
Higher Education In India: Some Reflections

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The real difficulty is that people have no idea of what education truly is. We assess the value of education in the same manner as we assess the value of land or of shares in the stock-exchange market. We want to provide only such education as would enable the student to earn more. We hardly give any thought to the improvement of the character of the educated. The girls, we say, do not have to earn; so why should they be educated? As long as such ideas persist there is no hope of our ever knowing the true value of education. –Mahatma Gandhi

Higher Education—Bird's-Eye view

In the earlier times when few people/students progressed beyond primary education, the term "higher education" was often used to refer to secondary education, which was not surely the case. Education beyond the secondary level; especially: education provided by a college or university is called the higher education. In other words, higher education, post-secondary education, or third level education

is an optional final stage of formal learning that occurs after completion of secondary education. Higher education by and large means university level education. It offers a number of qualifications ranging from Higher National Diplomas and Foundation Degrees to Honors Degrees and as further step, Postgraduate programmes such as Masters Degrees and research degrees/Doctorates. These are recognized throughout the world as representing specialist expertise supported by a wide range of skills that employers find very useful. Moreover, education usually includes those post graduate studies in which we can gain our Master and Doctorate degrees. These degrees mark the highest one can earn, though they are divided into two levels. A master's degree, for instance, is awarded for a particular course of study beyond the bachelor's degree. They come in various categories, such as a Master of Arts, Master of Science, Master of Theology and so on. The amount of duration it takes one to earn a master's degree depends upon the program one is enrolled in, but one should

usually expect to study at least for two years. The second type of graduate degree, and one considered higher than a master's degree, is a doctoral degree/PhD. These are awarded for a particular course of study beyond the master's degree. Doctoral degrees can be professional degrees, such as the Doctor of Ministry, or academic degrees, such as the Doctor of Philosophy. Those who earn doctorates often assume the title 'Doctor.' The amount of time one must study before earning such a degree varies greatly by field and institution. The different levels of degrees are defined in a precise way in the following lines:

Bachelor's Degree is normally an undergraduate academic degree awarded for a course or major that generally lasts three or four years. Master's degree is an academic degree usually awarded for completion of a postgraduate or graduate course of one to three years in duration. In England it is sometimes awarded for an undergraduate course whose final year consists of higher-level courses and a major research project. Doctorate is an academic degree of the highest level. Traditionally, the award of a doctorate implies recognition of the candidate as an equal by the university

faculty under which s/he has studied. There are essentially three types of doctorates: research, first-professional (USA only), and honorary. Research doctorates are nearly always awarded in recognition of academic research that is of a publishable standard (even if not actually published) and represents at least a modest contribution to human knowledge. It is usually assessed by submission and defense of a doctoral thesis or dissertation, though in some cases a coherent body of published literature can be accepted instead. Honorary doctorates are awarded for a substantial contribution to a field but this need not be academic in character.

The right of access to higher education is stated in a number of international human rights instruments. The UN International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights of 1966 declares, in Article 13, that "higher education shall be made equally accessible to all, on the basis of capacity, by every appropriate means, and in particular by the progressive introduction of free education". In Europe, Article 2 of the First Protocol to the European Convention on Human Rights, adopted in 1950, obliges all

signatory parties to guarantee the right to education.

Higher education includes teaching, research, and exacting applied work for instance, in medical schools and dental schools, and social services activities of universities. Within the field of teaching, it includes both the undergraduate level, and beyond that, graduate-level (or postgraduate level). The latter level of education is often referred to as graduate school, especially in North America. In addition to the skills that are specific to any particular degree, potential employers in any profession are looking for evidence of critical thinking and analytical reasoning skills, team working skills, information literacy, ethical judgment, decision-making skills, language skills, problem solving skills, and a wide knowledge of liberal arts and sciences.

Since World War II, developed and many developing states have enhanced the participation of the age group who mostly studies higher education from the elite rate, of up to 15 per cent, to the mass rate of 16 to 50 per cent. In many developed countries, particular in America, England, Sweden, Australia, Norway and Switzerland participation in higher education has

continued to increase towards universal or, what Trow later described, open access, where over half of the relevant age group participate in higher education. Higher education is important to national economies, both as an industry, in its own right, and as a source of trained and educated personnel for the rest of the economy. College educated workers have commanded a measurable wage premium and are much less likely to become unemployed than less educated workers. However, the admission of so many students of only average ability to higher education inevitably requires a decline in academic standards, facilitated by grade inflation. Also, the supply of graduates in many fields of study is exceeding the demand for their skills, which aggravates graduate unemployment and underemployment, as well as credentialism and educational inflation.

Higher Education in India

“By 2030, India will be amongst the youngest nations in the world. With nearly 140 million people in the college-going age group, one in every four graduates in the world will be a product of the Indian education system. Higher education in India

has recorded impressive growth since Independence,” says, Sharad Jaipuria. India's higher education system is the third largest in the world, next to the United States and China. There are large numbers of Indian as well as foreign students who apply every year to Indian universities and colleges. For all those who wish to study in India, it is very important to get prior and correct information about the courses that one would like to undertake, the university that want to apply to and how to go about the application procedure. For an international student, it is also important to know the accommodation facilities, weather conditions, food habits and cost of living in the city in which he or she intends to study. Central Government is responsible for major policy relating to higher education in the country. It provides grants to UGC and establishes central universities in the country. The Central Government is also responsible for declaration of Education Institutions as 'Deemed to be University' on the recommendation of the UGC. State Governments are responsible for establishment of State Universities and colleges, and provide plan grants for their development and non-plan grants for their maintenance. The coordination and

cooperation between the Union and the States is brought about in the field of education through the Central Advisory Board of Education (CABE). Special Constitutional responsibility of the Central Government: Education is on the 'Concurrent list' subject to Entry 66 in the Union List of the Constitution. This gives exclusive Legislative Power to the Central Govt. for co-ordination and determination of standards in Institutions of higher education or research and scientific and technical institutions. University Grants Commission (UGC) is responsible for coordination, determination and maintenance of standards, release of grants. The Central Government provides grants to the UGC and establishes Central Universities/Institutions of National Importance in the country. The Central Government is also accountable for declaring an educational institution as "Deemed-to-be University" on the recommendations of the UGC. 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:

1. **Central University:** A university established or incorporated by a Central Act.
2. **State University:** A university established or incorporated by a Provincial Act or by a State Act.
3. **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.
4. **Deemed-to-be University:** An Institution Deemed to be University, commonly known as Deemed University, refers to a high-performing institution, which has been so declared by Central Government under Section 3 of the University Grants Commission (UGC) Act, 1956.
5. **Institution of National Importance:** An Institution established by Act of Parliament and declared as Institution of National Importance.

6. **Institution under State Legislature**

Act: An Institution established or incorporated by a State Legislature Act.

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

- a. All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE)
- b. Distance Education Council (DEC)
- c. Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR)
- d. Bar Council of India (BCI)
- e. National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC)
- f. National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE)
- g. Rehabilitation Council of India (RCI)
- h. Medical Council of India (MCI)
- i. Pharmacy Council of India (PCI)
- j. Indian Nursing Council (INC)
- k. Dental Council of India (DCI)
- l. Central Council of Homeopathy (CCH)
- m. Central Council of Indian Medicine (CCIM)
- n. Veterinary Council of India (VCI)

According to 2011 Census, about 8.15% (68 millions) of Indians are graduates, with Union Territories of Chandigarh (24.65%) and Delhi (22.56%) topping the list. Indian higher education system has expanded at a swift 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.

Department of Higher Education

The Department of Higher Education, MHRD, is responsible for the overall development of the basic infrastructure of Higher Education sector, both in terms of policy and planning. Under a planned development process, the Department looks after expansion of access and qualitative improvement in the Higher Education, through world class Universities, Colleges and other Institutions. The Vision, Mission, Objectives and Functions of the Department are as under:-

Vision: To realize India's human resource potential to its fullest in the Higher Education sector, with equity and inclusion.

Mission

- Provide greater opportunities of access to Higher Education with equity to all the eligible persons and in particular to the vulnerable sections.
- Expand access by supporting existing institutions, establishing new institutions, supporting State Governments and Non-Government Organizations/civil society to

supplement public efforts aimed at removing regional or other imbalances that exist at present.

- Initiate policies and programmes for strengthening research and innovations and encourage institutions - public or private to engage in stretching the frontiers of knowledge.
- Promote the quality of Higher Education by investing in infrastructure and faculty, promoting academic reforms, improving governance and institutional restructuring toward the inclusion of the hitherto deprived communities.

Objective

- To expand the Higher Education sector in all its modes of delivery to increase the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in Higher Education to 15% by 2011-12 to 21% by 2016-17 and 30% by the year 2020.
- To expand institutional base of Higher Education (including technical, professional and vocational education) by creating additional capacity in existing institutions, establishing new institutions and incentivizing State Governments and Non-Governmental Organizations/civil society.

- To expand institutional base of Higher Education (including technical, professional and vocational education) by creating additional capacity in existing institutions, establishing new institutions and incentivizing State Governments and Non-Governmental Organizations/civil society.
- To provide opportunities of Higher Education to socially-deprived communities and remove disparities by promoting the inclusion of women, minorities and differently-abled persons.
- To remove regional imbalances in access to Higher Education by setting up of institutions in unnerved and underserved areas.
- To enhance plan support for infrastructure and faculty development in the institutions of higher learning and to attract talent towards careers in teaching and research.
- To create conditions for knowledge generation through improved research facilities in universities and colleges.
- To promote collaboration with International community, foreign governments, universities/institutions and regional and international institutions, for the advancement of

universal knowledge and intellectual property rights.

- To promote development of Indian languages.
- To promote autonomy, innovations, academic reforms in institutions of higher learning
- To undertake institutional restructuring for improving efficiency, relevance and creativity in Higher Education.

Functions

- Enhancement of Gross Enrolment Ratio by expanding access through all modes.
 - Promoting the participation of these sections of the society whose GER is lower than the national average.
 - To improve quality and to promote academic reforms
 - Setting up of new educational institutions and also capacity expansion and improvement of the existing institutions.
 - Use of Technology in Higher Education.
 - Development of Vocational Education and Skill Development.
- Development of Indian Languages.
 - International Collaboration in the field of education.

RUSA: Scheme of Development for Higher Education

Rashtriya Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA) is a Centrally Sponsored Scheme (CSS), launched in 2013 aims at providing strategic funding to eligible state higher educational institutions. RUSA aims to provide equal development to all higher institutions and rectify weaknesses in the higher education system. Its target achievement is to raise the gross enrolment ratio to 32% by the end of XII Plan in 2017. RUSA would create new universities through upgradation of existing autonomous colleges and conversion of colleges in a cluster. For instance, the cluster universities of Kashmir and Jammu are the latest testimonies to it. It would create new model degree colleges, new professional colleges and provide infrastructural support to universities and colleges. Faculty recruitment support, faculty improvements programmes and leadership development of educational administrators are also an important part of the scheme. In order to enhance skill development the existing central scheme of Polytechnics has been subsumed within RUSA. Besides these, RUSA also supports reforming, restructuring and building capacity of institutions in

participating state. The major objectives are to:

1. Improve the overall quality of state institutions by ensuring conformity to prescribed norms and standards and adopt accreditation as a mandatory quality assurance framework.
2. Usher transformative reforms in the state higher education system by creating a facilitating institutional structure for planning and monitoring at the state level, promoting autonomy in State Universities and improving governance in institutions.
3. Ensure reforms in the affiliation, academic and examination systems.
4. Ensure adequate availability of quality faculty in all higher educational institutions and ensure capacity building at all levels of employment.
5. Create an enabling atmosphere in the higher educational institutions to devote themselves to research and innovations.
6. Expand the institutional base by creating additional capacity in existing institutions and establishing new institutions, in order to achieve enrolment targets.

7. Improve equity in higher education by providing adequate opportunities of higher education to SC/STs and socially and educationally backward classes; promote inclusion of women, minorities, and differently abled persons.

Conclusion

India is fast becoming a major economic power in the world today. And if its growth trend continues for some more years, it would soon be playing a major role in the world economy along with China. This itself has been a major cause of attraction for many international students. Moreover, India's successful stint with democracy has also been a major magnetic force for scholars around the world. However, apart from knowing India well, there are some other advantages that are attracting students to study in India. Some of these are: low cost, quality education, consultation service, unique courses and so on. India has become one of the world's most exciting and advancing education hub. New age Universities and educational institutes in India offer both niche as well as the entire gamut of programmes in education that set us apart as the best in the world.

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