



# Sterling

College of Arts, Commerce & Science, Nerul

ISBN: 978 - 93 - 5267 - 362 - 9



Ministry of  
Human Resource Development



University of Mumbai



ज्ञान-विज्ञान विमुक्तये  
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**HIGHER EDUCATION IN INDIA – STATUS, ISSUES AND CHALLENGES****MRS. SHRUCHI SHRIYASTAV**

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**Abstract**

*Higher education plays an important role in development of a country's economy and thus has always occupied a prominent position. India has seen a tremendous growth in higher education since independence and holds the third largest higher education system in the world next to United States and China. It is ranked as second in the world with highest number of student enrolments. However, it is lacking behind in many parameters. This paper primarily focuses on the performance of higher education system in India. It aims to study the current status of higher education in India, to analyse the issues and challenges of higher education and gives corrective measures to overcome the challenges and issues.*

**Introduction**

Higher education is key tool of development of a country's economy. It provides knowledge and skilled persons to the country and thus enhances its competitiveness in the global economy. India being one of the developed countries holds second position in the world with highest number of student enrolments. It provides opportunities to large number of Indian as well as students from other parts of the world. The education system in India is primarily controlled by Central Government. It is

the responsibility of Central Government to deal with major policies relating to higher education in India. The major role of Central Government is to give grants to University Grant Commission (UGC) and to establish central universities while it is the responsibility of UGC to coordinate determine and maintain the standards and to release the grant. Subsequently, the responsibility of State Governments is to establish of State Universities and colleges, and to provide plan and non-plan grants for development and maintenance.

Many initiatives have been taken by Government of India to expand higher education system. As on today, higher education system in India is one of the largest systems in the world. However, the system is facing many issues and challenges at present. The paper focuses on the issues and challenges of higher education. It would help in recognising such issues and challenges so that we can implement corrective measures can make India a knowledge-based information society in coming years.

**Review Of Literature**

Many researches have been conducted on this field. Some of the reviews collected are listed below:  
Kumar Munesh (2016) "It is required not only to develop the educational and set of goals but execute them or convert them into realities. Adequate

funding and dedicated coordination among various functionaries of education is the need of time.”

Chakraborty Subhadeep and Konwar Nitu (2013), “With the onset of higher technology, easier access to communication and information technology, the divide has shown definitive signs of narrowing down even though only to a marginal extent. The government and the private sector will continue to play a key role in improving the reach of good quality education to all the corners of the country.”

ShaguriObadya Ray (2013), “Despite of growth in terms of number of colleges and enrolment the numbers are not sufficient enough to cater to the education needs of increasing young population of this country. The current status of higher education in rural areas of India is characterized by low enrolment, poor completion rates and high drop out.”

### Objectives

The objectives of this research paper are listed below:

- 1) To study the current status of higher education in India
- 2) To analyse the issues and challenges of higher education
- 3) To suggest corrective measures

### Some Facts and figures

Since Independence higher education in India has seen a phenomenal rise in numbers. Strong initiatives taken by government have contributed towards the growth in number of Institutions,

students' enrolment towards higher education. Some of the facts have been discussed below:

Table 1: Growth of Higher Education Institutions in India

| Year          | University (in tens) | Colleges ('000) | Students Enrolment (in lakhs) | Teaching staff (in lakhs) |
|---------------|----------------------|-----------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1950-51       | 3.2                  | 0.7             | 3.97                          | 0.24                      |
| 2014-15       | 79                   | 40.7            | 265.85                        | 12.61                     |
| Fold increase | 24.7                 | 58              | 67                            | 52                        |

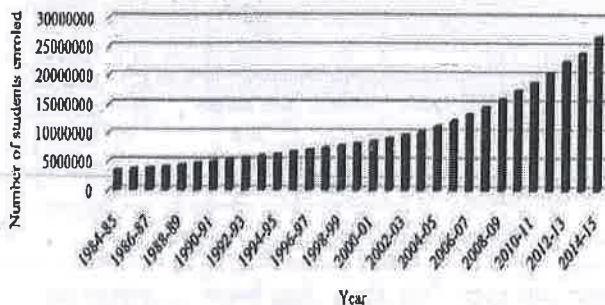
Source: UGC report 2014 - 15

It can be seen that there has been a substantial growth in higher education since the academic year 1950-51. There has been an appreciable growth seen in number of universities. The number of universities increased from 32 in year 1950-51 to 790 in year 2014-2015 thereby recording 24.7 times fold increase. Also, the number of colleges increased from 700 in year 1950-51 to 40,700 in year 2014-15. This further showed a substantial increase in number of enrolment of students and teaching staff. The student enrolment saw a 67 fold increase during the year 2014-2015 from the year 1950-51 while the number of teaching staff increased by 52 folds from the year 1950-51 to year 2014-2015. The pace of growth has been seen rising in the past two decades. The chart shows trend of increase in students enrolled from the year 1984-84 to the year 2014-15. Further there has been rise in exclusive women colleges which contributed towards phenomenal increase in women enrolment. Exclusive women colleges stood at 4,506 in the year 2014.

Although there has been an appreciable increase in numbers as compared to the numbers recording in the year 1950-51, it has been found that there are still number of challenges that Indian education system is facing. Some of the challenges have been

discussed along with statistics.

Chart 1: Number of students enrolled



Source: UGC report2014 - 15

## Issues And Challenges In Higher Education

### Disparity among various groups:

It is clear from the table 2 and table 3 that there is difference in Gross enrolment ratio (GER). It has been seen that there is difference in ratio among social groups. Also there is difference GER in rural and urban areas.

Table 2: Gross Enrolment Ratio in the year 2012-13

| SC   | ST | OTHERS |
|------|----|--------|
| 15.1 | 11 | 21.1   |

Source: Higher Education: AISHE-2012-13 (Provisional) Report

Table 3: Gross Enrolment Ratio

| RURAL | URBAN |
|-------|-------|
| 11.12 | 30.26 |

Source: NSS 64th round (2007-08)

### 1) Gender inequality in higher Education:

Though, the percentage of women enrolment recorded an appreciable rise since 1951-50. The percentage of women students' enrolment as that of total students stood at 46.93% in the year 2014-15. This percentage is still lower as compared to number of men students enrolled. Table 3 shows the women students enrolled for higher education and there percentage as of men students.

Table 4: Women students enrolled for higher education

| Year    | No of women students enrolled (in 000')    | Women students per Hundred Men Students |
|---------|--|---|
| 1950-51 | 40<br>(10% of total students enrolled)     | 14                                      |
| 2014-15 | 12,476<br>(46% of total students enrolled) | 88                                      |

Source: UGC report2014 – 15

### 2) Poor enrolment in higher education:

According to AISHE, 20% of the Colleges are having enrolment less than 100 while 4% colleges had more than 3,000enrolments. Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in Higher education was 23.0. It is calculated for 18-23 years of age group. Pupil Teacher Ratio (PTR) in Universities and Colleges is 25 in the year 2013-14.

### 3) Challenges of maintaining Quality and Excellence:

Quality and excellence is one of the biggest challenges which should to be the taken as priority. Though, the number of institutions in India has shown a phenomenal rise, there are only few good institutes located in some parts of India. Some good institutes located in Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Delhi and Uttar Pradesh is attracting foreign students into India for education. The major part of foreign student enrolment comes from Nepal and Bhutan. While the enrolments are low from other countries like United States, China and Iran. Moreover, it has been found that foreign enrolments drastically drops with the rise in higher levels of tertiary education. This decline in number of students is primarily due to lower quality of education standards as compared to Global quality education standards.

Table 5 shows the top major states which attracts

highest number of foreign students in India. Karnataka is popular destination for under-graduate courses while Maharashtra is popular for post graduate courses. About 76% of students were enrolled for undergraduate studies while 18% were for post-graduation in the year 2011-12.

Table 5: Student from other countries enrolment for various courses

| Year    | Research | Post Graduation | Under Graduation | Total  |
|---------|----------|-----------------|------------------|--------|
| 2010-11 | 850      | 4,730           | 21,951           | 27,531 |
| 2011-12 | 920      | 6,214           | 26,026           | 33,160 |

Source: All India Survey of Higher Education AISHE 2013-14

Table 6: Major States with highest foreign student's enrolments

| Major States   | Students enrolment in the year 2011-12 |
|----------------|--|
| Karnataka      | 12,058                                 |
| Andhra Pradesh | 3,580                                  |
| Maharashtra    | 4,242                                  |
| Tamil Nadu     | 4,866                                  |
| Delhi          | 1,721                                  |
| Uttar Pradesh  | 1,725                                  |

Source: All India Survey of Higher Education AISHE 2014

Since many institutions do not meet the standards of other top 150 universities in the world, many Indian students prefer to study abroad. Further, it can be noted that though the universities hold top rankings in India, they hold their positions above 150 in the world. India placed itself as the second largest source of foreign students where United States scores the highest preference among the Indian students. Table 6 and table 7 shows top 10 universities in India in 2016 and preference of Indian students for their higher studies.

Table 7: Top 10 Universities In India in the year 2016

| Ranking In India | Universities   | Ranking in world |
|------------------|--|------------------|
| 1                | Indian Institute of Science Bangalore                                | 201              |
| 2                | Institute of Chemical Technology, Mumbai                             | -                |
| 3                | Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi                               | -                |
| 4                | University of Hyderabad, Hyderabad                                   | -                |
| 5                | Tozpur University, Tezpur  | 601+             |
| 6                | University of Delhi, Delhi   | 601+             |
| 7                | Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi                                   | -                |
| 8                | Indian Institute of Space Science and Technology, Thiruvananthapuram | -                |
| 9                | Birla Institute of Technology & Science, Pilani                      | 601+             |
| 10               | Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh                                   | 601+             |

Source: Times Higher Education World University Rankings 2016, MHRD India rankings 2016

Table 8: Preference of Indian Students

| Top 4 destinations for Indian Students | Enrolments In the year 2012 | Percentage of enrolment |
|--|-----------------------------|-------------------------|
| United States                          | 97,120                      | 51.3%                   |
| United Kingdom                         | 29,713                      | 15.7%                   |
| Australia                              | 11,684                      | 6.2%                    |
| Canada                                 | 8,142                       | 4.3%                    |

Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS), Research 2013

#### 4) Insufficient Financial assistance:

Higher education needs to be empowered as it helps in building sustainable development in the country. This can be only achieved by empowering higher education through adequate funding. It has been observed that Indian education system lacks adequate funding from Government. As on 31 March 2015, 534 State and State Private Universities were registered under State law; however UGC made budget allocation of Rs. 2,069.95 crores for Plan Development Grants to only 156 State Universities. The budget excluded agricultural and medical universities.

#### 5) Lack Management and control:

Poor Management and control is the common problem at higher education level. Education institutions are still one of under managed

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organisations in India. Higher education requires Continuous accreditation and assessment by the regulatory bodies.

**7) Other Issues:** Other issues includes low teaching quality, old methods for teaching, Inadequate facilities and infrastructure. All these issues effects the overall education system.

### Suggestions

From the above facts, we can understand that Government of India should take initiatives to expand and to improve higher education system in the country. Some of the suggestions are listed below:

**(i) Remove disparities from various social groups:** Government needs to remove disparities in higher education from the society completely by providing equal opportunities to women, minorities, differently abled persons and other backward communities. Further it is advised to take bold steps to remove disparities in rural and urban areas towards higher education. This would help in creating educational opportunities for students in un-served and under-served areas

**(ii) Quality Education:** It is advised that initiatives should be taken to create an atmosphere within the higher educational institutions and provide them facilities for conducting high quality research. Initiatives such as Online Libraries, Career guidance to students, Industry based research and Curriculum would help in upgrading the quality of education in India. Steps should be taken to attract improved quality of faculty in higher education institutions.

**(iii) Meet the Global standards:** Government needs to focus in improving the quality of education in higher levels such that it can meet the standards of foreign educational institutes. Collaboration with international universities would help in upgrading Indian education system.

**(iv) Better research facilities:** It has been seen that the enrolment of students is less in the field of research. The government should focus more on research-based universities and colleges. This would provide better facilities to students and would help in upgrading the quality of education in India.

**(v) Bringing in more institutions:** The government should take steps to increase the existing base of higher education institution by bringing in new institutions. This would help in increasing the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in higher education.

**(iv) Increase in scholarships:** This would help in increasing the enrolment of students into Indian universities and colleges from rural areas.

### Conclusion

From the above discussion it may be concluded that though higher education in India since independence has seen a phenomenal growth however, it is still facing many challenges. This is due to poor implementation of policies into this sector. Government of India has laid down many policies to promote and improve the quality of education but implementation of these policies has always remained poor or week. Hence, it is required to put in more efforts and increase the focus towards execution of plans and strategies. There is a need to transform the overall higher education system in India. Adequate financing assistance, proper

management of finances and Continuous accreditation and assessment of institutes by regulatory bodies would bring in standardization among the institutes. This will help in improving the quality of education in higher levels such that it can meet the standards of foreign educational institutes. Subsequently, involvement of industry based research and consulting would help students in making their careers in their areas of strength and abilities.

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