



Higher Education in India

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Introduction

- India's higher education system is the world's third-largest in terms of students, next to China and the United States.
- India's Higher Education sector has witnessed a tremendous increase in the number of Universities/University level Institutions & Colleges since independence.
- In the prestigious **Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) World University Rankings 2020**, only three Indian Universities- IIT-Bombay, IIT-Delhi and IISc (Bangalore)- have been included in the top 200 institutes.

Issues and Challenges in India's Higher Education Sector

- **Enrolment:** The Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) of India in higher education is only 25.2% which is quite low as compared to the developed and other major developing countries.
- **Equity:**
 - There is no equity in GER among different sections of society. GER for males (26.3%), females (25.4%), SC (21.8%) and ST (15.9%).
 - There are regional variations too. While some states have high GER some are far behind the national figures.
 - The college density (number of colleges per lakh eligible population) varies from 7 in Bihar to 59 in Telangana as compared to All India average of 28.
 - Most of premier universities and colleges are centred in a metropolitan and urban city, thereby leading to the **regional disparity** in access to higher education.
- **Quality:** Higher Education in India is plagued with rote learning, lack of employability and skill development due to the low quality of education.
- **Infrastructure:** Poor infrastructure is another challenge to higher education in India. Due to the budget deficit, corruption and lobbying by the vested interest group (Education Mafias), public sector universities in India lack the necessary infrastructure. Even the Private sector is not upto the mark as per the global standard.

- **Faculty:** Faculty shortages and the inability of the state educational system to attract and retain well-qualified teachers have been posing challenges to quality education for many years. Shortage of faculty leads to Ad-hoc expansion even in the premier institutions.
The Pupil-to-teacher ratio though has been stable in the country (30:1), however, it needs to be improved to make it comparable to USA (12.5:1), China (19.5:1) and Brazil (19:1).
- **Outdated Curriculum:** Outdated, irrelevant curriculum that is dominantly theoretical in nature and has a low scope for creativity. There is a wide gap between industry requirements and universities' curriculum that is the main reason for the low employability of graduates in India.
- **Accreditation:** As per the data provided by the NAAC, as of June 2010, not even 25% of the total higher education institutions in the country were accredited. And among those accredited, only 30% of the universities and 45% of the colleges were found to be of quality to be ranked at 'A' level.
- **Regulatory issues:** Management of the Indian education faces challenges of over-centralization, bureaucratic structures and lack of accountability, transparency, and professionalism. As a result of the increase in a number of affiliated colleges and students, the burden of administrative functions of universities has significantly increased and the core focus on academics and research is diluted.

Regulatory Framework Of Higher Education In India



Research: Poor fund allocation in research, Low levels of PhD enrolment, fewer opportunities for interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary research, Low levels of industry engagement, Low quality of research work, etc. are some of the factors affecting the research ecosystem in India.

India's investment in R&D has remained constant at around 0.6% to 0.7% of India's GDP. This is below the expenditure of countries like the US (2.8), China (2.1), Israel (4.3) and Korea (4.2).

Recent Initiatives Taken by the Government

- **Education Quality Upgradation and Inclusion Programme (EQUIP) has been recently launched:**
 - This is a five-year vision plan to improve the quality and accessibility of higher education over the next five years (2019-2024).
 - Double the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in higher education and resolve the geographically and socially skewed access to higher education institutions in India.
 - Position at least 50 Indian institutions among the top-1000 global universities.
- **Revitalising Infrastructure and Systems in Education (RISE) by 2022**
 - Qualitatively upgrade the research and academic infrastructure in India to global best standards by 2022.
 - Make India into an education hub by making available high-quality research infrastructure in Indian higher educational institutions.
 - To allow access of HEFA funding to institutions like Central Universities, AIIMS, IISERs and newly created Institutes of National Importance, without creating any additional burden to the students.
 - Higher Education Financing Agency (HEFA) has been tasked to mobilise Rs. 1,00,000 crores for this initiative.
- **UGC's Learning Outcome-based Curriculum Framework (LOCF)**
LOCF guidelines, issued by UGC in 2018, aims to specify what graduates are expected to know, understand and be able to do at the end of their programme of study. This is to make student active learner and teacher a good facilitator.
- **Graded Autonomy to Universities & Colleges:** 3-tiered graded autonomy regulatory system has been initiated, with the categorization based on accreditation scores. Category I and Category II universities will have significant autonomy to conduct examinations, prescribe evaluation systems and even announce results
- **Global Initiative for Academics Network (GIAN):** The programme seeks to invite distinguished academicians, entrepreneurs, scientists, experts from premier institutions from across the world, to teach in the higher educational institutions in India.
- **All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE):** The main objectives of the survey are to- identify & capture all the institutions of higher learning in the country; and collect the data from all the higher education institutions on various aspects of higher education.
- **National Institutional Ranking Framework** was developed in 2015. The rankings are published annually since 2016. It outlines a methodology to rank educational institutions across the country based on five broad parameters:
 - Teaching, learning and resources;
 - Research and professional practice;
 - Graduation outcomes;
 - Outreach and inclusivity; and
 - Perception.

Way Forward

- **Regulatory and governance reforms:**
 - Restructure or merge different higher education regulators (UGC, AICTE, NCTE etc.) to ensure effective coordination.
 - Amend UGC Act to give legislative backing to regulatory structure.
 - Allow foreign institutions to operate joint degree programmes with Indian institutions.
 - Link University grants to performance.
 - Select Vice-Chancellors of universities through a transparent & objective process.
- **Creating ‘world-class universities’:** 20 universities – 10 each from the public and private sector – are being selected as **‘Institutions of Eminence’**, to help them attain world-class standards of teaching and research. **A graded mechanism** to ensure additional funds flow to top public universities should be developed, as in China & Singapore.

The **Draft National Education Policy, 2019** recommended Restructuring of the higher education system into Tier 1, Tier 2 and Tier 3.

Tier 1 includes research universities focusing equally on research and teaching, Tier 2 includes teaching universities focusing primarily on teaching; and Tier 3 includes colleges focusing only on teaching at undergraduate levels. All such institutions will gradually move towards full autonomy - academic, administrative, and financial. The idea is to spread ‘research culture’ at the undergraduate level.
- **Increased focus on vocational and profession led education:** Include vocational subjects in mainstream universities to allow for greater acceptance and utility for vocational learning.
- **Accreditation Framework:** All higher education institutions must be accredited compulsorily & regularly, by agencies, empanelled through a transparent, high-quality process.
- **Performance-linked funding and incentives:** All central universities should develop strategic plans for getting into the top 500 global universities rankings in the next 10 years. Funding to these institutions should be linked to performance and outcomes through the MHRD and newly constituted Higher Education Funding Agency
- **Distance and online education:** Broaden the scope of Massive Open Online Course (MOOCs) and Open and Distance Learning (ODL) to provide access to quality education beyond geographical boundaries.

For Mind Map