



QUALITY ASSURANCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION: AN OVERVIEW

English

**Dr. Kesavan Vadakalur Elumalai** Assistant Professor of English, KSU

KEYWORDS

INTRODUCTION:

The introduction of systematic higher education was the contribution of the British period. India's higher education system is the third largest in the world, after China and the United States. Higher education means the education imparted in colleges and universities. It imparts in-depth knowledge and understanding to students to seek truth, ability to question and it broadens the intellectual powers of an individual within a narrow specialization. Higher education generally covers teaching, research, and extension.

According to Ronald Barnett (1992) there are four predominant concepts of higher education:

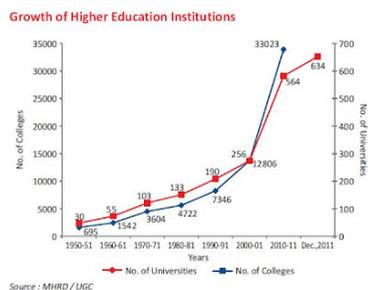
1. Higher education as a production of qualified human resources.
2. Higher education as training for a research career.
3. Higher education as the efficient management of teaching provision.
4. Higher education as a matter of extending life chances.

SCENARIO OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN INDIA:

University Grants Commission (UGC) released a report "Higher education in India at a glance" summarizing key data points of relevance for policymakers and administrators. Here are three charts from the report:

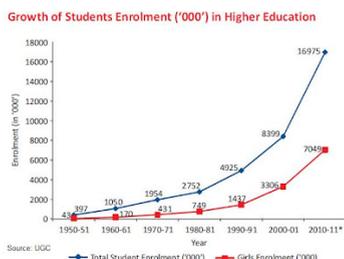
1. Massive expansion in supply of colleges:

India added nearly 20,000 colleges in a decade (increased from 12,806 in 2000-01 to 33,023 in 2010-11) which translate into a growth of more than 150%. Number of degree granting universities more than doubled from 256 to 564, primarily due to deemed-universities and private universities. India has a complex affiliation system where a university can have hundreds of public and private teaching colleges affiliated to it.



2. Lesser growth in student enrolment:

Although number of students enrolled in higher education doubled from nearly 8.4 million to 17 million in a decade, it grew a slower pace than number of colleges which grew 2.5 times in the same period, creating a paradoxical situation of excess capacity in a country where gross enrolment ratio is less than 20%.



3. Three-year degree and engineering:

Students continue to be sorted into two tiers--engineering and three-year degrees of Arts, Science and Commerce. Every sixth student in India is enrolled in engineering/technology program and more than 2/3rd of Indian students are enrolled in three year under graduate degree.

CONCEPT OF QUALITY:

The British standard institution (BSI) defines quality as "Totality of features and characteristics of a product or service that bear on its ability to satisfy stated or implied needs", (BSI, 1991).

Green and Harvey (1993) identified five different approaches to identify quality:

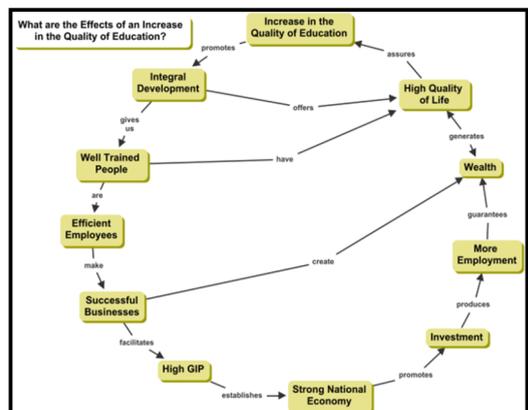
- In terms of exceptional
- In terms of consistency
- As fitness for purpose
- As value for money
- As transformative

Quality is a very important aspect of education. We are worrying not only about our compulsory education but also for quality education because of many reasons as:

- **Competition:** with globalization of education, in order to survive educational institutions need to worry about their quality.
- **Maintaining standards:** in order to maintain standard, we should always concern to quality of educational facilities, provision and transaction.
- **Customer satisfaction:** students, parents and funding agencies are the main customers of the educational institutions and they are highly conscious about their rights.
- **Accountability:** educational institutes are accountable to its stakeholders in terms of the funds used on it. Concern for quality ensures accountability of the funds utilised.
- **Credibility, prestige and status:** quality brings in credibility to individual and institution because of consistent status and brand value.

NEED OF QUALITY:

Quality education plays an important role in determining the future of children and in turn the fate of the nation. Education targets overall complete developments of the child in all forms like high quality of life, wealth and employment etc. Below given diagram represents the effects of an increase in quality of education.



**DECLINING STANDARDS:**

A careful analysis of higher education system in India identifies following common factors for the declining educational standards:

- Administrative mismanagement
- Highly personalized dealing
- Paucity of qualified faculties
- Financial corruption
- Political interference and manipulation in matters of appointment and administration
- Apathy of students and teachers
- Passive and non vibrant environment

**QUALITY ASSESSMENT:**

In order to evaluate performance of an institution and bring about a measure of accountability a mechanism of accreditation has been developed by UGC. This is an autonomous council under UGC called National Accreditation and Assessment Council (NAAC) with a purpose to carry out periodic assessment of universities and colleges. NAAC has evolved a methodology of assessment which involves self-appraisal by each university/college and an assessment of the performance by an expert committee. Similarly, for technical education, AICTE has established its own accreditation mechanism for its institutions through the National Board of Accreditation (NBA).

NAAC has identified the following seven criteria to serve as the basis of assessment procedures:

- Curricular Aspects
- Teaching-learning and Evaluation
- Research, Consultancy and Extension
- Infrastructure and Learning Resources
- Student Support and Progression
- Governance and Leadership
- Innovative practice

**ROADMAP TO EXCELLENCE:**

To improve quality and keep pace with time, higher education institutions should decide and specify its own aims and objectives. Aims and objectives should concern the development of intellectual enterprises among students. It should ensure that the individual should be able to develop relevant competencies and aptitude. The fitness- for purpose would measure the extent to which the subject provider is achieving its aims and objectives it has set for itself. The six broad parameters that may be considered for quality assessment are:

- Curriculum design, content and organization
- Teaching learning and assessment
- Student progression and achievement
- Student support and guidance
- Learning resources (laboratories, libraries etc.)
- Quality assurance and enhancement

**References**

1. Quality Assurance in Higher Education-An Introduction; NAAC Bangalore India, commonwealth of learning Vancouver, Canada, November 2007.
2. Higher Education In India At A Glance: by UGC February 2012.
3. Alberto J. Cañas & Joseph D. Novak; Institute for Human and Machine Cognition. www.ihmc.us
4. Dr Education International Higher Education Blog by Rahul Choudaha, Ph.D.; Latest Statistics on Indian Higher Education
5. www.wikipedia.com