standards.
- 4) **MOBILIZE RESOURCES:** We need to take successful steps to mobilize resources for higher education. The fee structure should be related to the student's ability to pay for the cost. So that, students at lower financial levels can be provided highly subsidized and fully subsidized education.
- 5) **INCENTIVES TO TEACHERS AND RESEARCHERS:** Industry and students are expecting specialized courses to be offered so that they get the latest and best in education and they are also industry ready and employable. We need to make Vocational and Diploma courses more attractive to facilitate specialized programs being offered to students. Incentives should be provided to teachers and researchers to make these professions more attractive for the younger generation.
- 6) **EXAMINATION REFORMS:** Examination reforms, gradually shifting from the terminal, annual and semester examinations to regular and continuous assessment of student's performance in learning should be implemented which will help in fair and better assessment of the students.

- 7) **CROSS CULTURE PROGRAMMES:** After education, with the cooperation of government, tour to the different places in India and to the different parts of the world as far as possible is necessary so that one can understand about people, culture, arts, literature, religions, technological developments and progress of human society in the world.
- 8) **FAIR QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM:** To give degrees it is required that Colleges and Private institutes should set up Internal Quality Assurance Cell and minimum standard which must be independent of political interference and it must have a basis in the legislation. There is need of an independent accreditation agency with a conglomerate of government, industry, academic; society etc. means all stakeholders of the education to ensure that the stakeholders particularly the students are not taken for a ride.
- 9) **PRIVATIZATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION:** In any nation, education is the basic necessity for the socio-economic development of the individuals and the society. According to various reports, only 20% of the population is educational qualified in India. So, improved standard of education as first precedence should be presented to the majority by the govt. authorities with sincere political spirit. Privatization of higher education is absolutely necessary in a vast country like India as government alone is helpless to do so.
- 10) **TOWARDS A LEARNING SOCIETY:** As we move towards a learning society, every human activity will require contributions from experts, and this will place the entire sector of higher education in sharp focus. Although the priorities, which are being assigned today to the task of providing quality education for all, will continue to be preponderant, the country will have to prepare itself to invest more and more on higher education and concurrently actions will have to be taken to refine, expand and promote higher education and research programmes.
- 11) **WORLD CLASS EDUCATION:** Indian government is not giving priority to the development of Standard in education. India should aim for the worldwide standard in education. Many national universities like in the USA, UK, Australia, etc. agree to support studies in higher education for foreign students in their countries and through correspondence courses also. In the similar manner Indian Universities of world class education can also proffer courses of studies to foreign students taking benefit of the globalization practice. To achieve that objective it should adopt uniform worldwide syllabus in its educational institutions.
- 12) **OTHER MEASURES:** As per the present scenario of the higher education in India we can recommend some other measures in order to further meet the challenges:
  - For location and building of campuses of higher education by private/corporate sectors, Government should offer tax concessions/fiscal incentives.
  - Open Universities should be set up and should be encouraged to offer quality programmes at the least cost.
  - Support should be given by the government to foreign universities to come to India to set up independent procedures or collaborate with existing Indian Institutions.
  - Authoritarian set up is requisite to make certain that there is no cheating or hoax and, fixation of fees should not be in state control.
  - There is great necessity for providing broadband connectivity to all students along with low priced computer accessibility.
  - Good salary packages and benefits should be provided to the faculty so that good brains can be attracted to this profession.

## CONCLUSION

Today India is one of the fastest developing countries of the world. After independence, there has been remarkable rise in the number of institutions of higher learning in all disciplines. There is significant need of higher education for the individual not only to possess formal certificates and degrees as well higher education is also necessary to acquire knowledge, vision, and good moral character, high cultural and social values. We can conclude from this paper that higher education has given new turn to the life of young generation of our country. But our country's system of higher education is also suffering from various flaws and there are still various challenges on the path of higher education system. To reach and achieve the future necessities, there is a vital need to relook at the financial assistance, international recognition of Indian education at international level, quality standards, improved infrastructure, and adoption of latest and innovative technology. In India, higher education was traditionally looked after by the government, but in vision of lack of resources to convene the increasing demand, private sector has been permitted to share the responsibility. Higher education institutions managed by private sector emphasize more on commercial education. If India has to emerge as preferred location for higher education in the global competition, it will have to develop an efficient national policy to address the challenges of sub-standard quality, eradication of ineffective systems of monitoring and control and there is need to reduce the unnecessary political interference. The above discussions in the paper can help the universities and institutions of higher education to improve their structure to meet the current needs of society.

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