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Challenges of Higher Education in India

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Abstract
The Indian higher education system is one of the largest systems in the World. A large number of students are knocking at the doors of higher education institutions in the country. Indian higher education system has undergone massive expansion in post-independent India with establishment of several Universities, Technical Institutes, Research Institutions and Professional / Non-professional Colleges all over the country to generate and disseminate knowledge coupled with the noble intention of providing easy access to higher education to the common Indian. But the quality of higher education is not up to the mark. There is a need to develop a system of rewarding the best performing faculty members by providing performance-linked monetary and non-monetary benefits by implementing, annual performance appraisals, explicit promotion standards, and Performance-based remuneration system. Curriculum should be regularly reviewed and updated at least for every 4 years. More funding is needed to endanger research.

Keywords: vocational and technical schools - modern economy - vibrant society - right leadership - technical Institutes - research Institutes - professional and non -professional colleges - affiliating system - deregulation mechanism - autonomous status - deemed university - state private university - state open university - state public university - open and distance learning system - gross enrolment ratio - student teacher ratio - refresher course - performance - based remuneration system - case study method - project - based approach - industry internship -

Introduction
Higher education is education beyond high school, specifically provided by colleges and professional schools. Higher education can be achieved through vocational and technical schools, which is considered as a great tool for everyday life. One with higher degree will be able to deal with any sort of problem. With higher education, a person will be able to get and maintain a job which will reward both financially and socially. Higher education is pivotal in developing modern economy, building a vibrant society and promoting a right leadership. It equips people with skills relevant for the market demands and provides the opportunity, mobility across the nations through education and employment. India is the largest democracy and a country of one billion plus and also one of the largest higher education system in the world.

Management of Higher Education
The Indian higher education system is one of the largest systems in the World. A large number of additional students are knocking the doors of higher education institutions in the country. There are also new challenges of management and regulation being faced by these institutions, which require serious attention, both at the institutions in the public sector and also those in the private sector. As a result, the old structures of management established in pre-independent India and working during most of the twentieth century are now required to undergo drastic changes. Besides, the demands of the society for equity and accommodation cannot be neglected any more.
The new regime under WTO where competence is the cardinal principle of success in international operations has made it abundantly clear that the country should exploit its excellent potential in higher education and training facilities and prepare itself to export the

Indian brand of education to foreign countries. Policy planning and evolving strategies for this task are somewhat new for the country. But, this is an opportunity which cannot be missed by India, as it offers interesting possibilities for strengthening the nation's talent and resourcefulness.

Public/Private Partnership

Indian higher education system has undergone massive expansion in post-independent India. More number of Universities, Technical Institutes, Research Institutions and Professional / Non-professional Colleges all over the country were established to generate and disseminate knowledge coupled with the noble intention of providing easy access to higher education to the common Indian. The Public initiatives played a dominant and controlling role in this phase. Most of the Universities were Public institutions with powers to regulate academic activities on their campuses as well as in their areas of jurisdiction through the affiliating system. Even the private institutions enjoyed large-scale financial support in the form of grants from the public exchequer. Private funds as well as individuals played key roles in the cause of higher education.

With the public funding being no more in a position to take-up the challenging task of expansion and diversification of the higher education system in the country to meet the continuously growing demands at present, there is little option other than bringing in private initiatives in a massive way to meet the various challenges. The deregulating mechanism of controls started with the granting of "Autonomous Status" to identified Colleges in the 1970s. Some of these Colleges have graduated further to receive the "Deemed to be University" status in later years. Now, the country is on the threshold of the establishment of Private Universities in different States.

The following are different types of universities offering higher education in India

1. Central Open University
2. Central University
3. Deemed University- Government
4. Institution Under State Legislature Act
5. Institution of National Importance
6. Deemed University- Private
7. State Private University
8. State Open University
9. State Public University
10. State Private University
11. Deemed University- Government Aided
12. Others

Central Universities

A central university is established by the Act of Parliament and is under the direct purview of the Department of Higher Education (DHE) under Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD). As of February 2017, there are 47 Central universities in our country. The universities Conducts admission procedures, decide their own syllabus, Conducts their own exams and Grants degrees to the students.

State Universities

As the name suggests, state universities are established, run and funded by the state government. State universities are usually established by a local legislative assembly act. According to UGC consolidated list, there are 359 state universities in the country. State Universities can confer / grant their own degrees to the students. State universities Conduct their own admission procedure**,** Grants degrees to the students, conduct their own exams and decide their own syllabus.

Deemed to be Universities

"Deemed" is a status of autonomy granted to a university by Department of higher education under MHRD, on the advice of UGC. Deemed to be Universities enjoy full autonomy or independence in deciding courses, syllabus, admissions and fees. Some Deemed to be Universities can also grant degrees on their own. Deemed-to-be Universities, which continue to perform well, can get the status of a full-fledged University. According to a UGC consolidated list, there are 123 deemed-to-be universities in the country. Deemed universities Conducts their own admission procedure**,** decide their own syllabus, and Conducts their own exams. They may or may not grant degrees to the students.

Private Universities

Private universities are also UGC approved institutes. However, such universities do not run on central or state funds. They can grant degrees but cannot have off-campus colleges or affiliate an institution/college. "They can establish off-campus centre(s) within the concerned State after their existence of five years and with the prior approval of the University Grants Commission."Unlike state and central universities which have a 'Chancellor' as the head, a private university is always headed by 'President' or 'Chairperson'.

According to a ruling by the Supreme Court of India, private universities need to adhere to UGC rules and regulations for operations. The UGC regularly sends committees to inspect private universities.

According to UGC consolidated list, there are 260 private universities in the country. They Conduct their own admission procedure, decide their own syllabus, Conduct their own exams and can grant degrees to the students.

Autonomous Institutes & Colleges

Autonomous institutes and colleges exercise independent control over their daily operations of framing syllabus of courses offered and admission procedure to be adopted for different courses. They fall under the administrative control of Department of Higher Education (DHE), Ministry of Human Resource Development. However, there is a thin line of difference between Autonomous Institutes and Autonomous Colleges.

Autonomous Colleges need to be affiliated to a certain university. These colleges can conduct their own admission procedure and exams. However, at the end of course completion, they cannot issue their own degree or diploma. The final degree or diploma is issued by the affiliated university.

Autonomous Institutes, like deemed-to-be universities, enjoy full autonomy or independence in deciding courses, syllabus, admissions and fees. They can also grant diplomas. It may be noted that IIMs will also be able to grant degrees and soon, diplomas as the Union Cabinet has approved the IIM Bill 2017.

However, some autonomous institutes are permitted to

award degrees, though they are not referred to as Universities. These institutes include Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs), Indian Institutes of Information Technology (IIITs), National Institutes of Technology (NITs), All India Institutes of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), etc. Autonomous institutes Conducts their own admission procedure, decide their own syllabus, Conducts their own exams. They may or may not grant diploma or degree to students.

Table 1: Number of Universities in India 2015-16

Type of University	Number of University	Percent
Central Open University	1	0.13
Central University	43	5.38
Deemed University- Government	32	4.01
Institution Under state Legislature Act	5	0.63
Institution of national importance	75	9.39
Deemed University- Private	79	9.89
State Private University	197	25.00
State Open University	13	1.63
State Public University	329	41.18
State Private Open University	1	0.13
Deemed University- Government Aided	11	1.38
Others	13	1.63
Grand Total	799	100.00

Source: Report of All India survey on Higher Education 2015-16

Table-1 shows Number of Universities in India as on 2015-16. The share of state public universities are highest i.e 41.18 percent followed by state private Universities 25 percent and deemed Universities-Private 9.89 percent.

Challenges in Higher Education

Quality in Higher Education

There is a considerable progress in the number of universities offering higher education in India. The numbers of universities increased from 30 in 1951 to 799 in 2015-16.The number of colleges were also increased from 695 in 1950-51 to 39,071 in 2015-16. But much is to be done in improving the quality in higher education system. Quality improvement consists of curricula, pedagogy, faculty, research, governance, leadership, collaborations and infrastructure.

The curriculum should be revamped to reflect the national development with international bench mark. The periodic revision and reconfiguration of curricula should be in vogue to make higher education more attractive. All the universities are advised by the Ministry Human Resource Development and UGC to get syllabi of courses upgraded and reviewed once in every three years of duration of the programme

Infrastructure

Since independence higher education in India has witnessed an impressive growth over the years. The number of higher education institutions (HEIs) has increased from about 30 universities and 692 colleges in 1950-51 to about 799 universities and 39,071 colleges in 2015-16 with an annual enrolment of above 25 million (including enrolment under open and Distance Learning System). Table-2 shows the growth of higher educational Institutions (HEIs) in India Since 1950. From Table – 2, it can be observed that, there has been a threefold increase in the number of Higher Educational Institutions in the country during the last decade.

Table 2: Growths of Higher Educational Institutions in India

Year	Number of Colleges	Number of Universities
1950-51	695	30
1960-61	1,542	55
1970-71	3,604	103
1980-81	4,722	133
1990-91	7,346	193
2000-01	12,806	256
2010-11	31,564	574
2011-12	35,539	700
2013-14	36,634	723
2014-15	38,498	760
2015-16	39,071	799

Source: Higher Education at a Glance- June-2013, University Grants Commission New Delhi-2013

The total enrolment in higher education has increased from 0.21 million in 1950 to about 22 million (more than 100 times) in 2011-12, while the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in higher education has increased from 0.40 percent in 1950-51 to 24.50 percent in 2015-16. The GER in higher education at 24.50 percent leaves a vast proportion of eligible population out of the system. The Indian GER is significantly less than comparable figures in other developed and emerging nations as shown in Table - 3.

The Government is targeting to achieve GER of 30 percent by 2020 which will require creation of additional enrolment capacity of 25 million in the next decade. This requires an additional 10,210 technical institutions, 15,530 colleges and 520 universities. That means there is a need for development of infrastructure, at an unprecedented rate, for the higher educational institutions to meet the increased requirement GER to compete with the Emerging countries.

Table 3: Gross Enrolment Ratios (GERs) of Developed and Emerging Nations

Name of the Country	GER (%)
India	24.50
China	26
Japan	55
UK	59
Brazil	36
USA	95

Source: UNESCO Institute of Statistics on Higher education, 2009

This could be achieved by enhancing financial support by the Government and encouraging Private institutions and Universities by providing incentives and with appropriate quality guidelines with broad outlook for internationalization of education.

Faculty

Availability of good quality faculty is a critical input in the functioning of a sound higher education system. There has been a consistent growth in the faculty strength in higher education, which has not matched with the growth in student enrolment, which is gone up by more than 100 times between 1950-51 and 2011-12. The number of teachers has gone up by less than 40 times, which implies the student-teacher ratio has declined by about 2.5 times over this period. This has also led to the country's poor performance on student-teacher ratio at the international level.

The high student teacher ratio is due to (1) teaching is not an attractive profession. It is one of the last choices in terms of career. (2) Number of PhDs produced each year is very low and those required by academia is far higher. In fact, at many institutions fresh graduates are employed to teach, leading to poor quality of classroom instruction. For example in technological education sector alone the annual students intake is 20, 00,000. Faculty shortage (at 1:15 staff student ratio) is about 80,000, shortage of PhDs is 60,000, and shortage of masters is 25,000.

Table 4: Student teacher ratios in selected countries

Name of the Country	Student Teacher Ratio
India	24
China	16.8
Argentina	16.3
Brazil	22.2
Canada	17.4
Sweden	9.5
Russia	18.1
UK	18
USA	13.6

Source: Higher Education at a Glance",-June-2013, UGC, UNESCO Institute for Statistics of Higher and Technical Education in India, 2009

Keeping the above State of quantity and quality of faculty there is a need to recruit more number of qualified and dedicated faculty members. This can be achieved by (1) providing incentives for good quality teaching by recruiting them based on their capabilities and experience and (2) encouraging PhD and other research scholars with scholarships. (3) conducing mandatory training programs for all faculty members not only on the subject matter, but also to enhance the effectiveness of their teaching, (4) Conducting refresher courses to update faculty members on new developments and effective teaching techniques. (5) Establish Teaching and learning Centres (TLCs) in existing universities, preferably in those with a strong research culture.

There is a need to develop a system of rewarding the best performing faculty members by providing performance-linked monetary and non-monetary benefits by implementing:

- Annual performance appraisals explicit promotion standards,
- Performance-based remuneration system
- evaluation of faculty members' performance through regular student feedback and peer review,
- Providing significant weightage to research while evaluating their performance, and
- Increasing involvement of faculty in designing curricula and decisions relating to pedagogy and examinations.

Curricula and Pedagogy

There has been a dramatic increase in the number of public colleges established in recent years, most of them offer general education courses through syllabi set by their affiliating universities. According to a study only 25% of engineering graduates are directly employable. This is an indication of the quality of education.

Curriculum content of present colleges and universities is criticized in many places as it is outdated. Students complain of too little connection to work-related opportunities for career preparation. Many feel they study for irrelevant degrees and are unprepared for the world of work. As a result graduate unemployment is rising. In early post-independence years, a bachelor's degree often provided the elite entrance to prime government positions, but in contemporary India, it at best provides a chance to become a white-collar worker with modest salary.

Furthermore the present day teaching methodology is one-way teacher-centric teaching, where student has no role to play and contribute for the learning process which makes education neither nor creative. Our top class students are hard-working but not innovative. They are not capable enough to produce new technology. Paucity of skill intensive education is compounded by parallel dearth of soft skills. The outcome is that, the workforce is far from globally competitive. Hence, there is a great need for a revolution in Higher Education.

Hence, there is a need of continuous up-gradation of curriculum, to keep up pace with rapid growth of science and technology. Curriculum should be object oriented and focused. In Science and Technological education there is a need to increase field and laboratory components to make the students innovative and creative and the education should be student –centric.

Hence, to improve the curriculum and pedagogy, the following measures may be taken:

1. Curriculum should be regularly reviewed and updated at least for every 4 years. The curriculum should be objective and employment oriented one.
2. The curriculum should be drafted in such a way that the graduate/postgraduate students who are studying the course should be equipped with the knowledge and skills that are expected out of him/her.
3. The mode of examination should gradually shift from the terminal, annual and semester examination to regular and continuous assessment of student's performance
4. Education should be student-centric in which, Faculty acts as a facilitator. More experiential learning through activities should be planned. Learning should be through self-directed ways; and increased responsibility should be developed in students for learning outcomes.

Further to make the learning environment more useful and challenging, students should be enumerated to aquire

Critical thinking skills, Communication and creativity-related skills and Conceptualization problem-solving skills.

- The 'case study' method of teaching can be adopted to develop problem solving and critical thinking skills.
- Adopting a project-based approach to enable practical application of concepts in the classrooms is needed.
- Integrating industry internship into the curricula is essential.
- Co-curricular activities are to be developed to build leadership and term-building skills.

Research

Research is an essential component of higher education system. Most of the Indian colleges and universities lack in high end research facilities, under-investment in libraries, laboratories and classrooms. With this, it is very difficult to provide top quality instruction to undertake quality research.

One of the input parameters to ascertain progress in research is the quantum of spending on research and development activities. As per a study India's share in spending on R&D to the total global R&D spending stands at 2.1% while the share of China is 12.5%. Table-5 shows the details relating to R&D spending by different countries. U.S.A and Europe countries are spending significantly on research and development. There is clearly a need to increase spending on R&D to move forward towards a knowledge economy.

Another important parameter to measure research is the enrolment and award of Ph.Ds. The number of Ph.Ds awarded in India has doubled over a ten year period from 1998 to2007. The study also indicates that only 0.25% of the students who enrolled at the graduate level get themselves enrolled for Ph.D.

Table 5: spending on R&D by different Countries

Name of the Country	Share of Spending on R&D
India	2.1
China	12.5
Japan	12.6
Europe	25.0
USA	33.6
Other	15.0

Source: R&D Magzine-2009

The number of Ph.Ds produced in India grew at an annual rate of about 9% during the period from 2002 to 2007, whereas the number of Ph.Ds awarded in China grew at a rate of over18% during the same period. The Table-6 shows that USA is producing more number of Ph.Ds during the period 2002-2007.

Table 6: Number of Ph.Ds produced in India, China and USAS

Name of the Country	Number of PhDs awarded in the year					
	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
India	11,974	15,328	17,853	17,898	18,730	20,131
China	14,706	18,625	22,593	26,392	36,247	41,464
USA	40,024	40,024	40,757	42,112	38,195	48,112

Source: Sunder. S, Higher Education Reforms in India, Yale University 2010

The above details indicate that, there is an urgent need to focus on increasing quantity and quality of research in India. This can be achieved by giving incentives and scholarship for research scholars and encouraging industry to Sponsor the research to enhance the quality development. One of the reasons for the Industries to be uninterested in the research activities in the universities is that, the research in university is not focused to their needs and there is no accountability of research outcomes and time schedule in universities. Hence, it is necessary for the researchers/university to focus on need based/industry requirement based research to attract the funds and make the research outputs more meaningful and useful.

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