



HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM IN INDIA

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ABSTRACT

By 2030, India will be amongst the youngest nations in the world. With nearly 140 million people in the college going age group, one in every four graduates in the world will be a product of the Indian higher education system. Over the last two decades, India has remarkably transformed its higher education landscape. It has created widespread access to low-cost high-quality university education for students of all levels. With well-planned expansion and a student-centric learning-driven model of education, India has not only bettered its enrolment numbers but has dramatically enhanced its learning outcomes. A differentiated three-tiered university system where each tier has a distinct strategic objective – has enabled universities to build on their strengths and cater across different categories of educational needs. Further, with the effective use of technology, India has been able to resolve the longstanding tension between excellence and equity. India has also undertaken large-scale reforms to better faculty-student ratios by making teaching an attractive career path, expanding capacity for doctoral students at research universities and delinking educational qualifications from teaching eligibility. India's higher education system is the third largest in the world, next to the United States and China. The main governing body at the tertiary level is the University Grants Commission, which enforces its standards, advises the government, and helps coordinate between the centre and the state. Accreditation for higher learning is overseen by 12 autonomous institutions established by the University Grants Commission. Indian higher education system has expanded at a fast pace by adding nearly 20,000 colleges and more than 8 million students in a decade from 2000-01 to 2010-11. As of 2011, India has 42 central universities, 275 state universities, 130 deemed universities, 90 private universities, 5 institutions established and functioning under the State Act, and 93 Institutes of National Importance which includes AIIM, IIT's, NIT's among others. Other institutions include 33,000 colleges as Government Degree Colleges and Private Degree Colleges, including 1800 exclusive women's colleges, functioning under these universities and institutions as reported by the UGC in 2012. The emphasis in the tertiary level of education lies on science and technology. Indian educational institutions by 2004 consisted of a large number of technology institutes. Distance learning and open education is also a feature of the Indian higher education system, and is looked after by the Distance Education Council. Indira Gandhi National Open University is the largest university in the world by number of students, having approximately 3.5 million students across the globe. Some institutions of India, such as the Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs), National Institute of Technology (NITs), Indian Institutes of Information Technology (IIITs), Indian Institutes of Management (IIMs), International Institute of Information Technology (IIIT), University of Mumbai and Jawaharlal Nehru University have been globally acclaimed for their standard of education. The IITs enroll about 8000 students annually and the alumni have contributed to both the growth of the private sector and the public sectors of India. However, India still lacks internationally behind prestigious universities



such as Harvard, Cambridge, and Oxford. Indian higher education is in need of radical reforms. A focus on enforcing higher standards of transparency, strengthening of the vocational and doctoral education pipeline, and professionalization of the sector through stronger institutional responsibility would help in reprioritizing efforts and working around the complexities. The rise of IT sector and engineering education in India has boxed students into linear path without giving them a chance to explore and discover their passions. Concerted and collaborative efforts are needed in broaden student choices through liberal arts education.

I. REFORMS INITIATIVES IN THE HIGHER EDUCATION SECTOR :

The departments of Higher Education has initiated a number of steps for educational reforms including in regulatory and governance structures in the higher education system. An important challenge in the higher education sector is to bring about reforms not only in the institutions of higher learning but also in the regulatory structures of the higher education system. There are also the challenges of maintaining quality and excellence while ensuring rapid expansion rapid expansion and attracting and retaining good faculty in adequate numbers to meet the demands of the rapidly expanding sector. The Government has accordingly taken a number of steps for reforms in the regulatory and governance structures of the higher education system. A few of these reform initiatives are as under:

- [1] Proposal to establish an autonomous overarching authority for prescribing standards and laying down policy for higher education and research to subsume the University Grants Commission (UGC) All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) , National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE) and academic functions of other regulatory bodies in higher education.
- [2] Proposal for prohibition and punishment of unfair practices in technical education institutions, medical educational institutions and universities.
- [3] Proposal for mandatory assessment and accreditation in higher education including institutions and programmes and creation of an institutional structure for the same.
- [4] Qualifying the National Eligibility Test (NET) has been made mandatory for appointment as teacher in universities and colleges with exemption provided to those who have obtained PhD degree in accordance with the standards specified by the regulation.
- [5] Review of performance of deserving institutions like councils , deemed universities.

II.ACCREDITATION

Indian law requires that universities be accredited unless created through an act of Parliament. Without accreditation, the government notes, "These fake institutions have no legal entity to call themselves as University/ Vishwvidyalaya and to award 'degree' which are not treated as valid for academic/employment purposes." The University Grants Commission Act 1956 explains, "the right of conferring or granting degrees shall be exercised only by a University established or incorporated by or under a Central Act carlo bon tempo, or a State Act, or an Institution deemed to be University or an institution specially empowered by an Act of the Parliament to confer or grant degrees. Thus, any institution which has not been created by an enactment of Parliament or a State Legislature or has not been granted the status of a Deemed to be University, is not entitled



to award a degree." Accreditation for higher learning is overseen by autonomous institutions established by the University Grants Commission:

- All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE)
- Distance Education Council (DEC)
- Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR)
- Bar Council of India (BCI)
- National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC)
- National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE)
- Rehabilitation Council of India (RCI)
- Medical Council of India (MCI)
- Pharmacy Council of India (PCI)
- Indian Nursing Council (INC)
- Dental Council of India (DCI)
- Central Council of Homeopathy (CCH)
- Central Council of Indian Medicine (CCIM)
- Veterinary Council of India (VCI)

The issue of assessing and assuring quality of Indian higher education is a challenge. Instead of aiming for 'world-class' universities through rankings, policy framework must improve the processes enable accountability through data collection and reporting on parameters of institutional quality. The government should leverage this tool to improve quality of the overall system. To this end, the Ministry of Human Resource Development is conducting a highly consultative exercise and has released various papers, including a discussion paper entitled Themes and Questions for Policy Consultation on Higher Education and Some Inputs for Draft National Education Policy 2016.

These inputs hit most of the right notes:

- Addressing the cascading effect of poor early education outcomes on later education;
 - Recognising the lack of employability of graduates, the need for better teaching training and for prioritising quality in the system as a whole through mandatory accreditation and other methods;
 - Promoting more broad-based curricula to emphasise softer skills;
 - Addressing governance problems at the system level and institutionally (for example, hiring practices of vice-chancellors and academic freedom) as well as regulatory issues;
 - Recognising the need to foster linkages between research and industry and to put greater emphasis on vocational education and integration of vocational and higher education;
 - Addressing disparities in access and provision of higher education (and earlier education) for females, minority groups and different regions;
 - Accelerating deployment of new technology for pedagogy and online delivery of courses;
 - Promoting greater internationalisation of the tertiary education system, including allowing selected foreign universities from the top 200 in the world to establish a base in India in collaboration with Indian universities;
- and



- Exploring financing models, including more public-private partnerships and alumni funding (although the documents are somewhat vague about the perennially vexed issue of private provision in India and its role), as well as support to help students get greater access to loans.

III. CONCLUSION

While it is important to address the existing shortcomings in the higher education system, it is more important to move towards a bold and aspirational vision. We strongly believe that a stratified three tiered structure that enables seamless vertical and horizontal mobility of students would be able to create the desired intellectual, economic and social value. The implementation framework suggests the student at the center stage to foster innovation and choice, an ICT architecture that will increase access, equity and quality, and a transparent governance framework that will enable autonomy and self –regulation. A framework for governance has been detailed in the addendum document which proposes a mechanism based on outcomes and strong institutional accountability, clearly delineating the role and responsibilities of the government as well as public and private higher education institutions.

IV. REFERENCES

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