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Higher Education in India : A Review of Growth and Challenges in the Present Scenario

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Abstract: Swami Vivekananda famously said that education is the most powerful weapon we can use to change the world. Education lays the foundation for the development of any nation. Higher education is equally important for the development of a person as well as for a nation. In spite of several reforms in higher education sector the present system of higher education does not serve the purpose for which it has been started. The paper tries to highlight the scenario of higher education in India and the reforms related to higher education.

Keywords: Higher education, Reforms, Economy, Employability skills

HISTORY OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN INDIA

In ancient times also, India was regarded all over the world for its universities like Takshila, Nalanda and Vikramshila and its scholars. In 1854, establishment of modern universities in India was first recommended by British Colonial administration ; universities in Bombay, Calcutta and Madras were set up in 1857.

In the post–independence period, Government has made significant efforts for the growth and development of Higher Education.

- Radhakrishnan Commission (1948-49)
- Kothari Commission (1964-66),
- Rammurthi Commission (1990),
- National Policy of Education (1986)
- National Knowledge Commission (2005)
- Yashpal Committee (2009),

- Bill for the National Commission on Higher Education and Research (2010) are the important landmarks in higher education.

MEANING OF HIGHER EDUCATION

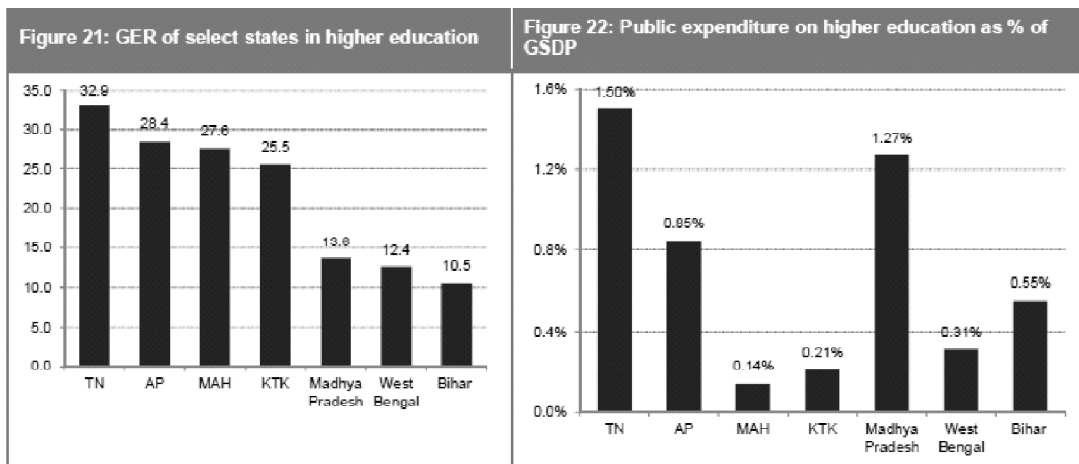
The field of study is divided into General and Professional institutions. Education after 10+ 2 (post secondary) is called higher or tertiary education. General institutions provide courses in the field of science, commerce and humanities whereas professional institutions provide courses in areas like engineering, medical, management, law etc.

TRENDS IN GROWTH OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN INDIA

Since independence, the number of colleges and universities has registered a significant hike. From 1950-51 to 2016-17, while the number of universities has increased from 30 to 803, the number of colleges has gone up from 695 to 38,498. The decadal growth in the number of universities and institutions was much higher in the 1950s and 1960s, primarily because of the relatively small number of such institutions existing, since planned expansion of higher education began after independence. In the 1970s and 1980s, growth of institutions of higher learning was relatively slow, it picked up in the 1990s onwards. This has happened because of increased demand for higher education and participation of the private sector, particularly in technical and professional education. This rapid expansion, however, hides the story of the harsh inequality that prevails in access to higher education across states and union territories. Though the number of colleges and institutions related to higher education has increased but there is disparity in the growth of higher education at the national level In India. Some states have much higher level of education institutions whereas higher education institutions are absent in Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Lakshadweep.

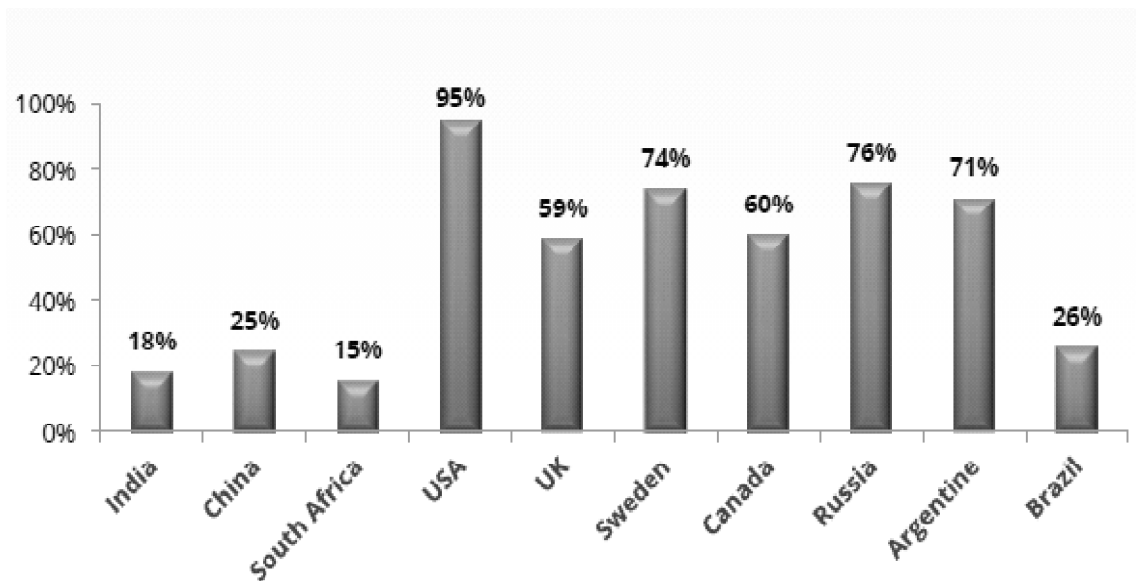
REGIONAL DISPARITIES

The public expenditure on higher education is not equal in all states of India. As most of the southern states have a high GER, while the states like Bihar, West Bengal, Madhya Pradesh are having less GER. Both the Central and the state governments should give special focus on states to increase GER and should provide financial assistance to increase spending on higher education.



Source: MHRD Report 2012-13

International comparisons



Source: Rashtriya Uchcharat Siksha Abhiyaan, survey conducted by MHRD 2012-13

Table shows the international comparisons of enrollment of students in higher education institutions of India. India's GER is far below those of most developed countries and even below that of the other BRIC nations (Brazil, Russia and China).

Challenges of Indian Higher Education System

- 1. Penetration of higher education in India remains low:** According to the recent report of HRD ministry presently about 21 percent of students go for higher education from the country. If India were to increase that figure of 21% to 30%, then it would need another 800 to one thousand universities and over 40,000 colleges in the next 10 years.
- 2. Inadequate Facilities:** There are is a large segment of the Indian populations who only have access to a rudimentary form of primary education and do not have access to higher levels of education namely.
 - a) Secondary Education
 - b) Adult Education
 - c) Vocational Education
 - d) University and Higher Education
 - e) Technical Education
- 3. Outdated and rigid curricula and pedagogy** Our education system is facing issues like a chronic shortage of faculty, poor quality teaching, outdated and rigid curricula and pedagogy, lack of accountability and quality assurance and separation of research and teaching.

4. **Rising demand for education:** The number of students aspiring for education is becoming larger day by day, making it impossible to develop the traditional infrastructure to sustain this; leveraging technology by developing e learning systems can help meet these growing demands.
5. **Lack of skill-based, quality education:** India ranks third in the output of graduates after the US and China but in terms of quality, it lags far behind to cite an example, at least 25% of the engineers and MBA's graduating every year remain unemployable, the education curriculum is highly theoretical and exam based and in most cases totally outdated which do not cater to the ever changing needs of industry.
6. **Cost of education:** The cost of education and the benefit accrued is not very apparent, there are many colleges in India imparting poor quality education at exorbitant cost unaffordable by the most of the population.
7. **Method of evaluation is exam oriented:** Higher education system is focused only on examinations rather than training students or enhancing their communication skills for the future and really testing their knowledge.

Suggestions

1. India has to improve on all factors which are important for higher education system by setting committees or organizations so that they can keep track and improve on these factors .Thus, the suggestions of these committees and organizations must be implemented.
2. India has to take better steps to improve gross enrolment ratio by increasing public spending on education.
3. The Governmental control over Universities must be reduced, so that the University autonomy and accountability are strengthened and academic decisions are taken on merit.
4. Student's involvement in the area of University / College governance should be encouraged.
5. Private institutes and Universities must follow a minimum standard to give degrees.
6. Provision of improved curriculum and teaching-learning material.
7. Attention to teacher capacity building.
8. Increased focus on specification and measurement of learner achievement levels.

CONCLUSION

Inspite of several reforms in higher education sector, India is still facing various challenges in its higher education system. Mere growth of higher education will not serve the basic purpose of educational reforms. Both the Central and State Governments should come up with the plans and policies for its systematic development. It is also necessary that Universities and Colleges should provide sufficient employability skills so that employability can be enhanced. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Government is also focusing on development of employability skills for students.

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