Higher Education in India: An Analysis

Gautam Chandra Deb

Abstract

The higher education system in India has grown in a remarkable way, particularly in the post-independence period, to become one of the largest systems of its kind in the world. However, the system has many issues of concern at present like financing and management including access, equity and relevance, reorientation of programmes by laying emphasis on health consciousness, values and ethics and quality of higher education together with the assessment of institutions and their accreditation. These issues are important for the country, as it is now engaged in the use of higher education as a powerful tool to build a knowledge-based information society of the 21st century. Despite, its impressive growth, higher education in India could only maintain a very small base of quality institutions. It is also encountering a few important and significant challenges. It contributes to economic and social development of the country. Globalization has resulted in significant changes in the knowledge economy and ushered new conditions for the provision of higher education to cater the skill requirement all across the globe. The present study highlights the growth of higher education sector in India, its problems and government initiatives towards improvement of higher education in India. The study will be an analytical one and based on secondary data and information.

Key Words: *higher education, globalization, challenges.*

INTRODUCTION: Globalization has, as we all know, entered almost every aspect of human life. It has affected the day-to-day routine trades and services of the people of various countries. Globalization can be seen widely in areas of agriculture, handicrafts, technologies, etc. In short it can be said that globalization has affected all the sectors of economy.

Globalization: Defining Globalization we can say that, "At the most organic and fundamental level, it is about the monumental structural changes occurring in the processes of production and distribution in the global economy." Hence it is the situation where the countries of the world come together at a common place (market) and exchange the goods and services to benefit all. This has become possible due to the liberal policies of the countries and the advanced technologies of the 21st century *(Singhal and Swami, 2010).*

Globalization can also be defined as the intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in

such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring at any distant place and vice versa, *(Singh, 2010).* Hence globalization gives rise to the terms like "*One World*" and "*Global Village*" and lays emphasis on decreasing the importance of national borders and increased flow of people, ideas, knowledge, capital, technologies, etc throughout the world.

Thus the globalization has led to an increased structural change in the global economy. These structural changes are due to tremendous technological developments and their application in the core business processes. Hence globalization brings the world together and throws away the barriers of geographical locations. Thus the aspect of globalization requires a developed information and communication infrastructure and to achieve this there is an increasing need that the system of higher education is framed in a way to cater the needs of globalization and the advanced systems of technology and developing economy, *(Singhal and Swami, 2010).*

Higher Education: Education in whole is a wide area which can be bifurcated majorly in levels like primary, secondary, higher secondary and higher education. But this paper takes into consideration the Development and impact of globalization only in higher education. Here by higher education we mean the entire education and learning in the life of a person after 10 + 2 i.e. the schooling level.

Thus higher education not only means the formal higher education rewarded by the certified degrees but also the perpetual learning and ever-developing knowledge. Here it is necessary that education, learning and knowledge are read and understood with their soul. Education is generally seen as a formal process of instruction, based on a theory of teaching, where learning can occur with or without formal institution; at any age, time, or manner. While knowledge accumulation takes place more or less outside the formal institution and environment keeping pace with the developing world *(ibid).*

Higher education is assuming an upward significance for developing countries, especially countries including India which is experiencing service-led growth. Higher education is all about generating knowledge, encouraging critical thinking and imparting skills relevant to this society and determined by its needs. Education general and higher education in particular, is a highly nation-specific activity, determined by national culture and priorities. The growth of India's higher educational institutions has indeed been outstandingly rapid. The numbers of universities have doubled since 1990-91, and enrolment has become more than doubled. But this has been at the expense of quality, increased rigidity in course design, poor absorption of knowledge and growing lack of access to laboratory facilities, journals and opportunities for field work, etc. The average Indian graduate compares poorly with her/his counterpart in most countries, including many developing ones. All this calls for reform, administrative changes, more funding, greater flexibility, quality improvement, etc. *(Sukhlecha and Jain, 2011).*

The present paper deals with the Indian educational system with the approach of facing challenges of globalization.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY: In view of the large outreach, present paper is an

attempt to highlights the current scenario, its problems and government initiatives towards improvement of higher education in India.

DATA SOURCE AND METHODOLOGY: The study is mainly based on secondary data and information. The informations were collected from various published sources. Such sources include books, journals, government reports and publications, research articles, websites, newspapers, etc.

CURRENT SCENARIO OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN INDIA: India is having one of the largest system of tertiary education with more than 300 university level institutions (single and dual mode universities that include central and state universities, deemed- to-be universities, institutions of national importance, open universities), 14000 colleges, 9 million students and 0.4 million teachers.

The non-formal mode of education consisting of 10 National and State Open Universities, nearly 60 Distance Education Institutes of traditional universities, together account for nearly 20% enrolment. The unit cost of higher education in open universities is about 50 – 33 % of that of the formal education; it is more for professional and technical education and less for general education. In some cases it is as low as 10 %.

The size of the total system appears to be quite large and impressive, but it covers hardly 6% of the relevant age-group. In order to compare well with the developed countries having coverage of about 30-40 %, India has an enormous task of creating huge infrastructure, which will require financial resources not affordable to the nation. It is therefore necessary to evolve some alternative and new way of increasing coverage and for offering more access to a large number of aspiring learners with less cost.

The single and dual mode universities as well as conventional universities are now using Information Communication Technologies (ICT) for various purposes. This has created a new scenario of modes of education which can be classifies as follows:

1. **Formal Education**: Classroom / campus based education imparted by traditional universities.
2. **Non-formal- Open and Distance Education:** Offered by single mode open universities.
3. **Mixed Mode Education:** Offered by Distance Education Institutions (DEI) of traditional universities by using both formal and non-formal components of the two modes.
4. **ICT Based Convergent Mode:** Uses Web Based Education (WBE), Computer Based Education, Center/Classroom Based Education. Some universities are using ICT and Internet extensively in education to supplement the print based /classroom based mode in formal and/or non-formal education *(Singhal and Swami, 2010).*

Moreover, the current scenario of higher education in India i.e., type of institution such as State Universities, State Private Universities, Central Universities etc., its number and growth of institutions in India are represented in the following tables and shown graphically.

Table1: Number and type of institution in 2010

Type of Institution	Number (Total 504)
State Universities	243
State Private Universities	53
Central Universities	40
Deemed Universities	130
Institution of National importance	33
Institutions established by State Legislative	05

Source: MHRD, Annual Report 2009-2010

Table-II: All India Growth of institutions

YEAR	UNIVERSITIES	COLLEGES	TOTAL
1947-48	20	496	516
1950-51	28	578	606
1960-61	45	1819	1864
1970-71	93	3227	3320
1980-81	123	4738	4861
1990-91	184	5748	5932
2000-01	266	11146	11412
2004-05	348	17625	17973
2005-06	355	18064	18419
2006-07	367	19000	19367
2007-08	416	20677	21093
2008-09	480	22000	22480
2009-10	504	25951	26455

Source: UGC and Higher Education in India, Annual Reports (Universities include central, state; private, deemed and also institution of national importance established both by the central and state legislatures).

Figure 1: Growth of universities in India from 1947 to 2010
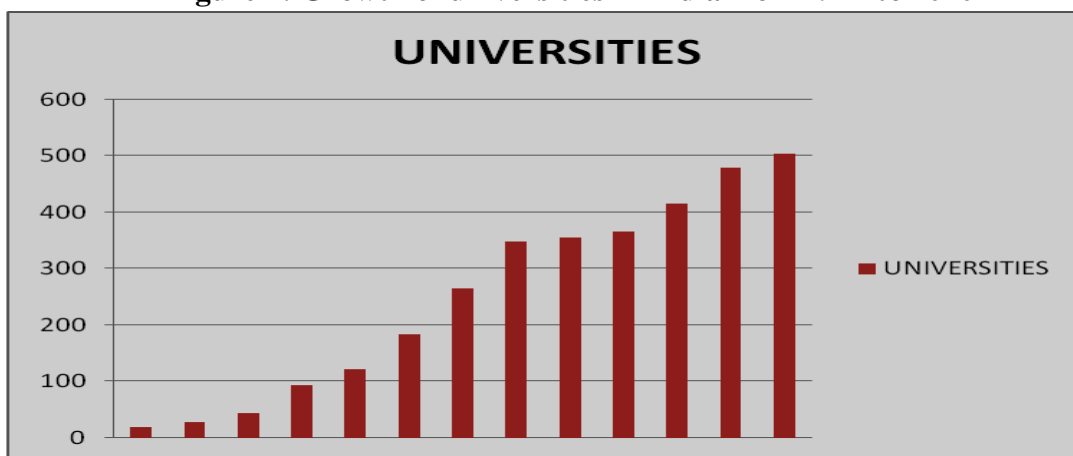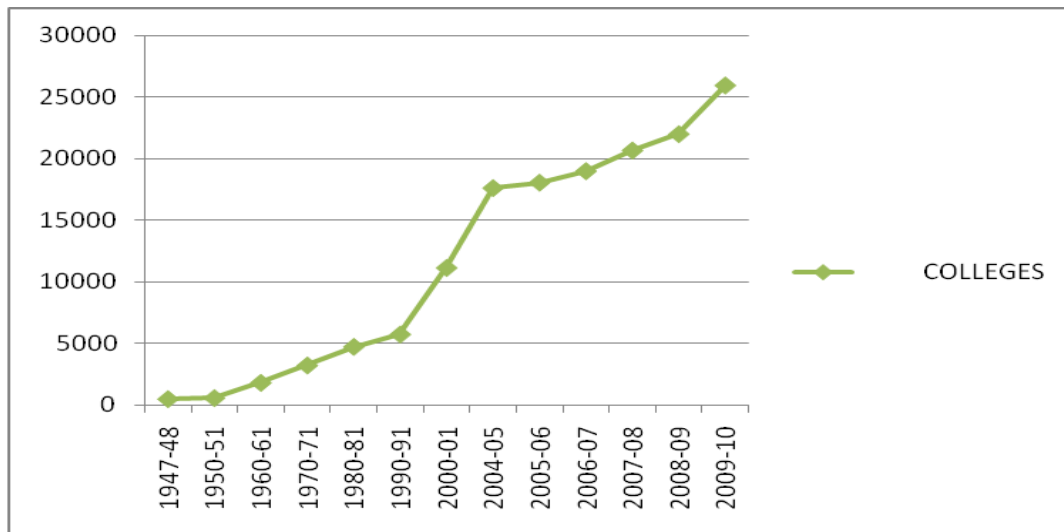
Figure 2: Growth of number of colleges in India from 1947 to 2010

Before Independence, access to higher education was very limited; there were only 496 colleges and 20 odd universities. Since independence, the growth has been very impressive. The number of universities (in year 1971) has increased rapidly to 93 colleges and 3227 universities which is great achievement for our nation. In the year 2000-01 the growth of universities and colleges are appreciated, it has increased by a large number. Year by year educational institutes are growing gradually. In its size and diversity, India has the third largest higher education system in the world, next only to China and the United States.

PROBLEMS OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN INDIA:

Co-modification of education: Higher education is becoming a marketing commodity. It is a multi-billion dollar business. Foreign universities are trying to have a share of Indian educational markets and have prepared for this during the last decade or more. This shift from education as a social good to marketable commodity is against the Indian culture and sufferers in these changes will be poor and disadvantaged people of India.

Global competitiveness: The competition will essentially be for offering quality education recognized at the International level and relevant to the local needs the major issue is how to raise the quality and standards of Indian education and make it globally competitive, locally relevant and enable it to offer marketing paradigm appropriate for developing societies.

Concerns of weaker institutions: High disparities in educational standards and quality of education offered by Indian universities and colleges is of great concern to all. National and global competition may create problems of survival of weaker universities and colleges.

Developmental disparities and unsolved Indian problems: Many colleges and universities were started in India for removing regional imbalances and for supporting education of weaker and disadvantaged classes, particularly of women. These institutions and other developmental programs for weaker

classes are still facing resource constraints, which are further aggravated by ignorance, poverty and disadvantages of the people they serve. This is resulting in widening divides and in keeping many educated from weaker and disadvantages sections outside the job and employment markets. The challenge of these marginalized and deprived to the system of education is enormous.

Weak linkage of education with developmental processes: It is creating frustration amongst graduates when they find that education is not so useful in employment and in work situations. A challenge is to transform the system from its present model of education to developmental education linking education to developments in society, industry and services sectors.

Shortage of teachers: Economic growth led by industrial and service sector during the last decade has created more opportunities and faster career growth for the young talent. Further, the lucrative salaries and glamour has acted as catalyst in attracting talent to such fast growing sectors. Higher education in India which has been passing through transition on account of privatization and withdrawal of financial support from the government has been finding it difficult to attract adequate number of young talent to teaching job. It is a big challenge for higher education sector to sustain in future due to lack of availability of faculty.

High cost of higher education: The unit cost of traditional education, particularly of professional education, is quite high and has gone out of reach of the Indian middle and lower classes. Many private entrepreneurs have started educational institutions for offering creamy courses with marketing approach; and have raised fees not affordable to majority. Subsidy to the education by the state is not the right solution in the present situation, when numbers aspiring for higher education is large and ever increasing. The deprived are already creating pressure on the state to make education accessible and have raised an issue of socio-economic equity and justice. The issue has already become extremely volatile in some states like Maharashtra *(Takwale, 2006)*.

SWOT Analysis: Despite the huge potential in the higher education sector, not everyone has been able to achieve success. The challenges/threats which the private sector players face in India are significant and therefore, approaching the market with a well thought-out strategy is advisable.

Strengths:
• Few globally renowned educational institutions.
• Huge demand – estimated 150 mn populations in 18-23 age groups.
• Growing middle class with increasing incomes.
• Growing economy with numerous employment opportunities.
• Huge demand for Indian students in overseas Markets.

Weaknesses:
• Lack of infrastructure.
• Shortage of trained faculty to meet the increased demand.
• Highly complex and unclear regulatory framework at Central & State level.
• Regional imbalances.
• "Not for profit" tag in formal education.

Opportunities:
• Unsaturated demand for quality global education.

- Low GER of 15% in Higher education as compared to 84% in USA.
- Sharp decline in dependency ratio predicted in the next 30 years.
- India is expected to emerge as a Global hub in education in Asia Pacific region.
- Low focus on R&D.

Threats:
- High time lags in introduction of reforms due to various reasons.
- Deterioration in quality of education especially in private sector due to lack of availability of trained faculty.
- Over regulation – Control over course curriculum, entrance tests, fees etc *(www.deloitte.com/in).*

GOVERNMENT INITIATIVE TOWARDS IMPROVEMENT OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN INDIA: The key initiatives of the government to improve the quality and further development of higher education in India are as follows:

- A proposal for establishment of an autonomous overarching National Commission for Higher Education and Research (NCHER) for prescribed standards of academic quality and defining policies for advancement of knowledge in higher educational institutions. The said proposal is based on the recommendations of Yash Pal Committee and National Knowledge Commission.

- A proposal to prevent, prohibit and punish educational malpractices.

- Law for mandatory assessment and accreditation in higher education through an independent regulatory authority.

- Establishment of a national database of academic qualifications created and maintained in an electronic format which would provide immense benefit to institutions, students and employers.

- A proposal to establish 14 innovation universities aiming at world class standards.

- Setting up 10 new National Institutes of Technology (NITs).

- Launching of a new scheme of interest subsidy on educational loans taken by professional courses by the economically weaker students.

- Setting up of 374 Model degree colleges in districts having GER for education less than the National GER.

- As part of reforms in All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) norms, the HRD ministry announced an increase of almost 2,00,000 seats in engineering courses, additional 80,000 seats in management and 2,200 seats in architecture courses. The ministry also made it mandatory for technical institutions to reserve 5 percent seats for the weaker sections of society.

- HRD ministry has liberalized the norms for land requirement for engineering colleges. Now lesser space will be needed for establishing technical institutes. While an engineering college in rural India will need 10 acres of land, just 2.5 acres of land will be needed in urban areas.

- Conduction of special evening in the areas of Engineering, Technology, Architecture, Town Planning, Hospitality and Pharmacy by AICTE-approved institutes.

- Introduction of Section 25 of Company's Act to allow good corporate to set up Technical Institutions.

- Review of the functioning of existing Deemed Universities.

- Passing of the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Bill *(Gupta and Gupta, 2012).*

HIGHER EDUCATION AND ITS COMMITTEE ECOMMENDATIONS: The higher education sector in India spends 4.1% of the country's research fund. It is 17.0% in Germany, 22.6% in U.K. and 10.1% China. The research manpower in China is 8.6 lakhs; in India 1.3 lakhs and even in Korea it is 1.5 lakhs. Prof. C. N. R. Rao who is the Principle Science Adviser to the Prime Minster has stated that our universities have largely stopped doing research. It can be pointed out here that the higher education system in India is not conducive to research and if the present state of affairs continues we will never be competitive in research. Higher education scene in India should kindly be looked into. Every institution has Lecturers, Assistant professor and Professor; and all are expected to do research. In India, higher education is in the affiliated colleges which are 22000 in number. They have no Professor; not even Assistant professors necessarily. Ninety percent (90%) of our undergraduate students and 66% of our postgraduate students and 84% of our faculty in higher education are in the affiliated colleges. There is no research in the affiliated colleges this means that in the field of higher education 84% of faculty members do not do research. They are not expected to do research and only 16% of the faculty in higher education is expected to do research in the country. So how can university research prosper with such grossly inadequate numbers not engaging in research, in comparison with the entire higher education faculty being expected to do research in advanced countries?

On the 29th of November 2006, the Chairman National Knowledge Commission wrote to the Prime Minister, recommending 1500 universities from India. Again, 2 years later, in 2008, Yasphal Committee recommended 1500 universities from India. These numbers are by no means large. The Chairman, Today's Meeting has stated that USA has 3500 universities; UK with a population less than that of Tamil Nadu has 125 universities; Germany with a population of 82 million has 350 universities; Japan with a population of 127 million has 726 universities. It is said that a nation must periodically introduce minor revolutions otherwise it will have to face a major revolution. India today, requires really a major revolution in higher education (Thanuskodi, 2011).

CONCLUSION: In this paper I have presented the development and present scenario of higher education in India by analyzing the various data and also identify the key challenges like demand-supply gap, quality education, research and development and faculty shortage in Indian's higher education sector. In this paper also identified the key initiatives from the government side and some committee recommendations of higher education which include the establishment of NCHER, independent regulatory authority for accreditation and national database of academic qualification, increase in number of universities including IITs, IIMs, NITs and SPAs during 11th five year plan and increase in the number of seats in existing institutions and passing of the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education. It is said that a nation must periodically introduce minor revolutions otherwise it will have to face a major revolution. India today, requires really a major revolution in higher education.

References:

Gupta, D., and Gupta, N., (2012), *Higher Education in India: Structure, Statistics and Challenges*, *Journal of Education and practice*, Vol. 5, No. 2, pp 15-20.

MHRD, Annual Report 2009-2010.

Singh, M., K., (2010), *Challenges of Globalization on Indian Higher Education*, retrieved from http://challengesofglobalisationonhighereducation.

Singhal, S., and Swami, P., (2010), *Globalisation and Higher Education: Situation in developing Countries with respect to India*, pp 1-2.

Takwale, R., (2006) *Challenges and Opportunities of Globalisation for higher Education in India- Alternative through e- Education*, retrieved from www.ugc.ac.in ugc-pro.pdf. pp 10-11.

Thanuskodi, S., (2011), *Higher education in India: Challenges and opportunities*, International Journal of Science and Technology Education Research, Vol. 2(6), pp. 106 -   108, retrieved from http://www.academicjournals.org/IJSTER.

UGC and Higher Education in India, Annual Reports (Universities include central, state; private, deemed and also institution of national importance established both by the central and state legislatures).

(www.deloitte.com/in)

(www.ibid.in).

Asst. Prof., Dept. of Commerce, Nabin Chandra College, Badarpur