



Higher Education in India after Independence: Issues and Challenges

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Abstract : Education is the backbone of a nation. India had glorious education system all over the world in the ancient times. The ancient Indian universities were regarded all over the world i.e. Taxila, Nalanda, Vallabhi and Vikramshila etc. These universities had produced many eminent scholars like Charaka, Atisha, and Nagarjuna etc. The medieval period had produced many scholars like Amir Khasru, Ziyauddin Barani, Abul Fazl, Abdul Qadir Badauni, Faizi, emperors Babur & Jahangir, prince Dara Shikoh, princesses Gul-Badan Begam & Jahanara, Mahakavi Krittibas Ojha, Maladhar Basu, Paragal Khan, Kavindra Parameswar etc. East India Company initially did not take much interest in education of its subjects. Later, they changed their policies. They established some educational institutions and implemented some policies for the native Indian because of their colonial mind set. After independence to till now, India has implemented many commissions, policies for the development of Indian education system. India has lots of issues and challenges to higher education. I would like to focus on this paper in brief discussion on Indian higher education system after independence and its issues and challenges. This paper will also suggest to resolve these challenges of Indian higher education system.

Keywords: Higher education, Colleges, Universities, Issues and Challenges

Introduction

In ancient times, India had world class universities like Taxila, Nalanda, Vikramshila etc. Pupils from all over the world used to flock for getting quality education in these universities. The distinguished female scholars were Lopamudra, Ghosa, Sulabha, Mamata, Maitreyi and Gargi etc in the Vedic period. Medieval India had many important centres of learning. These centres belonged to two major communities (Hindu and Muslim). The Muslim community education centres were set up in Delhi (Madrasah-i-Begum), Agra (distinguished scholars Siraj, Mirza Muftis), Lahore, Fatepur Sikri (Ibadat Khana), Multan, Jaunpur (Jaunpur known as Siraj-i-Hind), Gujrat (Langer-i-Duwazda Imam), Kashmir (eminent scholars like Jahanara, Mirza Abu Talib Kamil), Bidar (Bidar had a college named Gawan College), Gour (eminent scholars like Kritivasa Ojha, Maladhar Basu, Paragal Khan, Kavindra Parameshwara etc) and Hindu's learnig centres were in Kashmir, Vanarasi, Mithila, Nadia or Nabadwipa (Nadia school of Nyaya, & School of Smriti). During colonial rule, East India Company initially did not take much interest in the education of its subjects. Later, they changed their policies. They established some educational institutions and implemented some policies for the native Indian because of their colonial mind set. After independence, India had 20 Universities and 500 Colleges. India had 2,23,000 enrolling student in 1950. The number has rapidly increased 1043 Universities, 42343 Colleges and 11779 Stand Alone Institutions (All India Survey of Higher Education, 2019-2020). The number of universities has increased 52.15 times from 20 in 1950 to 1043. The number of colleges has also increased 84.69 times from 500 in 1950 to 42343. The student enrollment in India was 3.74 crores in AISHE Report 2018-19 and the enrollment in higher education is 3.85 crores (AISHE 2019-20). The higher education records rise of 11.4% in student enrolment (AISHE Report, 2019-20) and the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in higher education has crossed the 27% mark in India. After independence to till now, India has implemented many commissions, policies for the development of Indian education system. India has lots of issues and challenges to higher education.

Post-Independence India's Education Policies

India got freedom in 1947, after independence Indian Government has recommended and implemented any commission for the development of Indian higher education as follows;

Radhakrishnan Commission 1948-49

Famous teacher and philosopher Dr. S. Radhakrishnan was appointed as a chairman of the University Commission on November 4, 1948. The Commission submitted its report in 1949. The Commission has recommended certain aim such as; The commission has ensured to high quality teaching. The intermediate passed students should be admitted to university. A degree college should have at least 180 days in a year. University should not have more than 3000 students and a degree college should not have more than 1500 students. Suitable teacher must be appointed.

- i. Ph. D. should be chosen on all over India basis. The duration Ph. D. programme should be at least two years. Research scholars should be given fellowships. D. Litt and D. Sc degree should be awarded only on original works. The Government must be given adequate financial assistance.
- ii. The courses of studies for universities and intermediate colleges should be recognized on general, intellectual and vocational education.
- iii. Vocational education, teacher's training, engineering, technology and medical education must be included under professional.
- iv. Better facilities should be given to promote women education.
- v. Compulsory of all religious texts should be taught to the second year students of the graduate course.
- vi. Researchers should be made in the Ayurvedic and Unani of medicine for the development of it. Students should be admitted not more than 190 in a medical college within a year and not more than 10 patients under the observation of a medical student.
- vii. The student of higher secondary schools and universities should be taught the national language along with English and a regional language.
- viii. New universities should be set up in rural areas for the upliftment of the rural people.

Indian Education Commission 1964-66

Prof. Daulat Singh Kothari was appointed as a chairman of Kothari Commission by a Government Regulation in July 1964. Its report was submitted on June 26, 1966. The main recommendations are as follows

- i. Free and Compulsory Education.
- ii. Development of Languages (Three Language Formula).
- iii. Equalization of educational opportunity.
- iv. Residential facilities in schools.
- v. To improve women education.
- vi. Morals and religious education.
- vii. Adult education, vocational education and co-curricular activities.
- viii. Method of teaching, text book and curriculum.
- ix. Higher education and evaluation etc.

National Policy on Education 1968

National Policy on Education 1968 was approved on 24th July 1968. The main recommendations of National Policy on Education 1968 are as follows;

- i. Free and compulsory education,
- ii. Three Language Formula,
- iii. Equalisation of educational opportunities,
- iv. To improve science education and research,
- v. Education structure will be 10+3+2,
- vi. Removal of women illiteracy,
- vii. Delinking of degrees from jobs,
- viii. To set up rural universities and institutions,
- ix. The Government of India will be provided huge funds to improve quality higher education like establishing new universities, recruitment of additional staffs, increasing the numbers of laboratory and other facilities etc.
- x. First times Government of India was planned to spend 6% GDP on education etc.

National Education Policy 1986

The National policy on education 1968 marked significance achievement in the post-independence Indian history of education for about 20 years to promote national progress. But the 1968 Policy on Education was not implemented properly in Indian education system. Then Prime Minister Sri Rajiv Gandhi announced New Education Policy in January 1985. Finally New Education Policy on Education was approved by the Parliament in May 1986. The policy's main recommendations are as following:

- i. It has given all students, irrespective of caste, creed, gender, to access education for the upliftment of the society.
- ii. Free and compulsory education must be up to elementary level.
- iii. Opening Open University and Open Distance Learning Institutions for expansion of higher education which is recognized by UGC.
- iv. Operation Black Board has laid stress on the quality upliftment of elementary educations.
- v. To set up Navodaya Schools in each districts.
- vi. Delinking degrees from jobs and focused to skill based learning.
- vii. Set up Indian Education Service and National Testing Service.
- viii. National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE) got constitutional status and establishing District Institute of Education and Training (DIET) and Colleges of Teacher Education (CTEs).

- ix. It has given special privileges to women, Schedule Castes (SC), Schedule Tribes (ST), Other Backward Classes (OBC) and physically weaker section of the society.

National Curriculum Framework 2005

The National Curriculum Framework (2005) has set up under the chairmanship of Prof. Yash Pal and its report was published in 2005 by National Council of Educational Research and Training Centre (NCERT). The National Curriculum Framework (NCF) 2005 will be worked as a guideline for syllabus, textbooks, and teaching practices within the school education in India. Besides, there is diversity of text books and local knowledge and traditional skills will be included in the syllabus. It focused on curricular areas, school and classroom environment, and systemic reforms

Rashtriya Uchchar Shiksha Abhiyan 2013

The Government of India has approved Rashtriya Uchchar Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA) in 2013 for development of higher education. Following are primary components of RUSA;

- i. Existing autonomous colleges will be upgraded to Universities.
- ii. The Government will provide infrastructure grants to Colleges and universities.
- iii. New Model Colleges (general & professional) will set up.
- iv. Equity initiative is the most important component of RUSA.
- v. The Government should be provided faculty recruitment and teaching improvement assistants.
- vi. Capacity building and preparation, data collection and planning for research, innovation, and quality improvement of Indian education.

National Education Policy 2020

After 34 years, the Government of India approved a new National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 on July 2020. The NEP 2020 aims:

- i. To transform the Indian education system to meet the needs of the 21st century.
- ii. To rectify poor literacy and numeracy outcomes associate with primary schools.
- iii. To focus on early childhood care, restructure curriculum and pedagogy.
- iv. To reform assessments and exams, and invest in teacher training.
- v. To bring a holistic change in the education system in India etc.

The new curricular structure will be 5+3+3+4. There will be no rigid separations among arts, science & commerce and between vocational and academic streams. National Testing Agency (NTA) will offer common entrance for admission to higher education institutions. Undergraduate degree will be four years term with multiple entry and go out options and suitable certificates. After completed 4 years course will get a degree with research and there will be a one year master degree programme. Board exams will conduct twice a year. Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) will be increased 50% by 2035. M. Phil degree will be abolished. Undergraduate to Ph. D. courses must be interdisciplinary by 2040. Higher Education of Institution (HEI) will be made for whole higher education (excluding medical and legal). Professional education will be become multi-disciplinary institutions. Academic Bank of Credits (ABC) and National Assessment Centre 'PARAKH' will be created for the student's betterment. The National Curriculum Framework (NCF) will be set up by National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE). Indian top universities will set up campuses in foreign countries and top 100 universities all over the world will open campuses in India. The government has planned to set up a National Research Foundation, Multi-disciplinary Education and Research Universities for research purposes. The National Education Policy has recommended 6% GDP for quality education. Central Advisory Board of Education will look after regarding quality education.

Issues and Challenges in India's Higher Education Sector

- i. **Enrollment:** AISHE, 2019-20 report has stated that the Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) of India in education is 27.1% of eligible age group 18-23 years, which is not good as compared to the developed countries and other major developing countries in the world. Enrollment in school education is increasing day by day a great achievement one side and lack of sufficient higher education institutes is a big problem on the other side.
- ii. **Equity:** According to the AISHE, 2019-20 Report, there is no equity in Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) among different sections of the society. Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) for Scheduled Castes (SC) is 23.4% and for Scheduled Tribes (ST) is 18.0%. Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) for male population at all India level is 26.9% whereas for SC and ST male are 22.8% & 18.2% respectively. Similarly, Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) for female at all India level is 27.3% whereas for SC female is 24.1% and For ST female is 17.7%. The Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) for female is highest in Sikkim in all social groups. Distance education enrollment is about 11.1% of the total enrollment in higher education, of which 44.5% are female students. There are regional variations too. Some State has higher in Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) and some are far behind from the national figures.
- iii. **Quality:** Sheikh (2017, p. 40) argues, "Quality in higher education is the biggest challenges being faced in India today. The Government is restlessly focusing on quality education and a large numbers of colleges and universities in India are unable to meet the minimum requirements laid by the UGC". Indian Government is provided low quality of teaching; insufficient financial assistants and higher education have complex regulatory bodies and norms etc. So India's higher education quality is poor.
- iv. **Faculty:** The shortage of faculties is the greatest issue and challenge of higher education in India. Sheikh (2017, p. 41) stated that "large numbers of NET/SET/Ph.D candidates are unemployed even though there are a lot of vacancies in higher education". The recruitment process of faculty members is long-term. The recruitment should start before a post is vacated.
- v. **Overcrowded Classrooms:** Shortage of teachers and classrooms in many colleges and universities is a big problem in Indian higher education. The Government should provide financial assistants to build sufficient infrastructures.

- vi. **Traditional method of teaching:** Most of the professors are still taking old methods of teaching like board, chalk, duster, marker etc. Faculties are not using modern technique of teaching like audio-visual aids (Chahal, 2015, p.71). Most of the faculties are not engaged with the global industry's demand (Atri, et al., 2019). We should focus more on practical and technical knowledge also.
- vii. **Financing:** Financing is a big issue in higher education. Currently India has announced around 3.1% (Union Budget 2022) GDP on education, which is very low to compare others world developed and developing nations.
- viii. **Research and Development:** Indian Government does not giving priority for huge research. Research fund is also given very few candidates. India does not have a good quality of researchers to compare the first world countries. There are lack of early stage research experience, a weak ecosystem and low level of industry involvement (N & Iyer, 2016 & Singh, 2015). India has consecutively spent only 0.6% to 0.7% of India's GDP on research. On the other hand, developed and developing countries have spent more than India in research and development purposes like Israel (4.9), South Korea (4.6), Sweden (3.4), Austria (3.2), Japan (3.2), Germany (3.2), USA (3.1), Belgium (2.9), China (2.2), France (2.2), Netherland (2.2), Australia (2.1), U. K. (1.88), Russia (1.74), Canada (1.5) and Brazil (1.04) etc.
- ix. **Political Factor:** More than 70% colleges and 37% universities are run by private sector. The owner of the private sector institutes are the political leaders, builders, civil societies and industrialists etc. They are doing important role in the governing bodies of colleges and universities (Sheikh, 2017, p. 41). The Government colleges and government aided colleges governing bodies are connected directly and indirectly with the ruling parties and partly opposition parties. The Vice-Chancellors are indirectly recruited by the ruling parties. The Vice-Chancellors are involved into nepotism and abuse of power (Guha, 2011).
- x. **World Class University:** Indian government is not providing the facilities and priorities to development of world class standard education. In the exalted Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) World University Rankings 2022, only two Indian institutes got position into top 100 university of QS World Ranking. QS University ranking by subject 2022; Arts and Humanities: Indian Universities like Jawaharlal Nehru University (188), University of Delhi (227), IIT Bomboy (333), IIT Delhi & Jadavpur University (401-450) and QS World University ranking by subject 2022; Engineering and Technology: IIT Bomboy (65), IIT Delhi (72), IIT Kharagpur (101) got position etc.
- xi. **Privatization:** Privatization has increased the number of degrees holders on one hand and unemployed on the other hand. Privatization has increased the cost and decreased quality of education. Prabhdeep (2020) has stated that "high fee structures are difficult for parents with meagre income to bear. They demand higher donation for admission even of a bright student. These institutions strictly avoid admission from the poor section of the society". The quality of faculty is poor and many of them are not fully qualified and experienced in private colleges and universities. "Private institution has shifted from providing education to earning money" (Prabhdeep, 2020). So, private education is not a social goods, but economic goods used for money making.

Suggestions to improve the Higher Education System

- i. India needs to create a globally relevant, innovative and competitive ecosystem for the betterment of our youths.
- ii. The Government must improve infrastructure, quality and scope of higher education.
- iii. The Government should encourage collaboration among Indian top institutions and top international institutions for the upliftment of the quality and collaborative research.
- iv. Both private and public colleges and universities should be away from the influence of the political parties.
- v. The Government should increase financial support for the development of India's higher education.
- vi. The Government should provide student support services at the institutional level that will guide students to learn additional skills as per current market needs.
- vii. The Government should emphasize on creative thinking and collaborative learning.
- viii. The Government should promote spiritual, moral, social, cultural, mental and physical development policy for the betterment of the students, for opportunities of jobs and responsibilities in future life.
- ix. Nepotism, partiality and money making process must be abolished from Indian education system.
- x. The Government should not decrease stipend for the research scholars.
- xi. The Government should continue the M. Phil degree in spite of New Education Policy's recommendation against the same.
- xii. The Government should provide non-NET fellowship for the research scholars.
- xiii. The Government should increase the number of Ph.D. seats for innovations and research purposes.
- xiv. The Central Government and State Governments should take step to fill up the vacant faculty posts in higher education.
- xv. Good salary packages and benefits to the faculty will help to curb the brain drains from India.
- xvi. Internship should be made compulsory in professional courses.

Conclusion

The Indian Education System has to change for the betterment of the students. Government should give the students equal opportunities for their better future. Government must give up the old and traditional techniques. Government should implement updated curriculum and improve of teaching standards. Then, our youth can create a better world. Government should focus more on gradual upliftment for teachers and give them greater autonomy with institutions and good opportunities for research, to achieve great future of the students. The New Education Policy (NEP 2020) has covered all aspects in detail but we will have to watch as these recommendations take figure in the coming years, to truly understand how impactful is in future.

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