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“HIGHER EDUCATION IN INDIA: OPPORTUNITIES, CHALLENGES AND SUGGESTIONS”

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Abstract: Education is one of the significant factors instrumental to the development of a country. It should be transformed to the needs of the time and changing scenario of the world. It provides an opportunity to critically reflect upon the social, economic, cultural, moral and spiritual issues facing humanity. India needs more efficient and educated people to drive our economy forward. There are many Indian around the corner who known for their capabilities and skills. To develop India as an education hub or to become a prosperous partner in global economy, India has to qualitatively strengthen education in general and higher education with research and development in particular. The current study aims to highlight the challenges and to point out the opportunities in higher education system in India.

Key Words: Higher Education, opportunities, challenges, College and universities and suggestions.

1.1 Introduction: India's higher education system is the world's third largest in terms of students, next to China and the United States. In future, India will be one of the largest education hubs. India's Higher Education sector has witnessed a tremendous increase in the number of Universities/University level Institutions & Colleges since independence and it is encouraging to increasing human development. Higher education in India has experienced phenomenal expansion since independence. India has produced scientists, engineers, technologists, doctors, teachers and managers who are in great demand all over the world. Now it is one of the top ten countries in our industrial and technological capacity, because of the significant contribution of manpower and tools provided by higher education, especially, technical education. India has already entered into the era of knowledge explosion. It has proved its tremendous potential by its performance in nuclear and space domains. In the coming few decades will be heralded by space craft, satellites, internets and others offshoots of scientific enquires. Higher Education provides opportunities to the people to reflect on the critical social, cultural, moral, economic and spiritual issues facing humanity. Higher education provides specialized knowledge and skilled persons for national development. In next few decades, India will have world's largest set of young people. While the

correlation between people and higher education is not up to the mark. The increasing youth population can be a great asset if potential employability is brought to fruition. Conversely, if we fail to provide education and employment then it will open a downside gate for Indian economy. Education is an essential tool for achieving sustainability.

1.2 Objective

1. To study the present status in Higher Education system in India.
2. To study challenges and Opportunities in Higher education

1.3 Literature Review:

(Hernard, 2008) India has been always been a land of scholars and learners. In ancient times also, India was regarded all over the world for its universities like Taxila, Nalanda, Vikramshila and its scholars. By independence India had 20 universities, 500 colleges enrolling about 2,30,000 students. Since independence India has progressed significantly in terms of higher education statistics. This number has increased to 659 Universities and 33023 colleges up to December 2011-12. Central Government and state Governments are trying to nurture talent through focusing on the number of Universities and Colleges for expansion of higher educations. There is no doubt to the fact that much of the progress achieved by India in education has come from private sector. In fact the public sector

and private sector is not in opposition to each other but they are working simultaneously in Indian education sphere. UGC is the main governing body that enforces the standards, advises the government and helps coordinate between centre and states. The chart 1.1 & 1.2 shown below

depicts the growth of universities and colleges in India from 1970 to 2012 respectively. The number of universities has grown more than six times in last four decades and the number of colleges has been increased from 3603 in 1970-71 to 33000 colleges in 2011-12.

The Growth of Universities and Colleges in India from 1970 To 2012

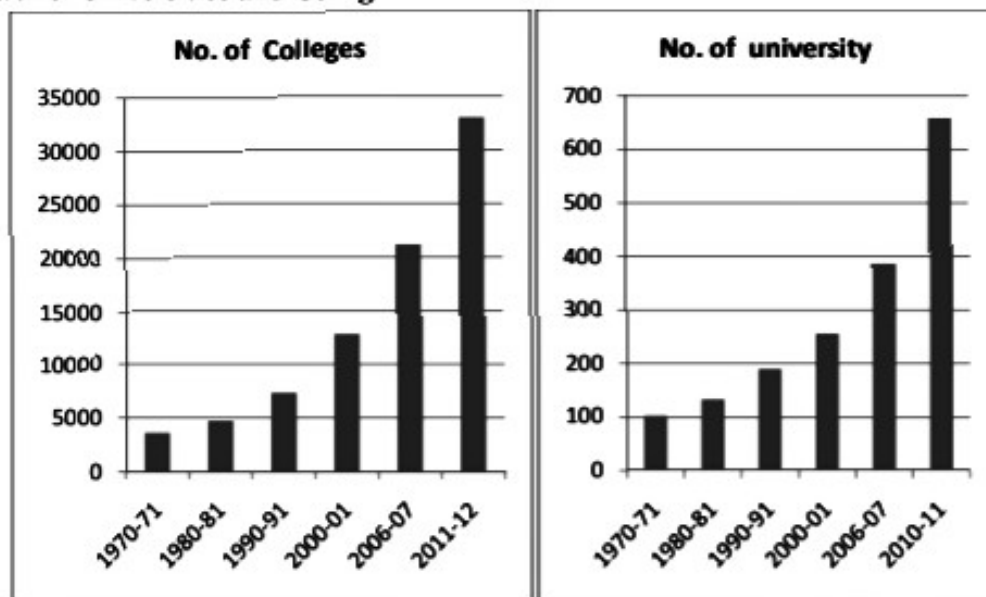


Chart 1.1

Chart 1.2

Source: Higher Education in India: Twelfth Five Year Plan (2012-17) and beyond FICCI Higher Education Summit 2012

Expenditure on Research and Development

Countries	Expenditure on R & D (% of GDP 96-03)	Expenditure on R & D(US\$ M at PPP)	%performed by HEIs	Expenditure on R & D Performed at HEIs (US\$ M at PPP)
USA	2.60	284,584	16.8	47,810
China	1.31	72,014	10.1	7,273
Japan	3.15	106,854	13.9	14,853
India	0.81	19,200	2.9	557
Germany	2.50	54,449	17.1	9,311
UK	1.89	31,163	22.6	7,043
France	2.19	37,967	18.9	7,176
Italy	1.16	16,367	32.6	5,336
Brazil	0.98	-	-	-
Russia	1.28	16,838	6.1	1,027
Canada	1.94	18,596	34.9	6,490
Korea	2.64	24,869	10.1	2,512
Australia	1.63	7,815	26.8	2,094

*PPP GDP — purchase power parity, gross domestic product; HEI: higher education institutions

Source: Data on expenditure on R & D % of GDP from WDI (2006) and others from OECD Science and Technology Indicators 2004.

1.4 Opportunities in Higher Education in India

India is a large country, with an estimated population of young people aged between 18 to 23 years to be around 150 millions. The sheer size of the market offers huge opportunities for

development of the higher education sector in India. India now boasts of having more than 33,000 colleges and 659 universities, which has been quite a remarkable growth during the last six decades. During the last ten years, the changes in

technology have been considerable and have changed to the ways in which people communicate with each other. The new technologies have the potential to support teacher development both in structured and unstructured ways (Jakobsdottir et al., 2010). However, variations in accessibility and the lack of ICT infrastructure in some parts of the world mean that there is a danger that differences between the developed and the developing world are likely to become accentuated. In some parts of the world, teachers and student teachers can access materials on line. At best, those materials are interactive and written for the web; at worst they consist of books or pdf files that are simply read on a screen.

1.5 Challenges in Higher Education in India

1. **Enrolment:** The Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) of India in higher education is only 15% which is quite low as compared to the developed as well as, other developing countries. With the increase of enrolments at school level, the supply of higher education institutes is insufficient to meet the growing demand in the country.
2. **Equity:** There is no equity in GER among different sects of the society. According to previous studies the GER in higher education in India among male and female varies to a greater extent. There are regional variations too some states have high GER while as some is quite behind the national GER which reflect a significant imbalances within the higher education system.
3. **Quality:** Quality in higher education is a multi-dimensional, multilevel, and a dynamic concept. Ensuring quality in higher education is amongst the foremost challenges being faced in India today. However, Government is continuously focusing on the quality education. Still Large number of colleges and universities in India are unable to meet the minimum requirements laid down by the UGC and our universities are not in a position to mark its place among the top universities of the world.
4. **Infrastructure:** Poor infrastructure is another challenge to the higher education system of

India particularly the institutes run by the public sector suffer from poor physical facilities and infrastructure.

5. **Political interference:** Most of the educational Institutions are owned by the political leaders, who are playing key role in governing bodies of the Universities. They are using the innocent students for their selfish means..
6. **Faculty:** Faculty shortages and the inability of the state educational system to attract and retain well qualified teachers have been posing challenges to quality education for many years. Large numbers of NET / PhD candidates are unemployed even there are lot of vacancies in higher education, these deserving candidates are then applying in other departments which is a biggest blow to the higher education system.
7. **Accreditation:** As per the data provided by the NAAC, as of June 2010, "not even 25% of the total higher education institutions in the country were accredited. And among those accredited, only 30% of the universities and 45% of the colleges were found to be of quality to be ranked at 'A' level".
8. **Research and Innovation:** there are very nominal scholars in our country whose writing is cited by famous western authors. There is inadequate focus on research in higher education institutes. There are insufficient resources and facilities, as well as, limited numbers of quality faculty to advice students. Most of the research scholars are without fellowships or not getting their fellowships on time which directly or indirectly affects their research. Moreover, Indian Higher education institutions are poorly connected to research centres. So, this is another area of challenge to the higher education in India.

1.6 Suggestions Improving the System of Higher Education:

- There is a need to implement innovative and transformational approach from primary to higher education level to make Indian educational system globally more relevant and competitive.

- Higher educational institutes need to improve quality and reputation.
- There should be a good infrastructure of colleges and universities which may attract the students.
- Government must promote collaboration between Indian higher education institutes and top International institutes and also generates linkage between national research laboratories and research centers of top institutions for better quality and collaborative research.
- There is a need to focus on the graduate students by providing them such courses in which they can achieve excellence, gain deeper knowledge of subject so that they will get jobs after recruitment in the companies which would reduce unnecessary rush to the higher education.
- Universities and colleges in both public private must be away from the political affiliations,
- Favouritism, money making process should be out of education system etc.
- There should be a multidisciplinary approach in higher education so that students knowledge may not be restricted only up to his own subjects.

1.7 Conclusion:

Education is a process by which a person's body, mind and character are formed and strengthened. It is bringing of head, heart and mind together and thus enabling a person to develop an all round personality identifying the best in him or her. Higher education in India has expanded very rapidly in the last six decades after independence yet it is not equally accessible to all. India is today one of the fastest developing countries of the world with the annual growth rate going above 9%.

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Still a large section of the population remains illiterate and a large number of children's do not get even primary education. This is not only excluded a large section of the population from contributing to the development of the country fully but it has also prevented them from utilising the benefits of whatever development have taken place for the benefit of the people. No doubt India is facing various challenges in higher education but to tackle these challenges and to boost higher education is utmost important. India is a country of huge human resource potential, to utilise this potential properly is the issue which needed to discuss. Opportunities are available but how to get benefits from these opportunities and how to make them accessible to others is the matter of concern. In order to sustain that rate of growth, there is need to increase the number of institutes and also the quality of higher education in India. To reach and achieve the future requirements there is an urgent need to relook at the Financial Resources, Access and Equity, Quality Standards, Relevance, infrastructure and at the end the Responsiveness. Report of the National Knowledge Commission if implemented can help boost education sector in India. We are moving towards an era which would be defined by the parameters of knowledge and wisdom. India in order to become a developed nation by 2020 and knowledge power by 2015. The decisions that are going to be taken on these are likely to hold the key to India's future as a center of knowledge production. We need higher educated people who are skilled and who can drive our economy forward. When India can provide skilled people to the outside world then we can transfer our country from a developing nation to a developed nation very easily and quickly.

