

Higher Education in India: Growth, Financing, and Challenges

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Abstract: Education at the post - secondary level is called higher education. Higher education is widely acknowledged as a fundamental force behind social and economic progress. In order to meet the challenges of globalization, higher education is required. The higher education system in India is one of the biggest in the world. More than 1100 universities and 46007 colleges in our nation offer higher education to more than 394.34 lakh people. Despite this, India has made remarkable progress in higher education since gaining independence. However, gender disparities between rural and urban areas, a lack of funding, a focus on privatizing higher education, and problems with higher education's quality and quantity are all significant issues that have a significant impact on the Indian higher education system. The present article seeks to examine the expansion of higher education in India after independence. Additionally, the article also analyzes higher education finance patterns and the current challenges the Indian higher education system is experiencing.

Keywords: Indian Higher Education

1. Introduction

"Today more than ever before in human history, the wealth or poverty of a nation depends on the quality of the higher education. Those with a larger repertoire of skills and a greater capacity for learning can look forward to lifetime of unprecedented economic fulfillment. But in the coming decades the poorly educated face little better than the dreary prospects of lives of quiet desperation. " **Malcolm Gillis (1999)**

Education is regarded as a force for social, economic, and personal growth as well as a tool for reducing poverty (S. L. Jangu, 2021). Higher education is seen as a development engine in the modern global economy. Being in a post - industrial era, higher education is unquestionably a significant investment in a country's human capital. It is a specialized kind of human capital. Higher education is instruction and training provided by universities, affiliated colleges, and professional institutions in the areas of humanities, science, commerce, management, law, performing arts and medicine, design, engineering, communication, and technology, among others. Higher education is instruction and training provided beyond the secondary level. A degree, diploma, or certificate is granted after completing a required course of study. Higher education is essential in a globalized society since it not only prepares students for the information world but also for the socioeconomic and technical advancement of a country. For both personal and societal advancement, higher education is crucial.

1.1 Growth of Higher Education in India

India's higher education system, which had enrollments of more than 1 crore (approximately) in 2005–06, is the third biggest in the world in terms of size and variety (after China and the United States). The Ministry of Education and University Grants Commission figures show a fourfold growth in the number of higher education institutions. Progress was also made in 2021–2022 with the growth of the

teaching staff and student enrolment ratio (Annual Report, 2021 - 22). Here are some indications that India's higher education system is expanding:

Table 1: Capacity Expansion in Higher Education

Institutional Capacity Indicator	1950	2008	2022
No. of Universities	25	431	1113
Number of Colleges	700	20, 677	46007
Number of Teachers	1500	5.05 Lakh	14.82 Lakh
Number of Students Enrolled	1 Lakh	116, 12 Lakh	413 Lakh

Table 2: Type of Universities

Type	Sept, 2008	Mar, 2022
Central Universities	25	54
State Public Universities	230	450
Deemed Universities	113	126
State Private Universities	28	409

According to the All India Survey on Higher Education for 2020–21, the student enrollment ratio in higher education scaled from 0.7% in 1950–1951 to 72.56% at the undergraduate level, 15.7% at the graduate level, and 0.27% at the doctoral level. It was 3.85 crore in 2019–20, but it increased to 4.13 crore in 2020–21. The system has expanded around 17 times in terms of universities, 31 times in terms of colleges, and 15 times in terms of gross enrolments since independence. By 2015, 15% of people were expected to enroll in higher education, and as of today, we have met that goal.

1.2 Financing Higher Education in India

Education is a matter of concord in India. The central and state governments are in charge of it. The country's higher education policies are mostly implemented by the national government. However, as the most developing economy in the world, it is falling behind in the field of education. According to University News (2009), India's total educational index was 0.57, placing it 141st out of 195 countries. In terms of a share of GDP, India has spent the least on both higher education and all forms of education. In the 1950s, the actual annual growth rate of public spending

on higher education was 7.5%, while in 2008–09, it was only 13%.

With a budget allocation of Rs 15, 429 crore, higher education received special consideration in the 2009–10 budget session. This year's higher education offer is 36.1% larger than previous year's. Our country has a goal to devote 6% of GDP to education, yet in 2008, that number was only 3.8%. The Ministry of Education has been given Rs 1, 12, 899 crore in the budget year 2023–24, of which 44, 095 crore would go for higher education. This is an increase of 8% above the 2022–2023 updated projections (Demand for Grants 2023–2024, 2023).

2. Challenges being Faced by Indian Higher Education

Political interference in academic and administrative reforms, a lack of equity in equality, a failure to implement existing programs and policies, an insufficient use of the resources that are available, gender disparities between rural and urban areas, differences in the calibre of education support research, problems with the assessment and accreditation system, and inadequate and poor basic physical infrastructure are just a few of the fundamental issues related to Indian higher education that need to be addressed. Major ones are discussed below:

- 1) **Low Budget Allocation to Higher Education:** From 1950 to the present, India's higher education system has made amazing strides. Still, we are falling behind in the field of education. The main cause of this is the inadequate funding for higher education. It is as a result of the government's constrained financial capabilities. Despite several attempts, the investment in higher education is just 3.8% of GDP rather than the required 6%.
- 2) **Privatization:** Government financial resources are insufficient to match the desire for rapid growth. Private and deemed universities are becoming more and more prevalent. These are assisting in meeting the demands of the scientific and technological age for higher education. The professional fields of engineering, medicine, and graduate - level programs like MBA have been the focus of self - financing universities. The self - financing programs offered by these institutions/universities and govt. aided institutions are likewise quite expensive, making them unaffordable for middle - class or lower - class people. Although the Eleventh Five Year Plan's goal of 15% enrollment in higher education has been reached, this ratio nevertheless remains at the lower level due to population growth and rising levels of competency across the board. Government involvement in higher education is more significant. It can't be carried out entirely by the private sector. Government must recognize the value of publicly supported education.
- 3) **Academic and Administrative Reforms:** Accountability, professionalism, and academic and administrative improvements are required for India's higher education system. Academic and administrative improvements in education at all levels are a top priority for the National Education Policy 2020. From time to time, attempts have been made. On June 24, 2009,

Professor Yashpal, the chairman of the Committee to Advise on Renovation and Rejuvenation of Higher Education, also submitted a report to the UHRD Minister in which he urged for the independence of higher education from both the state and from private business interests. But it appears that autonomy will have a detrimental impact on how inexpensive and accessible education is provided by looking at the current situation of private institutions in higher education.

- 4) **Globalization and Internationalization of Higher Education:** A global market for students and academics has emerged as a result of globalization. At both the national and international levels, the globalized world of higher education is incredibly uneven between wealthy and poor nations. It takes a lot of effort and time to adapt higher education to international and global demands.

3. Conclusion

The higher education system in India is taking shape. It has a number of shortcomings. But there are numerous possibilities in India. India has the ability to overcome obstacles in a constructive way and the tenacity to put in a lot of effort to develop a solid framework that would transcend national borders and have an international impact.

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