

HISTORY AND MILESTONES OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN INDIA

Amir Hossain¹ & Gourish Chandra Mondal²

^{1,2}Assistant Teacher, Srikantabati PSS Sikshaniketan, Raghunathganj, Murshidabad.

Received: December 05, 2018

Accepted: January 19, 2019

ABSTRACT: Higher education system plays an important role for the country's overall development which includes industrial, social, economic etc. Indian higher education system is third largest in the world. The role of Indian higher educational institutes such as colleges and universities in the present time is to provide quality based education in the field of education, research etc to empower youth for self sustainability. This paper includes the history, growth and challenges that India is currently facing in higher education and also includes some initiatives taken by the government to meet those challenges.

Key Words:

Introduction

The historical education in India was deep rooted in religion and Vedic studies covering wide range of subjects have Grammar, Mathematics, Medicine, Astrology, Logic, Commerce and many more areas of students. Buddhist learning was also large based on Vedic studies such as Takshila and Nalanda attracted a large number of learners from far places. The theme of higher knowledge and higher education was fashioned in India by the ancient rishi's and sages in the Vedic age, the date of which is uncertain but is supposed to be traceable to great antiquity. The early Gurukul system of system flourished in the Vedic and Upanishadic period, but a huge university came to be set up at Takshashilia in the 6th century B.C and two other universities namely Nalanda and Vikramshila were established in the 4th and 5th centuries A.D respectively.

Vedic Period

The Gurukuls/Ashrams the centres of learning in Ancient India were located far away from cities and towns and the learners lived and learned with the Guru's in Ashrams. It represents the most ancient of the cultures and at the same time the most modern and intricate scientific stories embedded in it, which speak abundantly and convincingly of the glory and eminence of Hindu culture. Vedic age ceases to exist after 600 B. C. It is safer to presume that Vedic age started from unknown time to roughly about 600 B.C after which Buddhist age start and lasts till about 600 A.D. Vedic education was imparted to students to achieve lofty ideals of life.

Mughal Period

The advent of the Mughals in 1526 so the establishment of traditional Madrasas and Maktabs the Islamic Institution of education in India teaching Grammar, Philosophy, Mathematics and Law. The Islamic education emphasised on linking science and humanities. During medieval period Muslim rulers started a new system of education which is popularly known as Maktab-Madarsa system or Muslim system of education. Side by side the old pathshala system also continued for Hindu students. Institutions of higher learning of the status of a university were established in principal cities. This was because of specialised scholars in good numbers being available there only. In the cities the number of students would be larger and the courtiers and kings would help financially. The institutions of common interest for both the Hindu and the Muslim students were not state neither owned nor managed officially by the Central or Provincial governments of the time. The Persian records read about the Muslim rulers that these emperors used to look to the betterment of people and get tanks, wells, bridges, roads, buildings like mosques, is observed that Akbar was keen enough to spread education to provide for means sufficient enough to meet with this demand. India had a long tradition of inquiry and articulation of the concepts of universe, self, role of economy, social order and other related matters. The methodology adopted were subjective and objective, included observation, conceptualization, verification, articulation and teaching. The higher education system flourished in ancient India and it continued to influence developments during its subsequent ages, in spite of diverse forms that developed under the impact of changes in religion, and in social, economic and political life.

Pre Independence Period

The British in 1857 introduced the system of European higher education in India by establishing of Universities at Bombay, Calcutta and Madras. English also become the medium of instruction at the higher

education level. The British education in India was established with an objective to produce English educated manpower to serve the large British administration. British and other foreign education had its beginning in India with the activities of Christian Missionaries. The first of the Missionaries to come to India belonged to the Roman Catholic Sect. Escaping from the changing circumstances in Europe, these Missionaries set foot in countries outside Europe with the intention of establishing a new religious empire. In their search for new territories in which to propagate their religion, these Missionaries discovered India, Africa, America and Australia till then these were unknown to the Europeans. As soon as the Portuguese found their feet in India, Franciscan, Dominican, Jesuit and other Roman Catholic Sects began their work of spreading their religion among the country's tribal. They also began to set up educational institutions for this purpose.

Post Independence Period

India became Independent on 15th August the people of India faced the challenge of bringing about a total transformation in the standard of living. The new Constitution which sought to build India into a Sovereign Democratic Republic was adopted by the constituent assembly on 26th November 1949 and came into force on 26th January 1950. At the time of Independence in 1947, India inherited a system of higher education which was not only small but also characterized by the persistence of large intra / inter regional imbalances. Determined efforts were made to build a network of universities and their affiliated colleges which provided tremendous outreach to a country of vast diversities in language as also in the prevailing standards education at the different levels. When India became Independent it has only 20 universities and 500 colleges located in different parts of the country. It enrolled around over a little one person per thousand of population in higher education. Participation of women was limited and those who graduated annually were few in number. In the post- independence period, higher education has expanded fast, and it is mostly public in nature. In developing countries like India, higher education occupies an important place in the nation building process and in economic development.

The Government of India took upon itself the responsibility of its expansion and growth. Education has been considered as one of the very important dominion in our national life. Education holds the important key for development and progress in every aspect of our existence. To eradicate such prevailing systems in the pre-independence era. Many commissions were set up to propose recommendations to make a change in the educational system. In the year 1948-49 Radhakrishnan commission on university education was set up, in the year 1953 University Grants Commission and later in the year 1964-66 Kothari commission on education.

First Education Commission (1948) After Independence:

It was appointed to examine the condition of India and to provide recommendations to improve the ailing situation of education. This commission was chaired by Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, the main recommendations given by the commission were 1. Financing of education sector should have the responsibility of both Central and State government, 2. Universities should be established with the consent of the Central Government on the recommendation of the University Grants Commission. Some other recommendations were also made by commission like redefining goals and standards of education, courses and curriculum, funding of educational institutions, faculty and their job conditions.

Radhakrishnan Commission (1948-49)

The first commission on university education (1948-49) appointed after Independence in 1947, under chairmanship of Dr. S. Radhakrishnan set out the basic aims of university education. It emphasized that the policies and programmes of universities should ensure the reorientation of higher education to meet the national demand in the changed context. It outlined the goals of university as follows:

- To foster the kind of leadership in all walks of life by helping the individuals developing their potential.
- To provide society with competent men and women trained in all profession as cultivated individuals, are endowed with a sense of social purpose.
- To strive to promote equality and social justice and to reduce social and cultural differences through diffusion of education.
- To foster in the teachers and students and through them in the society generally, the attitudes and values needed for developing the good life in individuals and society.
- To bring the universities closer to the community through extension of knowledge and its application to problem solving.

Based on its recommendations the University Grants Commission (UGC) was constituted as the apex body on higher education in 1953 by an act of the Parliament.

National Council of Education, Research and Training (1965)

It emphasized mainly on the financing of education particularly in the field of higher education. It stated that educational financing had been a major trouble in improvement of higher education. It also mentioned that India had not been spending sizeable amount of Gross National Product (GNP) on financing of education like other developing countries. Indian higher education system is not only large but also the most complex one

Kothari Commission (1966)

“We should strive to allocate the largest proportion of GNP possible to education” Education Commission 1966, back in 1966, the Kothari commission on education emphasised the importance of education in the social and economic development of the country. The commission strongly argued in favour of large investment in education. The Kothari commission, noted that we should accord the highest priority to education and allocate the largest proportion of GNP possible to it (Tilak 2007).The commission suggested that 6% of national income should be spent on education. It was felt that a large investment in education was necessary to ensure equity in educational attainment between different socio-economic groups in the economy. The objective of achieving a public expenditure of 6 per cent of national income on education has remained a distant dream in this country. The total public expenditure by the Central and State government on education has not crossed the 4 per cent mark, during the first decade of the 21st century.

New Educational Policy 1986

Due to political stability during 1971-79, Congress had to leave power and the then Government also declared its own National Policy on Education. Again Congress came into power and deceased Prime Minister Shri Rajeev Gandhi took interest in Education and declared his National Education Policy in 1986 and proposed an action plan.

This document was published in 1986. Honourable Governor of Gujarat Mr R. K Trivedi expressed his views on this policy. “Considering the all-round development of the country, the structure of Education Policy was erected. Education is not considered within four walls of the school. Teaching is not limited to the curriculum but it is a source of developing national unity, cultural preservation and indication of moral, social and ethical values”.

Education policy provides a sound basis to national progress. Every ruler in India gave preference to education according to its need. Present Government declared its National Policy on Education. Role of Education, National System of Education, Equality, Women Education, Education of Scheduled Castes, Education for Tribes, Education for Backward Classes, and Adult Education are the main features of National Policy on Education 1986.

Revised National Policy of Education 1992

In July 1991, Central Advisory Board of Education appointed a Committee on National Policy of Education under the chairmanship of Janardan Reddy, the then Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh. Six other education Ministers belonging to major political parties and eight educationists were the members of the committee. The committee reviewed the NPE 1986, taking into consideration the report of Acharya Ram Murti committee known as National Policy of Education Review Committee (NPERC) and other relevant developments since 1986. The policy provides new dimension to education such as Distance Education through Open Universities. Indira Gandhi Open University has been established for this purpose at centre. Similarly some states have also opened Open Universities. Declining the employment with degree, establishment of rural universities, technical and management education, innovation, research and development, organising the new educational programmes, rationalisation of educational activities and process, evaluation system, status of teachers’, women education and creating means for it are some of the new dimensions.

Revised National Policy of Education 1992

In July 1991, Central Advisory Board of Education appointed a Committee on National Policy of Education under the chairmanship of Janardan Reddy, the then Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh. Six other education Ministers belonging to major political parties and eight educationists were the members of the committee. The committee reviewed the NPE 1986, taking into consideration the report of Acharya Ram Murti committee known as National Policy of Education Review Committee (NPERC) and other relevant developments since 1986.

National Assessment and Accreditation Council (1994)

The NAAC is an autonomous body established by the University Grants Commission (UGC) of India to assess and accredit Institutions of higher education in the country. It is an outcome of the recommendations of the National Policy on Education (1986) which laid special emphasis on upholding the quality of higher education in India. To address the issues of quality, the National Policy on Education (1986) and the Plan of Action (POA)-1992 advocated the establishment of an independent National Accreditation Body. Consequently, NAAC was established in 1994 with its headquarters at Bangalore.

National Knowledge Commission (2005)

The National Knowledge Commission (NKC) was constituted in 2005 by the Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh, under the chairmanship of Mr. Sam Pitroda, to prepare a blueprint for reform of our knowledge related institutions and infrastructure which would enable India to meet the challenges of the future. To take its mandate forward the commission focussed on five key aspects of knowledge : enhancing access to knowledge, reinvigorating institutions where knowledge concepts are imparted, creating a world class environment for creation of knowledge, promoting applications of knowledge for sustained and inclusive growth and using knowledge applications in efficient delivery of public services.

Yash Pal Committee Report (2009)

The committee to advice on renovation and rejuvenation of higher education (the Yash Pal Committee) submitted its report to the Union Minister of education on June 23, 2009. Given the widespread concerns about the current state and trends in India's higher education system, the report is timely.

National Commission for Higher Education and Research (NCHER) Bill (2010)

An Act to provide for the determination, co-ordination, maintenance of standards in, and promotion of, higher education and research, including university education, technical and professional education other than agricultural and medical education, and for that purpose, to establish the National Commission for Higher Education and Research. An act further to promote the autonomy of higher educational institutions for the free pursuit of knowledge and innovation, and for facilitating access, inclusion and opportunities to all, and providing for comprehensive and holistic growth of higher education and research in a competitive global environment through reforms and renovation, and to provide for an advisory mechanism of eminent peers in academia.

Rashtriya Uchchar Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA) (2012)

Based on the recommendations of Central Advisory Board For Education(CABE) on university reforms, a new Centrally Sponsored Scheme (CSS) named Rashtriya Uchchar Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA) has been envisioned during the Twelfth Plan for incentivisation of State Governments for improving higher education. The CABE in its meeting held at 08th November 2012 considered the report of the CABE committee and "approved" in principle" the RUSA scheme. After approval of the competent authority, the centrally sponsored scheme shall be launched during the Twelfth Plan period. RUSA is an umbrella mission mode project scheme that would subsume other existing schemes in the sector. The key objectives of RUSA are to improve access, equity and quality in higher education through planned development of higher education at state level, by creating academic institutions that are self-reliant in terms of quality management, have a greater inclination towards research and provides students with education that is relevant to them and to the nation as a whole. The primary components of RUSA includes creation of new institutions, expansion of existing institutions, infrastructural up-gradations, establishing bodies such as State Higher Education Councils, accreditation agencies, sectoral affiliation, academic, examination reforms etc.(Annual Report 2012-13 MHRD).

India achieved a Gross Enrolment Ratio of 18.8% in higher education by 2012 through expansion schemes under the Eleventh Five Year Plan (FYP). Recent higher education surveys have documented three aspects. One, quantitative expansion has not always led to quality enhancement. Two, employability of engineering graduates ranges between 20% and 40% and that of arts and science graduates is only 10%. The reforms initiated under RUSA will build a self-sustaining momentum that will push for greater accountability and autonomy of state institutions and impress upon them the need to improve the quality of education. Once eligible for funding under RUSA, after meeting the prerequisite commitments, the states will receive funds on the basis of achievements and outcomes. The yardstick for deciding the quantum of funds for the states and institutions comprise the norms that reflect the performance in key result areas (access, equity and excellence).

Recent Trends in Higher Education

Higher education plays an important role in imparting quality education and promoting the economic development of the country. It has been found that India has second largest higher educational structure comprised of 702 universities, 35539 colleges, 9 lakh teachers and 200 lakh students (UGC). To cope up with the changing priorities of the people in the wake of globalization process, the planners are bound to revise their strategies in the education sector. Thus, several specialist committees involving the elites and captains of industry and education, constituted by the Union Ministry are engaged in the process. Moreover, the public interest demands a wider domain for the national debate on syllabus and curriculum reform among other related aspects. The introduction of “cost recovery” principles that results in a hike in fees contributes to reduction in the burden of the government in financing higher education. Social obligations in respect to equity and accessibility to most of the people of the country has not considered seriously in the name of reforms. Social sector an investment throughout the last decade has incrementally scrunching from the government counterpart regarded as the support measures for accessing the opportunity to higher education.

Challenges in Higher Education Institutions

In order to urge for development these issues are expected to be rectified at the initial stages otherwise it will be a great obstruction in achieving the requisite target. The “higher education” and “economic development” is interlinked as the improvement in one field leaves a positive impact on the other. The initiatives should be taken in this regard to build up such a highly qualified manpower which helps in maintaining the level of growth and development of the country. The scope of higher education is not only restricted to bachelors or masters it further includes vocational and professional qualification too, once it is quoted somewhere “that giving the management of the country in highly qualified hands is an assurance that it will lead to a progressive path”.

There are many basic problems facing higher education in India today. These include inadequate infrastructure and facilities, large vacancies in faculty positions and poor faculty thereof, low student enrolment rate, outmoded teaching methods, declining research standards, unmotivated students, overcrowded classrooms and widespread geographic, income, gender, and ethnic imbalances. Apart from concerns relating to deteriorating standards, there is reported exploitation of students by many private providers. Ensuring equitable access to quality higher education for students coming from poor families is a major challenge. Students from poor background are put to further disadvantage since they are not academically prepared to crack highly competitive entrance examinations that have bias towards urban elite and rich students having access to private tuitions and coaching. Education in basic sciences and subjects that are not market friendly has suffered. Research in higher education institutions is at its lowest ebb. There is an inadequate and diminishing financial support for higher education from the government and from society. Many colleges established in rural areas are non-viable, are under-enrolled and have extremely poor infrastructure and facilities with just a few teachers. A series of judicial interventions over the last two decades and knee-jerk reaction of the government – both at the centre and state level and the regulatory bodies without proper understanding of the emerging market structure of higher education in India has further added confusion to the higher education landscape in the country. There is an absence of a well-informed reform agenda for higher education in the country. A few efforts made now and then are not rooted in the new global realities based on competition and increased mobility of students and workforce.

There are so many people in various parts of country which are still out of reach. This is when we have emphasised more on our education programs and made our system reachable to all areas. Government has to rethink on these areas to implement more on the policies. Money also plays a vital role for the education system which needs to unique for all globally recognized syllabus and curricula. Take a look on our constitution which says that this is the responsibility of Central and State government to build good education system. For that we need to have funds. But despite there was a large expenditure on the funds every year on education where the fund goes and our system remains intact.

Central government prepares policies and plan while responsibility of State government is run those policies on ground. The standard education facilities are higher in the states which are much rich. There is a need to change such defects from the country education system which only can be influenced by increasing funding and providing better facilities to students. But we know there is always increase in the fund for the education system but never implemented in that area. So we have to work in this area.

Government tries to make different policies which are implemented but quality never checked. Majority of fund goes in the pockets of officials working for this. There is a vast need to improve the quality and

standards. The time now is to modernize our education system so that our country can get much more technically graduated people which can help our country to developed state.

Strategies

Economic growth of a nation is possible if there is a dynamic growth in the education sector; knowledge is always considered an important element in promoting the development of the country. Following strategies are suggested to revitalise the higher education system to make promoter of growth in the State.

- Establish State Higher Education Council to formulate, launch and promote higher education campaign in mission mode in the State.
- Upgrade government colleges with enrolment of 15000 or more; autonomous colleges; colleges with potential for excellence; and A grade accredited colleges by NAAC as, universities.
- Set up two women universities; one model college in each district and promote evening universities colleges.
- Introduce undergraduate programmes in universities as integrated undergraduate or postgraduate (UG/PG) programmes.
- Promote private sector participation in higher education, skill based education and vocational education.
- Support curricular academic reforms and implement affiliation reforms package of UGC.
- Provide financial support to students of socially deprived groups, minorities, Scheduled castes, scheduled tribes, OBC and women.
- Set up State Skill Council and starting programmes under PPP mode with market guided intake in the areas of manufacturing and production, hospitality and tourism, medical and hospital testing and diagnostic, media and communication, and ICT.
- Launch Faculty Talent Promotion Scheme for capacity building and capability enhancement of teachers through Academic Staff Colleges.

Conclusion

India has a long and venerable history in the field of higher education. In ancient times, the country was known to have been home to the oldest formal universities in the world. However, in spite of the significant progress made during the past few years, India's higher education sector is still in danger with several challenges with its relatively low Gross enrollment ratio (GER). Higher education institutions should focus on holistic development of an individual and, therefore, focus on development of multiple intelligence rather than merely linguistic and logical intelligence of an individual.

Reference

- Higher Education in India: Twelfth Five Year Plan (2012-17) and beyond FICCI Higher Education Summit 2012.
- Kumar, Anuj & Ambrish, Higher Education: Growth, Challenges And Opportunities, International Journal of Arts, Humanities and Management Studies, Volume 01, No.2, Feb 2015.
- Sharma, Sahil, Sharma, Purnendu, Indian Higher Education System: Challenges And Suggestions, Electronic Journal for Inclusive Education, Vol. 3, No. 4, 2015, pp.3-4.
- Nexus Novus, Higher Education Opportunities in India, <http://nexusnovus.com/higher-educationopportunities-india>, Jul 26, 2013 accessed on 30/07/2016.
- Balachander, K.K. "Higher education in India: Quest for Equality and Equity", Mainstream, 1986.
- British Council, Understanding India- The Future of Higher Education and Opportunities for International Cooperation, 2014.
- Kiranmayi, Y.S. (1989), Management of Higher Education in India, Crown Publications, New Delhi.
- Kothari, V.M and Pancharukhi, P.R. (1975) "A Survey of Research in Economics of Education in India" New Delhi.
- Karuna. Chanana. (1993). Higher Education Reforms in India, Experience and Perspective. New Delhi: Sage Publishers.
- Lakshmanasamy, T. (2001), Financing of Higher Education: A Study of Policy Options: An Unpublished Ph. D. Thesis, Department of Economics, University of Madras, Chennai.
- Liefner, I. (2003), "Funding Resource Allocation and Performance in Higher Education Systems, Higher Education, Vol. 46, No. 4, pp. 469-489.
- Levin, H.J. (1987), "Education as a Public and Private Good", Journal of Policy and Management, Vol. 6, No. 4, pp. 628-641.