IMPORTANCE OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN INDIA

Mr. Manzoor Ahmad Parray

Assistant Professor

Faculty of Education, Desh Bhagat University, Mandi Gobindgarh

Abstract

Higher Education is essential part of our education system.NEP2020 is also give stress on higher education. It gives a better future to our students. Higher education's importance has evolved, initially focused on religious faith and knowledge, but now emphasizes critical thinking, personal growth, and workforce preparedness, with institutions like Harvard and early Indian universities like Nalanda and Takshashila playing pivotal roles.

Today the world economy is experiencing an unprecedented change. New developments in science and technology, media revaluation and internationalization of education and the ever expanding competitive environment are revolutionizing the education scene. A paradigm shift has been noticed in higher education now a days, from 'national education' to 'global education', from 'one time education for a few' to 'life long education for all', from 'teacher- centric education' to 'learner centric education'. These changes make new demands and pose fresh challenges to the established education systems and practices in the country. Because of interdependence and integration of world economy in recent years, the Indian higher education system has a new role and a challenge to provide to the nation and the world at large, skilled human power at all levels, having breadth of knowledge and confidence to effectively confront the social and economic realities.

Introduction:

India is believed to have had a system of higher education as early as 1000 B.C. Unlike present day universities, these ancient learning centres were primarily concerned with dispersing Vedic education. The modern Indian education system finds its roots in colonial legacy. British colonists used the university system as a tool of cultural colonization. Colonial efforts in higher education were carried out initially through the East India Company, followed by the British parliament and later under direct British rule. The first institution of higher learning set up by the British East India Company was the Calcutta Madrasa in 1781. This was followed by the Asiatic Society of Bengal in 1784, Benaras Sanskrit College in 1791 and Fort William College in 1800. With the Charter Act 1813, the British Parliament officially declared Indian education as one of the duties of the state.[14] The same act also removed restrictions on missionary work in British India, thus leading to the establishment of the evangelist Serampore College in 1818. Thomas Babbington Macaulay's famously controversial Minute on Education (1835) reflected the growing support of a Western approach to knowledge over an Oriental one. Soon after, in 1857, the first three official universities were started in Bombay (Mumbai), Calcutta (Kolkata) and Madras (Chennai). Followed by the University of Punjab in 1882 and the University of Allahabad in 1887. These universities were modelled after the University of London and focused on English and the humanities.

The British control of the Indian education system continued until the Government of India Act 1935 that transferred more power to provincial politicians and began the "Indianisation" of education. This period witnessed a rise in the importance of physical and vocational education as well as the introduction of basic education schemes. When India gained independence in 1947, the nation had a total of 241,369 students registered across 20 universities and 496 colleges. In 1948, the Indian Government established the University Education Commission to oversee the growth and improvement of higher education. In the 1960s and 1970s, the government increased its efforts to support higher education by not only setting up state-funded universities and colleges, but also providing financial assistance to private institutions, resulting in the creation of private aided/ grant-in-aid institutions.

Despite the departure of the British, Indian higher education continued to give importance to the languages and humanities until the 1980s. Institutes of professional education like the Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs), Birla Institute of Technology and Science Pilani (BITS), Regional Engineering Colleges (REC) and Indian Institutes of Management (IIM) were some of the more

prominent exceptions to this trend. These institutions drew inspiration from reputed universities in the United States and also received foreign funding. However, the education system remained using colonial English instead of plain English as many ESL countries do under the view that sophistication of language used in education signifies quality of education instead of the quality of structured knowledge that is transferred. Post 1980s, the changing demands of the global economy, lack of foreign investment and political volatility, decreasing value of currency, and an increased strain on government governance capacity, slowed the growth of state-funded higher educational institutions. This led to an increased role of the private sector in the education system.

Ancient Origins and Evolution:

- **Early Focus:**

    Ancient civilizations recognized the need for educated individuals to manage empires, spread literacy, and pursue knowledge, often intertwined with religious beliefs.

- **Religious Institutions:**

    Religious organizations played a crucial role in the pursuit of knowledge, with centers of learning rising and falling with the kingdoms they served.

- **Indian Gurukul System:**

    The Gurukul system, a residential schooling system dating back to around 5000 BC, allowed for the transmission of knowledge and the development of an emotional bond between students and teachers.

- **Early Universities:**

    The system of higher education had its origin in Europe in the Middle Ages, when the first universities were established.

- **Indian Universities:**

    Takshashila, Nalanda, and Vikramshila were some of the well-known universities of ancient India.

- **Colonial Era:**

The modern Indian education system finds its roots in colonial legacy, with British colonists using the university system as a tool of cultural colonization.

Modern Importance:

- **Critical Thinking and Personal Growth:**

    Higher education is now seen as a way to think critically about society, politics, and values, grow personally and intellectually, and refine character.

- **Workforce Preparation:**

    Many view higher education as a way to prepare for the workforce and take the first steps toward upward mobility.

- **Economic and Social Change:**

    Higher education promotes economic, technological, and social change by facilitating the exchange of knowledge, research, and innovation.

- **Skills for the Future:**

    It equips students with the skills needed to meet ever-changing labor markets.

- **Passport to Economic Security:**

    For students in vulnerable circumstances, it is a passport to economic security and a stable future.

- **Indian Context:**

    India's Founding Fathers always highlighted the importance of tertiary education and despite the resource crunch, built Universities for social sciences as well as medical colleges and India's now famous Institute of Technology (IIT).

- **Challenges:**

    Despite the progress, India's higher education system faces challenges, including access and equity, quality assurance, research and innovation, and employability.

Indian Higher Education System

India has one of the largest higher education systems in the world that stands second in terms of the higher education network. The term 'higher education' with respect to India denotes the tertiary level education that

is imparted after 12 years of schooling (10 years of primary education and 2 years of secondary education). The entire higher education ecosystem in India comprises around 1000+ universities and 42,000+ colleges imparting exceptional education. All these institutions fall under the purview of the Ministry of Education.

The Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs), the Indian Institute of Science (IISc), the National Institutes of Technology (NITs), Indian Institutes of Science Education and Research (IISERs) and Indian Institutes of Management (IIMs) have been featured in world top-ranking institutions lists.

Types of Universities

On the basis of management the universities are classified as:

- **Central Universities** - These are set up through an Act in Parliament. The establishment and operation are funded by the Union Government.

- **State Universities** - These are set up through an Act in the State Legislature. The state universities are primarily funded and operated by the State Government.

- **Private Universities** - These are set up through an Act in the State Legislatures. It includes specialized institutions and multidisciplinary research universities.

- **Deemed Universities** - These are well-performing institutes that are declared to be of equal standing as the universities by the Central Government on the advice of the Union Grants Commission (UGC).

- **Institutes of National Importance (INI)** - These are eminent institutions of India that are known to develop highly skilled individuals. They are funded by the Government of India and include all the IITs, NITs and AIIMs institutes.

The Regulatory Structure

The entire ecosystem of higher Study in India is primarily overseen by the following authorities:

- University Grants Commission (UGC) - The main regulatory body that performs a range of tasks such as providing funds to the universities, establishing education standards for the universities and analysing the growth of the various higher education institutions. It is crucial for universities to meet the criteria set by UGC so as to enjoy degree-awarding authority.

- All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) - The regulatory body that coordinates, plans and develops technical education in the country.

Finally, the accreditation of the universities and colleges is overseen by the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) and the National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF).

The NAAC is an autonomous organization set up by University Grants Commission and it is headquartered in Bengaluru. The main function of NAAC is to ensure that quality is the defining feature of higher Study in India. It facilitates performance assessment and inspection for volunteering higher education institutions through a series of parameters. The accreditation granted by NAAC helps the institutions to identify and amend their internal planning areas, resource allocation and weakness through an extensive review procedure. On the other hand, the students get reliable information in terms of quality education offered by the concerned institution.

The NIRF is the methodology approved and launched by the Ministry of Education (erstwhile the Ministry of Human Resource Development) that outlines the procedure of ranking higher education institutes across India. The methodology revolves around ranking the institutions based on five broad categories which are sub-categorised as well.

The paradigm shift in the higher education system in India is aided by the integration of the latest innovation and technology. The transformed system focuses on the inclusive development of the learners and the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 ensures the same. The main purpose of NEP 2020 is to implement and

strengthen multidisciplinary, inclusive and technology-based learning that is accessible to all

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