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HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM IN INDIA

KEY WORDS:

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ABSTRACT

India's higher education system, also known as tertiary education, is a vast and diverse network of institutions offering a wide range of courses and programs. It includes both public and private universities, colleges, and specialized institutions, with a focus on undergraduate, postgraduate, and doctoral studies. The system is governed by the University Grants Commission (UGC) and operates under a federal structure where both the central and state governments share responsibility for higher education.

Higher education system in India includes both public and private universities. Public universities are supported by the union government and the state governments, while private universities are mostly supported by various bodies and societies. Universities in India are recognized by the University Grants Commission (UGC), which draws its power from the University Grants Commission Act, 1956. The main governing body is the University Grants Commission, which enforces its standards, advises the government, and helps coordinate between the center and the state.[1] Accreditation for higher learning is overseen by various autonomous institutions established by the University Grants Commission (UGC)

As of 2020, India has over 1000 universities, with a break up of 54 central universities, 416 state universities, 125 deemed universities, 361 state private universities and 159 Institutes of National Importance which include AIIMS, IIMs, IIITs, IISERs, IITs and NITs among others. Other institutions include 52,627 colleges as government degree colleges, private colleges, standalone institutes and post-graduate research institutions, functioning under these universities as reported by the MHRD in 2020 Apart from these institutions, there are several parallel, state, and nationally accredited bodies that provide professional and vocational educational programs like the National Skill Development Corporation, Gramin Skill Development Mission, the Centre for Development of Advanced Computing, etc. Distance learning and open education of the Indian higher education system are overseen by the Distance Education Council. Colleges may be autonomous, i.e. empowered to examine their own degrees, up to PhD level in some cases, or non-autonomous, in which case their examinations are under the supervision of the university to which they are affiliated; in either case, however, degrees are awarded in the name of the university rather than the college. Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) is the oldest distance education university in the country, transitioning from correspondence to online delivery of education, and has the largest number of student enrollments.

Vocational Education

India's All India Council of Technical Education (AICTE) reported, in 2013, that there are more than 4,599 vocational institutions that offer degrees, diploma and post-diploma in architecture, engineering, hotel management, infrastructure, pharmacy, technology, town services and others. There were 1,740,000 students enrolled in these schools. Total annual intake capacity for technical diplomas and degrees exceeded 3.4 million in 2012

According to the University Grants Commission (UGC) total enrolment in Science, Medicine, Agriculture and Engineering crossed 65 lakh in 2010. The number of women choosing engineering has more than doubled since 2001.

After passing the Higher Secondary Examination (the Standard 12 examination), students may enroll in general degree programmes such as bachelor's degree (graduation) in arts, commerce or science, or professional degree programme such as engineering, medicine, nursing, pharmacy, and law graduates. India's higher education system is the third largest in the world, after China and the United States. The main governing body at the tertiary level is the University Grants Commission (India) (UGC), which enforces its standards, advises the government, and helps co-ordinate between the centre and the state up to Post graduation and Doctorate (PhD). Accreditation for higher learning is overseen by 12 autonomous institutions established by the University Grants Commission

All India Institute of Medical Sciences Delhi

As of 2012, India has 152 central universities, 316 state universities, and 191 private universities. Other institutions include 33,623 colleges, including 1,800 exclusive women's colleges, functioning under these universities and institutions, and 12,748 Institutions offering Diploma Courses. The emphasis in the tertiary level of education lies on science and technology. Indian educational institutions by 2004 consisted of a large number of technology institutes. Distance learning is also a feature of the Indian higher education system. The Government has launched Rashtriya Uchchattar Shiksha Abhiyan to provide strategic funding to State higher and technical institutions. A total of 316 state public universities and 13,024 colleges will be covered under it.

Some institutions of India, such as the Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs) and National Institutes of Technology (NITs) have been globally acclaimed for their standard of under-graduate education in engineering. Several other institutes of fundamental research such as the Indian Institute of Science (IISc) Indian Association for the Cultivation of Science (IACS), Tata Institute of Fundamental Research (TIFR), Harish-Chandra Research Institute (HRI), Jawaharlal Nehru Centre for Advanced Scientific Research (JNCASR), Indian Institute of Science Education and Research (IISER) are also acclaimed

for their standard of research in basic sciences and mathematics. However, India has failed to produce world class universities both in the private sector or the public sector.

Besides top rated universities which provide highly competitive world class education to their pupils, India is also home to many universities which have been founded with the sole objective of making easy money. Regulatory authorities like UGC and AICTE have been trying very hard to extirpate the menace of private universities which are running courses without any affiliation or recognition. Indian Government has failed to check on these education shops, which are run by big businessmen & politicians. Many private colleges and universities do not fulfil the required criterion by the Government and central bodies (UGC, AICTE, MCI, BCI etc.) and take students for a ride. For example, many institutions in India continue to run unaccredited courses as there is no legislation strong enough to ensure legal action against them. Quality assurance mechanisms have failed to stop misrepresentations and malpractices in higher education. At the same time regulatory bodies have been accused of corruption, specifically in the case of deemed-universities. In this context of a lack of a solid quality assurance mechanism, institutions need to step-up and set higher standards of self-regulation.

Our university system is, in many parts, in a state of disrepair. In almost half the districts in the country, higher education enrollments are abysmally low, almost two-third of our universities and 90% of our colleges are rated as below average on quality parameters. I am concerned that in many states university appointments, including that of vice-chancellors, have been politicised and have become subject to caste and communal considerations, there are complaints of favouritism and corruption.

The Government of India is aware of the plight of higher education sector and has been trying to bring reforms, however, 15 bills are still awaiting discussion and approval in the Parliament. One of the most talked about bill is Foreign Universities Bill, which is supposed to facilitate entry of foreign universities to establish campuses in India. The bill is still under discussion and even if it gets passed, its feasibility and effectiveness is questionable as it misses the context, diversity and segment of international foreign institutions interested in India. One of the approaches to make internationalisation of Indian higher education effective is to develop a coherent and comprehensive policy which aims at infusing excellence, bringing institutional diversity and aids in capacity building.

Three Indian universities were listed in the Times Higher Education list of the world's top 200 universities – Indian Institutes of Technology, Indian Institutes of Management, and Jawaharlal Nehru University in 2005 and 2006. Six Indian Institutes of Technology and the Birla Institute of Technology and Science—Pilani were listed among the top 20 science and technology schools in Asia by Asiaweek. The Indian School of Business situated in Hyderabad was ranked number 12 in global MBA rankings by the Financial Times of London in 2010 while the All India Institute of Medical Sciences has been recognised as a global leader in medical research and treatment. The University of Mumbai was ranked 41 among the Top 50 Engineering Schools of the world by America's news broadcasting firm Business Insider in 2012 and was the only university in the list from the five emerging BRICS nations viz Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa. It was ranked at 62 in the QS BRICS University rankings for 2013 and was India's 3rd best Multi-Disciplinary University in the QS University ranking of Indian Universities after University of Calcutta and Delhi University In April 2015, IIT Bombay launched the first U.S.-India joint EMBA programme alongside Washington University in St. Louis.

Technical Education

From the first Five-year Plan onwards, India's emphasis was to develop a pool of scientifically inclined manpower. India's National Policy on Education (NPE) provisioned for an apex body for regulation and development of higher technical education, which came into being as the All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) in 1987 through an act of the Indian parliament. At the central level, the Indian Institutes of Technology, the Indian Institute of Space Science and Technology, the National Institutes of Technology and the Indian Institutes of Information Technology are deemed of national importance.

The UGC has inter-university centers at a number of locations throughout India to promote common research, e.g. the Nuclear Science Centre at the Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. Besides there are some British established colleges such as Harcourt Butler Technological Institute situated in Kanpur and King George Medical University situated in Lucknow which are important centre of higher education.

In addition to above institutes, efforts towards the enhancement of technical education are supplemented by a number of recognised Professional Engineering Societies such as:

1. Institution of Engineers (India)
2. Institution of Civil Engineers (India)
3. Institution of Mechanical Engineers (India)
4. Institution of Chemical Engineering (India)
5. Institution of Electronics and Tele-Communication Engineers (India)
6. Indian Institute of Metals
7. Institution of Industrial Engineers (India)
8. Institute of Town Planners (India)
9. Indian Institute of Architects

that conduct Engineering/Technical Examinations at different levels (Degree and diploma) for working professionals desirous of improving their technical qualifications.

The number of graduates from technical colleges increased to over 700,000 in 2011, compared to 550,000 in FY 2010. However, according to one study, 75% of technical graduates and more than 85% of general graduates lack the skills needed in India's most demanding and high-growth global industries such as Information Technology (IT). In 2009, less than 1% of India's labour pool was employed in the Indian IT industry (about 2.3 million people). That number has almost doubled as of 2023, with around 5.4 million people estimated to be employed in IT, however, given the rapid population growth in India, this still accounts for only 0.4% of the Indian labour pool. Given the sheer numbers of students seeking education in engineering, science and mathematics, India faces challenges balancing the huge demand for employment with the need to ensure quality graduates.

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