# Higher Education in Current India

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**ABSTRACT:** *The concept of education is like a diamond which seems to be of a different colour when observe from different angle. The world has realized that the economic success of the states is directly determined by their education systems. Education is a Nation's Strength. A developed nation is inevitably an educated nation. Indian higher education system is the third largest in the world, next to the United States and China. Since independence, India as a developing nation is contentiously progressing in the education field. Although there have been lot of challenges to higher education system of India but equally have lot of opportunities to overcome these challenges and to make higher education system much better. It needs greater transparency and accountability, the role of colleges and universities in the new millennium, and emerging scientific research on how people learn is of utmost important. India need well skilled and highly educated people who can drive our economy forward. India provides highly skilled people to other countries therefore; it is very easy for India to transfer our country from a developing nation to a developed nation. The current study aims to highlight the challenges and to point out the opportunities in higher education system in India. This research paper includes Growth of higher education in India, challenges in higher education, opportunities or schemes available for higher education and suggestions to the problem.*

*Keywords: Higher Education, Challenges, Opportunities, Colleges, Universities.*

## INTRODUCTION:

India's higher education system is the world's third largest in terms of students, next to China and the United States. In future, India will be one of the largest education hubs. India's Higher Education sector has witnessed a tremendous increase in the number of Universities/ University level Institutions & Colleges since independence. The 'Right to Education Act' which stipulates compulsory and free education to all children within the age groups of 6-14 years, has brought about a revolution in the education system of the country with statistics revealing a staggering enrolment in schools over the last several years. The involvement of private sector in higher education has seen drastic changes in the field. There are more than 77.8% colleges running in Private sector; aided and unaided taken together, but it caters to only 67.3% of the total enrolment. This has accelerated establishment of institutes which have originated over the last decade making India home to the largest number of Higher Education institutions in the world, with student enrolments at the second highest (Shaguri, 2013). Also, India has failed to produce world class universities.

Today, Knowledge is power. The more knowledge one has, the more empowered one is. However, India continues to face stern challenges. Despite growing investment in education, 25 per cent of its population is still illiterate; only 15 per cent of Indian students reach high school, and just 7 per cent graduate (Masani, 2008). The quality of education in India whether at primary or higher education is significantly poor as compared to major developing nations of the world. As of 2008, India's post-secondary institutions offer only enough seats for 7 per cent of India's college-age population, 25 per cent of teaching positions nationwide are vacant, and 57 per cent of college professors lack either a master's or PhD degree (Newsweek, 2011). As of 2011, there are 1522 degree-granting engineering colleges in India with an annual student intake of 582,000 (Science and Technology Education, 2009) plus 1,244 polytechnics with an annual intake of 265,000. However, these institutions face shortage of faculty and concerns have been raised over the quality of education (Mitra, 2008). Despite these challenges higher education system of India equally have lot of opportunities to overcome these challenges and have the capability to make its identity at international level. However, it needs greater transparency and accountability, the role of universities and colleges in the new millennium, and emerging scientific research on how people learn is of utmost important. India provides highly skilled people to other countries therefore; it is very easy for India to transfer our country from a developing nation to a developed nation.

## GROWTH OF HIGHER EDUCATION SECTOR IN INDIA:

As higher education systems grow and diversify, society is increasingly concerned about the quality of programmes, public assessments and international rankings of higher education institutions. However these comparisons tend to overemphasis research, using research performance as a yardstick of institutional value. If these processes fail to address the quality of teaching, it is in part because measuring teaching quality is challenging (Hernard, 2008) India has been always been a land of scholars and learners. In ancient times also, India was regarded all over the world for its universities like Taxila, Nalanda, Vikramshila and its scholars.

Central Government and state Governments are trying to nurture talent through focusing on the number of Universities and Colleges for expansion of higher educations. There is no doubt to the fact that much of the progress achieved by India in education has come from private sector. In fact the public sector and private sector is not in opposition to each other but they are working simultaneously in Indian education sphere. UGC is the main governing body that enforces the standards, advises the government and helps coordinate between center and states.

By independence India had 20 universities, 500 colleges enrolling about 2,30,000 students. Since independence India has progressed significantly in terms of higher education statistics. This number has increased to 864 Universities (All Type of Universities) and 40026 colleges and 11669 stand-alone institutions as per AISHE 2016-17. The top 8 States in terms of highest number of colleges in India are Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Tamil Nadu and Madhya Pradesh. Bangalore district tops in terms of number of colleges with 1025 colleges followed by Jaipur with 635 colleges. Due to more colleges in Bangalore District the Government of Karnataka trifurcated as 3 Universities. Top 50 districts have about 33.5% of colleges. Total enrolment in higher education has been estimated to be 35.7 million with 19.0 million boys and 16.7 million girls. Girls constitute 46.8% of the total enrolment. About 79.4% of the students are enrolled in Undergraduate level programme. 1,41,037 students are enrolled in Ph.D. that is less than 0.4% of the total student enrolment.

Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in Higher education in India is 25.2%, which is calculated for 18-23 years of age group. GER for male population is 26.0% and for females, it is 24.5%. For Scheduled Castes, it is 21.1% and for Scheduled Tribes, it is 15.4% as compared to the national GER of 25.2%. Scheduled Casts students constitute 14.2% and Scheduled Tribes students 5.1% of the total enrolment. 34.4% students belong to Other Backward Classes. 4.9% students belong to Muslim Minority and 2.2% from other Minority Community. The total number of teachers is 13,65,786. Out of which more than half about 59.4% are male teachers and 40.6% are female teachers.

**Social Category-wise Distribution:** The total estimated student enrolment is 3,57,05,905 out of which nearly 53.2% are male and rest 46.8% are female students. State-wise and Category-wise estimated enrolment is given in Table 14. SC student enrolment is 14.3% of the total and the male-female ratio is more or less similar to the All Category. On the other hand, students belonging to ST category constitute only 5.2% of the total student enrolment and male female ratio is similar to All Category. 34.4% of the total students belong to OBC with 53% of male students.

**Minority Students:** Among Minority category, data on Muslims have been collected separately. According to the response received during the survey, 4.9% students belong to Muslim Minority and 2.2% are from other Minority Community. Muslim Minority has more male students than females where as other Minority has more females than males.

**CHALLENGES IN HIGHER EDUCATION IN INDIA:**

It is our 7 decades of independence still our education system has not been developed fully. We are not able to list a single university in top 100 universities of the world. Various governments changed during these seven decades. They tried to boost the education system and implemented various education policies and schemes, though various governments have implemented the policies and schemes according to their manifest they were not sufficient to put an example to the universe. UGC is continuously working and focusing on quality education in higher education sector. Still we are facing lot of problems and challenges in our education system. Some of the basic challenges in higher education system in India are discussed below:

**Enrolment:** The Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) of India in higher education is 25.2% which is quite low as compared to the developed as well as, other developing countries. With the increase of enrolments at school level, the supply of higher education institutes is insufficient to meet the growing demand in the country.

**Equity:** There is no equity in GER among different sects of the society. According to previous studies the GER in higher education in India among male and female varies to a greater extent. There are regional variations too some states have high GER while as some is quite behind the national GER which reflect a significant imbalance within the higher education system.

**Quality:** Quality in higher education is a multi-dimensional, multilevel, and a dynamic concept. Ensuring quality in higher education is amongst the foremost challenges being faced in India today. However, Government is continuously focusing on the quality education. Still Large number of colleges and universities in India are unable to meet the minimum requirements laid down by the UGC and our universities are not in a position to mark its place among the top universities of the world.

**Infrastructure:** Poor infrastructure is another challenge to the higher education system of India particularly the institutes run by the public sector suffer from poor physical facilities and infrastructure. There are large number of colleges which are functioning on second or third floor of the building on ground or first floor there exists readymade hosieries or photocopy shops.

**Political interference:** Most of the educational Institutions are owned by the political leaders, who are playing key role in governing bodies of the Universities. They are using the innocent students for their selfish means. Students organize campaigns, forget their own objectives and begin to develop their careers in politics.

**Faculty:** Faculty shortages and the inability of the state educational system to attract and retain well qualified teachers have been posing challenges to quality education for many years. Large numbers of NET / PhD candidates are unemployed even there are lot of vacancies in higher education, these deserving candidates are then applying in other departments which is a biggest blow to the higher education system.

**Accreditation:** As per the data provided by the NAAC, as of June 2010, "not even 25% of the total higher education institutions in the country were accredited. And among those accredited, only 30% of the universities and 45% of the colleges were found to be of quality to be ranked at 'A' level".

**Research and Innovation:** there are very nominal scholars in our country whose writing is cited by famous western authors. There is inadequate focus on research in higher education institutes. There are insufficient resources and facilities, as well as, limited numbers of quality faculty to advice students. Most of the research scholars are without fellowships or not getting their fellowships on time which directly or indirectly affects their research. Moreover, Indian Higher education institutions are poorly connected to research centers. So, this is another area of challenge to the higher education in India.

**Structure of higher education:** Management of the Indian education faces challenges of over centralization, bureaucratic structures and lack of accountability, transparency, and professionalism. As a result of increase in number of affiliated colleges and students, the burden of administrative functions of universities has significantly increased and the core focus on academics and research is diluted (Kumar, 2015).

## OPPORTUNITIES IN HIGHER EDUCATION:

### Source: MHRD

Indian higher education system is growing very fast irrespective of various challenges but there is no reason that these Challenges cannot be overcome. With the help of new-age learning tools, it is easy for country like India to overcome these problems and bring a paradigm shift in the country's higher education sector. With such a vibrant country with huge population properly educated, the possibilities are endless. If knowledge is imparted using advanced digital teaching and learning tools, and society is made aware of where we are currently lagging behind, our country can easily emerge as one of the most developed nations in the world.

There are opportunities for strategic engagement and capacity building in higher education leadership and management at the state level. There are opportunities for India to collaboration at national and international level on areas of systemic reform, including quality assurance, international credit recognition, and unified national qualifications framework. 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. 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 inegalitarian system of education" (Balachander, 1986).

The need to enhance the employability of graduates is presenting entry points for collaboration in enterprise education and entrepreneurship, links with industry, research skills and the wide range of transferable skills, including English. The emerging interest in Indian higher education institutions in the vocational skills market provides areas for potential engagement with international partners. There is a need to build stronger relationships and increase mutual understanding in higher education by increasing support and participation in platforms (conferences, workshops, seminars) which enable debate and dialogue with other countries of the world.(British Council, 2014).

### Schemes for Higher Education:

Higher Education is the shared responsibility of both the Centre and the States. The coordination and determination of standards in institutions is the constitutional obligation of the Central Government. The Central Government provides grants to UGC and establishes Central Universities in the country. Meritorious students, from families with or without necessary means, need an incentive or encouragement to keep on working hard in their studies and go to the next level of education in their academic career. This is where the scholarships and education loans play a crucial role.

Following are some significant fellowship schemes/scholarships awarded by the various institutions:

### General Schemes for Higher Education

- Scheme of Apprenticeship Training

- National Scholarships

- Post-Doctoral Research Fellow (Scheme)

- Junior Research Fellowships for biomedical sciences

- All India Council for Technical Education Scholarships

- Department of Science and Technology grants and fellowships

- DST's Scholarship Scheme for Women Scientists and Technologists

- Biotechnology fellowships for doctoral and postdoctoral studies by DBT

- Scholarships/Awards at Undergraduate & Postgraduate level in various science courses at the University of Delhi

- Fellowships/Scholarships/Awards by the Jawaharlal Nehru University

- Sports Authority of India promotional schemes

- Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities-Schemes/ Programmes

- Scholarship Schemes for ST Students by Ministry of Tribal Affairs

- Post-matric Scholarships for SC /ST students

- Scholarships for Minority Students

- RashtriyaUcchatar Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA)

- National Initiative for Design Innovation

- National Research Professorship (NRP)

- Establishment of New Central Universities

- Indira HYPERLINK "http://mhrd.gov.in/new-initiatives-xi-plan" Gandhi National Tribal University

- Establishment of 14 World Class Central Universities

- Setting up of 374 Degree Colleges in Educationally Backward Districts

- Scheme for incentivizing state governments for expansion of higher education institutions

- Central Sector Interest Subsidy Scheme, 2009 on Model Education Loan Scheme of IBA

- Construction of girls hostels

- Supporting uncovered state universities and colleges

- Additional assistance to about 160 already covered universities and about 5500 colleges

- Strengthening science based higher education and research in universities

- Inter universities research institute for policy and evaluation

- Schemes Implemented through Autonomous Organizations

**Technical Schemes for Higher Education:**

- Sub-Mission on Polytechnics under the Coordinated Action for Skill Development

- Scheme of Apprenticeship Training

- Support For Distance Education HYPERLINK "http://mhrd.gov.in/technical-education-13"& HYPERLINK" http://mhrd.gov.in/technical-education-13" Web Based Learning (NPTEL)

- Indian National Digital Library in Engineering, Science HYPERLINK "http://mhrd.gov.in/technical-education-13"& HYPERLINK "http://mhrd.gov.in/ technical-education-13" Technology (INDEST-AICTE) Consortium

- National HYPERLINK "http://mhrd.gov.in/technical-education-13" Programme HYPERLINK "http:// mhrd.gov.in/technical-education-13" of Earthquake Engineering Education (NPEEE)

- Technology Development Mission

- Direct Admission of Students Abroad

- Scheme for Upgrading existing Polytechnics to Integrate the Physically Disabled in the mainstream of Technical and Vocational Education

- Setting up 20 new IIITs

**SUGGESTIONS IMPROVING THE SYSTEM OF HIGHER EDUCATION:**

- There is a need to implement innovative and transformational approach form primary to higher education level to make Indian educational system globally more relevant and competitive.

- Higher educational institutes need to improve quality and reputation.

- There should be a good infrastructure of colleges and universities which may attract the students.

- Government must promote collaboration between Indian higher education institutes and top International institutes and also generates linkage between national research laboratories and research centers of top institutions for better quality and collaborative research.

- There is a need to focus on the graduate students by providing them such courses in which they can achieve excellence, gain deeper knowledge of subject so that they will get jobs after recruitment in the companies which would reduce unnecessary rush to the higher education.

- Universities and colleges in both public private must be away from the political affiliations,

- Favoritism, money making process should be out of education system etc.

- There should be a multidisciplinary approach in higher education so that students knowledge may not be restricted only up to his own subjects.

- Education should be Student Centric Learning: At present education system is Teacher Centric Teaching but it's not good for future. The syllabus should be framed with inclusive of student and parent'sparticipation. And framed based on present situation for better quality of education.

- Education should be more research oriented: At present education system is more theory oriented so the students are limited learn only theory and get a marks this restricts students knowledge and capacity of learning. When it becomes research, oriented student can extend their way of thin and innovate lot of things which can solve the present problems.

- It's better to adopt the following teaching models in higher education. The teaching models are as follows, Interaction between students and teachers, peer group discussions among students, case study, re-treat by experts, field visit and study according to subject and adopt the Information Communication Technology.

**CONCLUSION:**

Higher education in India has expanded very rapidly in the last seven decades after independence yet it is not equally accessible to all. India is today one of the fastest developing countries of the world. Still a large section of the population remains illiterate and a large number of children's do not get even primary education. This is not only excluded a large section of the population from contributing to the development of the country fully but it has also prevented them from utilizing the benefits of whatever development have taken place for the benefit of the people. No doubt India is facing various challenges in higher education but to tackle these challenges and to boost higher education is utmost important. India is a country of huge human resource potential, to utilize this potential properly is the issue which needed to discuss. Opportunities are available but how to get benefits from these opportunities and how to make them accessible to others is the matter of concern. In order to sustain that rate of growth, there is need to increase the number of institutes and also the quality of higher education in India. To reach and achieve the future requirements there is an urgent need to relook at the Financial Resources, Access and Equity, Quality Standards, Relevance, infrastructure and at the end the Responsiveness.

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