



Higher Education in India: Growth and Challenges

KEYWORDS

Indian Higher Education System, UGC, RUSA and Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD).

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ABSTRACT Owing to the nature of the Indian higher education system, which is not only complex in its functioning and evolution, but is also large in scope, the higher education system in India is witnessing an exceptional change. The 21st century is the era of knowledge -based economy and the center for change and therefore the traditional system of education cannot escape the challenges. More than 600 million populations in India are under the age of 25 years. With the increase in the size of middle class populations coupled with India's young population craving for education, the system is under remarkable pressure to develop. India is the largest tertiary age population in the world and is the second largest graduate talent pipelined below China and ahead of the USA needs a drastic change in the Higher education system. Therefore, the present research paper attempts to highlight the initiatives undertaken by the UGC and Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD), to update and upgrade the higher education system.

Introduction

Higher education plays a vital role in creating knowledge-based society by imparting research based knowledge and creating a mass of skilled and educated personnel. The present higher education system is full of challenges, particularly related to financing and management, access, equity, significance and reorientation of policies and programmes. In order to balance with the increasing growth of population, particularly relating to the increase in the volume of students and their diverse needs the higher education system in India has to go for extraordinary expansion by increasing the number of institutions and also public funding. For the promotion of economic growth, cultural development, social solidity, equity and justice higher education need to be viewed as a long-term social investment. The UGC XII plan basically aims at inclusive growth and also to ensure indisputable endogenous and sustainable progress along with social justice and equity. With the aim of providing quality higher education to an ever increasing number of students, Rashtriya Uchchar Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA) was initiated by the UPA government. The main objective of RUSA was to improve access, quality and equality in Higher Education at the state level by developing more academic institutions, expanding, enhancing and upgrading the existing ones and also to provide more autonomy to Universities and colleges to develop quality education with a greater inclination towards research.

Justification of the Study

The strong foundation which has been laid down by the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) and the Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA) to uplift the primary and secondary education in India has paved way for improving the present condition of Higher education in India. The Higher education System in India is facing many problems linked to it because of the outdated systems and regulations which governs them, therefore the need to reform the existing governance and system was initiated under RUSA which will help to unleash the potential of the state universities. Owing to the nature of the Indian higher education system, which is not only complex in its functioning and

evolution, but is also large in scope, the higher education system in India is witnessing an exceptional change. The 21st century is the era of knowledge -based economy and the center for change and therefore the traditional system of education cannot escape the challenges. Therefore, an attempts has been made to understand the growth of higher education in India by analyzing the initiatives undertaken by the UGC and Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD), to update and upgrade the higher education system.

Review of Literature

Powar (2012) argues that the co-relation between higher education and employment is complex in the Indian context as a number of socio-economic and technological variables are involved; having said that, the Indian economy boasts unprecedented growth as well as one of the highest growth rates in the world. Mattoo (2009) explicates the notion succinctly: "The whole idea of building a knowledge society is the idea of empowering young men and women through education and ensuring that all our delivery systems are built on the premise of the latest knowledge" (as cited in Bhatia and Dash, 2010, p. 46). Whitaker (2004) discusses the symbiotic relationship between cities or "cluster regions" and internationalization of universities and colleges. She argues that the agglomeration of services and businesses go to play an important role in attracting international students. She describes these economies as "knowledge-based economies".

Objectives of the Study

1. To study the current status of Higher education in India.
2. To study the growth of Higher education in India in the post Independence era.
3. To narrate the expenditure on higher education out of GDP and to analyze the future expectations from RUSA and its impact on Higher Education.

Methodology

In order to analyze the impact of initiatives taken by government under RUSA the data have been collected from

secondary sources like Research Journals, E-Journals, Report on Higher Education in India: Twelfth Five Year Plan (2012–2017) and reports of Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD), etc. Inferences have been drawn on the basis of data collected from the above mentioned sources.

Analysis of Current status of Higher Education, growth of Higher education in India in the post Independence era and expectations from RUSA.

The present study attempts to explore the current condition of Higher education in India and also tries to analyze the post Independence developments in the Higher Education sector. The paper also attempts to understand the initiative undertaken by the UPA government in the form of RUSA in order to uplift Higher education in India, and also to understand its future expectations.

Table No. 1: Number of Institutions by Nature and Category-2013-2014 (P)

	Type		Number
	Higher Education	Universities	Central University
State Public University			310
Deemed University			127
State Private University			143
Central Open University			1
State Open University			13
Institution of National Importance			68
Institutions under State Legislature Act			5
Others			3
Total			712
Colleges			36671
Stand Alone Institution		Diploma Level Technical	3541
		PGDM	392
		Diploma Level Nursing	2674
	Diploma Level Teacher Training	4706	
	Institute under Ministries	132	
Total		11445	

Data Source :

For Higher Education : All India Survey on Higher Education [AISHE Portal] (www.aishe.gov.in)

P: Provisional

Interpretation

At the time of Independence of India, there were only 20 Universities and 500 Colleges in the country with 2.1 lakhs students in higher education. The numbers now have increased to almost 36 times in the case of the Universities, 74 times in the case of Colleges and the student enrolments have gone up to over 100 times in the formal system of higher education in comparison to the figures at the time of independence. In table no.1, the number of

institutions related to higher education up to 2013-2014 is shown. It indicates that there is expansion of higher education in India. The central and state government has taken initiatives to promote higher education. In the year 2013-2014, the number of Universities and Colleges was 712 and 36671 respectively in India.

Table No. 2: Number of Recognised Educational Institutions

Level/ Year	(In absolute numbers)	
	Colleges	University
1950-51	578	27
1960-61	1819	45
1970-71	3277	82
1980-81	6963	110
1990-91	5748	184
2000-01	10152	254
2005-06	16982	350
2006-07	19812	371
2007-08	23099	406
2008-09	27882	440
2009-10	25938	436
2010-11	32974	621
2011-12	34852	642
2012-13(P)	35829	665
2013-14(P)	36671	712

P:Provisional Data Source:

For Higher Education:-

(i) figure for 1950-51 to 2009-10 from the Statistics of Higher and Technical Education publication

(ii) figures for 2010-11 to 2013-14 (P) taken from AISHE

Interpretation

At the end of X Plan (31.03.2007), there were 371 Universities (20 Central, 237 State, 109 Deemed and 5 Institutions established under Special State Legislature Acts) and 19812 colleges in the country. At the end of XI Plan (31.03.2012), the number of Universities has gone up to 642 (43 Central, 129 Deemed and 466 State

Universities and four Institutions established under Special State Legislature Acts) and the number of Colleges to 34852, thus registering an increase of 73% in the number of Universities and 75% in the case of Colleges in comparison to the figures at the end of X Plan. The current number of universities is 712 (as on 31.3.2014) and the number of colleges is 36671. So far as the number of Universities in states is concerned, the state of Tamil Nadu tops the list with Universities, followed by Uttar Pradesh & Rajasthan with 56 each and Andhra Pradesh (43) etc. Relatively speaking and in comparison to the absolute figures at the beginning of XI Plan (2007-2008), the state of Uttar Pradesh accounted for the highest increase with (2303

colleges, followed by Rajasthan (1576), Maharashtra (1473), Andhra Pradesh (1286), Tamil Nadu (1113) etc. It is also observed that the growth in the number of colleges is almost minimal in all the States located in the North Eastern Region and a few of the Union Territories. To meet the XII Plan target of 30% Gross Enrolment Ratio, efforts have to be made to open more number of Universities/Colleges and also to increase the existing intake capacity of each course in every University/ College.

Table No. 3: Public Expenditure on Education and Gross Domestic Product (GDP)

Year	GDP at Current price (at Factor cost) (Rs. crore)	Total Expenditure on Education by Education & other Departments (Rs. crore)	Expenditure on Education by Education & other Departments as % of GDP
1951-52	10080	64.46	0.64
1960-61	16220	239.56	1.48
1970-71	42222	892.36	2.11
1980-81	130178	3884.2	2.98
1990-91	510964	19615.85	3.84
2000-01	1925017	82486.48	4.28
2005-06	3390503	113228.71	3.34
2006-07	3953276	137383.99	3.48
2007-08	4582086	155797.27	3.40
2008-09	5303567	189068.84	3.56
2009-10	6108903	241256.01	3.95
2010-11	7248860	293478.23	4.05
2011-12(RE)	8391691	351145.78	4.18
2012-13(BE)	9388876	403236.51	4.29
RE: Revised Estimate			
BE: Budget Estimate			
Data Source: Analysis of Budg- eted Expendi- ture (MHRD)			

Interpretation

The table no. 3 indicates percentage of GDP in expenditure on higher education. It is clear from the table that soon after Independence the percentage of expenditure on education out of the GDP was almost negligible, which was 0.64% soon the government realized the importance of higher education started increasing the percentage of expenditure on Higher Education with 4.28% expenditure in the year 2000-2001, 4.05% in the year 2010-2011, 4.18% in the year 2011-12 and 4.29% in the year 2012-2013. It means there is increasing expenditure on higher education by the Central Government. Due to this increasing expenditure there is growth in the institutions which is providing higher education to the masses. Though there is increasing expenditure by the Central Government in India, but comparatively it is less than the developed countries. Therefore, reforms initiated under RUSA will force the state government to create a State Higher Education Council, allocation of a predetermined percentage of GSDP (Gross State Domestic Product) towards the Higher Education, Institutional governance reforms and filling of faculty position, etc. Consequently, initiated reforms under RUSA will enable the State Government to facilitate a self-sustaining impetus that will push greater accountability and autonomy to the state universities and Institutions and will force them to improve quality of education. Thus, the objectives of RUSA to attain 32% GER (Gross Enrollment Rate) by the end of XIII Plan can be achieved.

Conclusion

The globalized era has made it essential to encourage a competitive spirit at all levels and which is only possible by bringing maximum achievable standards in every sphere of work. With the ever increasing desires and expectation of the Indian society the quality of higher education needs to be maintained at the desired level. Hence forth the quality of higher education rests on the quality of all its facets whether it is the faculty, staff, students or the infrastructure. In order to create new knowledge, new capabilities and create an intelligent human resource pool, the Indian higher education system has to prop itself to deal with global challenges by channelizing teaching, research and extension activities, and maintaining the right balance between need and demand. It has rightly been said by renowned British Economist Joan Robinson that "whatever you can rightly say about India, the opposite is also true" exactly the same is applicable for Indian Higher Education system where existence of excellence is there at few Institutions together with mediocrity at many others. Therefore, all policies, processes and systems need to be aimed at attaining improvement in the relevant facets for an overall rise in the quality of education.

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