

# Growing Higher in Higher Education

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## 1. Introduction:

Education is the most powerful mechanism with which you can transform the world. The sustained economic development of any country is directly determined by its education system. Education is a Nation's health and wealth. A progressive nation is inevitably an educated nation.

Education is the passport to the future, for tomorrow belongs to those who prepare for it today. And so, investment in education pays the best interest. The aim is to form quality leaders, local and global, with strong human and spiritual values.

## 2. Indian higher education system

Higher education system in India is the third largest in the world, next to the United States and China.

The main regulatory body at the tertiary level is the UGC with its 15 odd autonomous agencies like AICTE, NAAC etc for assessment and accreditation of higher learning.

### Types of Education

#### (i) Distance Education:

The University Grants Commission (UGC) oversees Open and Distance Learning (ODL) throughout the country.

Correspondence Course Institutes (CCIs)

Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU)

State Open Universities (SOUs)

#### (ii) Formal, General, Non-formal, and Informal Education:

#### (iii) Professional and Technical Educations

In India, medical studies fall into the category of professional education.

Aeronautical, management, and pharmaceutical studies in India are placed into the category of technical education.

#### (iv) Value Education

Value education has made Indian education system different from other systems, but changing times and approaches have significantly overshadowed it. Value education is also known as skill formation that expands the scope for further development.

The value education emphasizes, among other ideals: Compassion, Honesty, Responsibility and Trust. These ideals are meant to address and defeat: Divisive forces, Corruption, Intolerance and Violence

Value Based Integrity Learning (VBIL) has also been introduced, which recommends that value should be linked to all lessons.

### 3. Number of HE Institutions:

Jawaharlal Nehru observed: Educational institutions are the temples of knowledge and wisdom and villages are the temples of prosperity. Knowledge is power. The more knowledge we promote, the more empowered we are as individuals and as a nation.

As of December 2018, we have:

|                            |   |
|----------------------------|---|
| Graduates in India:        | 85 million (9.25% of Indian population) |
| Colleges of all types:     | Around 60,000                           |
| Autonomous Colleges:       | 612                                     |
| Students:                  | 35 million                              |
| Teachers:                  | 1.53 million                            |
| Teacher/Student ration:    | 1:23                                    |
| Central Universities:      | 47                                      |
| State Universities:        | 387                                     |
| Deemed to be Universities: | 123                                     |
| Private Universities:      | 285                                     |
| Total Universities:        | 839                                     |

### 4. Challenges in Higher Education in India

Indian higher education system is in need of radical reforms. We need to focus on enforcing higher standards and transparency with stronger institutional responsibility. Concerted link from KG to PG and collaborative efforts are required to broaden student choices and making their studies relevant.

Even after 70 years since independence, our Universities are not able to figure among the best 100 universities in the world; various governments have tried to boost the education system and implement various education policies. Still we are faced with many challenges and I try to present some.

a. Four Es: Any higher education institution in India should aspire to strike a fine blend between four Es: i) Expansion – both academic and physical in terms of infrastructure and facilities; ii) Equity – to address the issues of gender bias, regional variations etc and enable access to broader sections of students; iii) Excellence – in teaching, learning and research; and iv) Employability – making the courses relevant and enhancing student employability in our institutions.

b. The Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) of India in higher education is only around 21 per cent, which is quite low as compared to the developed countries. The supply of higher education institutes is insufficient to meet the growing demand in the country.

c. Quality is another area our system suffers from. Ensuring quality in teaching - learning, research, is amongst the foremost challenges we face today. Many of our institutions are unable to meet the minimum requirements for quality education.

d. Political interference is a serious issue in our Indian administrative system. Most of the decisions taken at the government levels with regard to educational policies or appointments of officers in educational institutions are political decisions. Political leaders own many of the educational Institutions from schools to universities. They are using the innocent students for their selfish motives, for activities like campaigns, strikes, processions etc.

e. Faculty shortages and the inability of the state educational system to attract and retain well-qualified teachers have been posing challenges to quality education. Large numbers of NET / PhD candidates are unemployed even though there are vacancies in higher education.

f. Assessment and Accreditation Frameworks have been introduced in education system. As per the data provided by the NAAC, as of December 2018 “only 30 per cent of the total higher education institutions in the country have been accredited”.

g. There is inadequate focus on research and innovation in higher education institutes. There are insufficient resources and facilities, as well as, limited numbers of quality faculty to guide students. Moreover, Indian Higher education institutions are poorly connected to research centers and industries. The industry interface programs are weak except in a few professional institutes.

#### 5. Opportunities in Higher Education:

Indian education system is facing the challenges boldly and creating opportunities in every sector. There are efforts to conduct a paradigm shift in the system with a learner-centered pedagogy, use of science and technology, and a transparent and innovative governance system.

Opportunities are created for strategic engagement and capacity building in higher education leadership and management.

Over the last four decades, India has made remarkable advancement in its higher education landscape. In recent years, India has undertaken massive structural and systemic changes that have started to yield encouraging results. The Higher education Department has prepared a road map called Vision 2030 envisaging significant growth and results.

By 2030, India will have the largest population in the world. India would require a robust higher education system that can deliver on multiple imperatives.

Indian economy is expected to grow faster. Rapid industrialization will create additional workforce. India could potentially emerge as an economic giant and a global supplier of skilled workforce.

While it is important to address the existing challenges in the higher education system, it is more important to move towards a bold and aspirational vision. India needs to infuse in the system with quality institutions with clear objectives and focus areas to achieve the proposed goals.

A basic weakness in our system is the absence of adequate institutions – quality institutions. As observed by Prof. Partha Pratim Chakrabarti, Director of IIT Kharagpur, ‘to reach global standard in the conventional way, we need to build at the rate of six universities per month for the next 20 years – a practically impossible task. And so, are we to take a different route? – A route that uses science and technology to enable personalized learning – to properly harness our demographic dividends – a system that is proactive rather than reactive’.

Our Indian system has a laid down clear process, hierarchical in nature: 1. Affiliated Colleges; 2. Autonomous Colleges; 3. Degree awarding Colleges; 4. Deemed to be Universities; 5. Private Universities and 6. State / Central Universities.

#### 5. Private Universities:

Universities in India, whether Central/State/Private, are established by different State/Central acts and adhere to the provisions laid down in the UGC ACT 1956. According to the laws, State Universities are of affiliating in nature while private ones are unitary (single entity). Private Universities operate as per the State Act within the territorial boundaries of the State where it is established. A private university will be allowed to start off-campus, study centres and off-shore campuses only after a period of five years.

The private sector is strong and potent in Indian higher education. This has been partly due to Government’s decision to encourage private investment and participation. Different state assemblies took advantage of this initiative and passed private university bills. Only universities established by the Central or State Acts or higher education institutions empowered by the Parliament to confer or grant degrees are entitled to award degrees.

In 2005 there were only 20 private universities. But as of today we have 285 private universities. 78% of colleges in India are private colleges; of them 64 per cent are unaided and only 14 per cent are aided colleges.

It is a fact that there has been a quantum leap in the number of universities which are the temples of learning. It shows that there is a high scope for the role of private universities as India has a huge potential in terms of opportunities in higher education. There is a huge demand for quality learning with a wider choice of subjects and an assurance of placement. Private universities can meet this challenge.

There is a felt need for independence and autonomy for HE institutions to emerge as world class centres of knowledge. As public expenditures are insufficient and public institutions suffer from government interference and control, private participation is necessary.

#### 6. A Jesuit University in Kolkata:

The Jesuits in Kolkata responded to an invitation from the Hon'ble CM, Mamata Banerjee to start a St. Xavier's University in the City of Joy. We tried with many options:

- a) To upgrade the existing St. Xavier's College, Kolkata to a university status, but because of some technical problems relating to minority status and state aid, we had to give up that option.
- b) We proposed a public- private partnership model. This model did not work out.
- c) St. Xavier's College was selected as one of the 35 colleges for upgradation under RUSA scheme. But even after two meetings, the proposal did not come through. Finally we decided to go private way and submitted our proposal to the State Government of West Bengal.

The Bengal government was very cooperative and did all it could. The Hon'ble Chief Minister herself took keen interest in establishing the University. The Government gave us 17 acres of land in the New Town.

Our alumni joined hands and pledged their full support. The State Assembly passed the St. Xavier's University, Kolkata Act 2016 in December 2016. We prepared a road map - Vision 2020 and began our journey.

Today our dream has reached its first destiny. St. Xavier's University, Kolkata was inaugurated by the Hon'ble CM of Bengal in July 2017. The Chief Minister congratulated the Jesuits for setting up yet another seat of higher learning of strong ethical and aesthetic virtues; she highlighted the contributions of St. Xavier's towards the academic, cultural and social endorsements of West Bengal. She expressed her firm belief that like Harvard and Oxford, St. Xavier's University, Kolkata would soon be of global significance, thriving on the principles of faith and wisdom.

In just two years' time, SXUK has 1100 students on the rolls. Its focus is on:

1. Trained and dedicated faculty to form men and women for others in the spirit of Magis;
2. Development of world class infrastructure and facilities;
3. Emphasis and promotion of high quality teaching, learning, constructive research and innovation;
4. Scholarships to economically poor and deserving students;
5. Maintaining a global quality bench-mark through (Four Es) Expansion, Equity, Excellence and Employability;
6. National and International exchange programs;
7. Outreach programs and social commitment of students;
8. Choice based credit system;
9. On-going training of faculty;
10. Inculcation of values through Foundation courses
11. Career oriented programs in terms of certificate and diploma courses
12. Summer Internships and placements of our students and so on.

We believe that with the Divine providence and the wholehearted support of our stakeholders, we shall be able to achieve our Vision 2020.

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