

Rejuvenating Indian higher education: where we are?

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Abstract

The article has focused on the system and present status of Indian Higher Education. As we know, a number of national debates are taking place in all the corners of our country about the drastic change of our higher education in terms of quality and quantity, realising the gravity of the contemporary issue, this article has been designed in the name of "Rejuvenating Indian Higher Education: Where we are?". The crucial issues like the recommendations of National Knowledge Commission (NKC), Foreign University Bill, Prof. Yashpal Committee Report on Higher Education and its recommendation like establishment of National Council of Higher Education and Research (NCHER) have been discussed with full length and breadth. A data base has been presented and analysed in this article which has recently published by University Grants Commission (UGC) about the status of Indian Higher Education up to 2012. A detail discussion has been taken place in this article about the enrolment of students in different level courses, appointment of teachers, establishment of new universities, expenditure in higher education sector, target achievement propounded by National Knowledge Commission (NKC) by 2015, and Operating a National Council for Higher Education and Research (NCHER) for coordinating better association and easy administration of Higher Education Unit. In this regard, it has also discussed to function all the regulatory bodies like NCTE, NAAC, AICTE, MCI, PCI, BCI etc. under the same umbrella of NCHER. At the end some practical suggestions/implications has put forth to establish a better situation in Indian Higher Education.

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Background

When we go back to Indian higher education, we find that Wood's Despatch (1854) proposed to establish universities at Calcutta, Madras, and Bombay on the pattern of London University. During the period of 1856 to 1922, the expansion of Universities, Colleges, and student's enrolment are given as follows:

Table 1: Higher Education during 1856-1922

Year	Universities	Colleges	Students Enrolment
1856-57	03	34	4335
1901-02	05	191	23,909
1921-22	14	246	58,837
1936-37	-	446	1,20,000
1947	20	626	2,40,000

Source: "Modern Indian Education" by Aggarwal J.C. 2010

When we analyse the data given above, we find that within a period of near to 100 years only 20 universities were developed in our country and 626 colleges (including general and professional) were functioning with cumulative students enrolment of 4,47,081. It indicates how slow our higher education before independence was. That may be a cause for further time to slow down the rate of higher education. During this period the leading committees and commissions which had worked for the development of Indian higher education were; Indian Education Commission (1982-83), Indian University Commission (1902), Indian Universities Act (1904), Calcutta University Commission or Sadler Commission (1917-1919). A clear gap of Indian Higher Education was observed when we see it closely comparing contemporary development over the seas.

For filling the gap, many efforts had been taken just after the independence. Realising the objectives like; to teach that life has a

meaning, to acquaint with the social philosophy which should govern all our institutions, educational as well as economic and political, to train for democracy, to train for self-development, to acquaint with cultural heritage for its generation, and to impart vocational and professional training the University Education Commission was established in the year 1948-49 under the chairmanship of Dr. Sarva Palli Radhakrishnan, which is popularly known as Radhakrishnan commission. The commission recommended; to appoint well qualified faculty for university teaching, to increase standard of teaching, develop standard courses of study for undergraduate and post graduate level, honours students will only eligible for post graduation studies, to enhance research and training in university system, to strengthen professional courses, improvement of common religious education, English as the medium of instruction in university education, and to reform in examination system. Besides these, it also recommended to enrich student's activities and welfare, develop women education, and to provide better finance. When the recommendations came to the force, changes in higher education observed but drastic changes had not occurred.

Again, Kothari Commission in 1964-66 and National Policy on Education 1986 brought a system to operate through out country a new education policy. The system of 10+2+3 was implemented all over the country which indicates 10 years of school education, two years of higher secondary education, and three years of degree education. The main observations of NPE 1986 and Revised NPE 1992 were as follows; 1. Autonomous colleges will be helped to develop in large numbers, 2. Courses and programmes will be redesigned to meet the demands of specialisation, 3. UGC and the State Councils of Higher Education will develop coordinated methods to keep a watch on standards, 4. Admission will be regulated according to capacity, 5. Research in Indology, humanities, and social sciences will receive adequate support, 6. Indira Gandhi National Open University will be strengthened, and a beginning will be made in de-linking degrees from jobs in selected

areas. Before coming to the present status of Indian Higher Education, let us discuss the development of higher education 1950 to 2003-04.

Table 2, data revealed that continuous development of Indian Higher Education was observed since 1950 to 2004, but the rate was slow in the initial two decades after independence. From 1970-80, it was observed that the development was moderate but the effect of Education Commission 1964-66 (Kothari Commission) was clearly visible in terms of increase of number of Universities, Colleges, and Enrolment of Students. During 1990-2004, it was realised that higher education increased in a rapid rate and accordingly student's enrolment increased double in last one decade. It may be because of the establishment of National Policy on Education 1986 and Revised National Policy on Education 1992.

Present development of indian higher education

Higher education has received a lot of attention in India over the past few years. In recent years the Indian Government has initiated a number of policy guidelines in all three sectors of education – Primary, Secondary, and Tertiary. There is clearly a sense of urgency and commitment. In the tertiary sector, the suggestions of two high powered Committees- The National Knowledge Commission (NKC) and the Committee to Advise on Renovation and Rejuvenation of Higher Education (Yash Pal Committee) are being discussed and suitable legislative interventions are under process. From a policy prospective there is a move “to promote the autonomy of higher education institutions for the free pursuit of knowledge and innovation, and for facilitating access, inclusion and opportunities to all.

One of the suggestions of NKC is to set up a number of World-Class National Universities. The Commission recommended 50 such Universities with 10 of them within a three year time frame. It also recommended for a massive expansion of opportunities, to around 1500 universities nationwide, that would enable India to

Table 2: Higher Education during 1950-2004

Year	Universities	Deemed Universities	Institutes of National Importance	General colleges	Professional Colleges	Student's Enrolment (In lakhs)
1950-51	27	3	-	370	208	3.6
1960-61	45	2	2	967	852	6.45
1970-71	84	09	09	2285	99	19.54
1980-81	112	11	9	3421	3542*	27.52
1990-91	147	29	9	4682	886	44.25
2003-04	213	89	13	9427	1068	99.50

*includes institutes of post-metric courses

(Source: UGC Annual Report 2003-04, Economic Survey 2005-06, from the book “Modern Indian Education” by Aggarwal J.C. 2010)

attain a gross enrolment ratio of at least 15 percent by 2015. The focus would have to be on new universities, but some clusters of affiliated colleges could also become universities. NKC recommends the creation of 50 National Universities that can provide education of the highest standard. After the recommendation of NKC, we have realised many changes and development in present Indian Higher Education. Let us have a look to human and infrastructure development have occurred recently in Indian Higher Education. Prof. Yashpal and his committee members have, in their report to the Ministry of Human Resource Development, suggested the scrapping of all higher education regulatory/monitoring bodies

and creation of a super regulator: a seven-member Commission for Higher Education and Research (CHER).

The committee in its final report, submitted to the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) on June 24, recommended that the deemed university status be abandoned and that all deserving deemed varsities be either converted full-fledged universities or scrapped — and a GRE like test be evolved for university education.

The committee said a plethora of regulatory bodies like UGC, AICTE, NCTE *et al* be replaced by a seven-member Commission

Table 3: State-wise Universities/Degree Awarding Institutes, Colleges, and Students Enrolment (2010-2011). (This data is excluding Open and Distance Learning in India)

S.N.	State	Univ.	Colleges	Ratio(C/U)	HEI	Students Enrolment	Ratio (SE/HEI)
1.	Andhra Pradesh	46	4066	88.39	4112	1847479	449.29
2.	Arunachal Pradesh	3	16	5.33	19	16068	845.68
3.	Assam	10	507	50.70	517	268451	519.25
4.	Bihar	21	653	31.10	674	690776	1024.89
5.	Chhattisgarh	15	641	42.73	656	304381	464.00
6.	Goa	2	54	27.00	56	26783	478.27
7.	Gujarat	36	1836	51.00	1872	893648	477.38
8.	Haryana	22	1836	83.45	1858	452565	243.58
9.	Himachal Pradesh	18	344	19.11	362	133564	368.96
10.	Jammu & Kashmir	11	328	29.82	339	184394	543.94
11.	Jharkhand	12	231	19.25	243	274450	1129.42
12.	Karnataka	42	3078	73.29	3120	1001473	320.98
13.	Kerala	19	1063	55.95	1082	404121	373.49
14.	Madhya Pradesh	28	2236	79.86	2264	928939	410.31
15.	Maharashtra	44	4631	105.25	4675	1955226	418.23
16.	Manipur	3	76	25.33	79	33755	427.28
17.	Meghalaya	9	64	7.11	73	41633	570.32
18.	Mizoram	3	28	9.33	31	12303	396.87
19.	Nagaland	4	55	13.75	59	20026	339.42
20.	Odisha	19	1100	57.89	1119	510418	456.14
21.	Punjab	17	852	50.12	869	469870	540.70
22.	Rajasthan	48	2412	50.25	2460	789479	320.93
23.	Sikkim	5	15	3.00	20	11608	580.40
24.	Tamil Nadu	59	2267	38.42	2326	1482277	637.26
25.	Tripura	3	39	13.00	42	32800	780.95
26.	Uttar Pradesh	58	3859	66.53	3917	2564886	654.81
27.	Uttarakhand	19	360	18.95	379	294485	777.01
28.	West Bengal	26	942	36.23	968	944075	975.28
29.	Chandigarh	3	25	8.33	28	64510	2303.93
30.	A & N Island	-	6	-	6	3158	526.33
31.	Lakshdweep	-	3	-	3	410	136.67
32.	Daman & Diu	-	4	-	4	860	215.00
33.	Delhi	25	243	9.72	268	278770	1040.19
34.	D & N Haveli	-	1	-	1	2120	2120.00
35.	Puducherry	4	86	21.50	90	35122	390.24
	Total	634	33023	52.09	33657	16975000	504.35

(Note: U-University, C-College, HEI-Higher Education Institute, SE-Student Enrolment)

(Source: Higher Education at a Glance, UGC, 2012)

for Higher Education and Research (CHER) under an Act of Parliament. It has also recommended, obviously to buffer the new regulator against political pressures, that the position of chairperson of the proposed commission be analogous to that of election commissioners.

It also said that the jurisdiction of other regulators — Medical Council of India, Bar Council of India and others — be confined to administrative matters, with universities taking up their academic responsibilities

University Grants Commission (UGC) has declared a brochure in the name of “Higher Education in India at a Glance” on 21 March 2012. The data which has placed in different tables and figures are quite impressive to say we are in a very right direction. It seems it is the golden time of Indian Higher Education. Infrastructure (human and material), university finance, students enrolment, educating to women and social disadvantage group related developmental data have clearly reflected to read the document. Let us discuss some of the data to proceed further discussion.

Table 3, represented the data of number of universities, colleges, students enrolment and ratio of affiliated colleges with universities and ratio of students enrolment with number of Higher Education Institutions. Data revealed that till the year 2012 we have 634 Universities including Central Universities (43), State Universities (297), Deemed Universities (129), Private Universities (100), and Institutes of National Importance (65). The States like Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Karnatak, and Andhra Pradesh had more numbers of Universities with compared to other States. Accordingly total colleges were 33023 including both general and professional colleges. Highest colleges were in Maharashtra (4631) and next was in Andhra Pradesh (4066). National ratio of affiliating colleges and the Universities was 52.09 which vary from highest 105 to lowest 3. It was observed that a total of 33657 Higher Education Institutes including Universities and

Colleges had existed in our country. Total students enrolment was 16975000. The highest student’s enrolment was in Uttar Pradesh (2564886) and Lowest in Lakshdweep (410). When it was tried to get the ratio of student’s enrolment with existing Higher Education Institutes, it was found that the national ratio was 504.35 which vary from 2304 (Chandigarh) to 136 (Lakshdweep). It was found that some States had over crowded colleges with comparison to low students enrolment in some other States.

Discussion

This data gives us enough evidence to rethink our planning and policy development. When to permit the colleges/universities in a State, close observation should be needed, whether there is the requirement or not. Population and area are also other parameters to establish colleges and Universities. The State which had highest number of Higher Education Institutions (Maharastra) was less student’s enrolment comparing to other States. Some State have over crowded colleges and in other side some States have colleges but students are less. It also again emphasizes to adopt a suitable plan and procedure for opening of new colleges and universities.

Let us have some other discussion of faculty & level-wise student’s enrolment, faculties in HIE, and financial aspects of Indian Higher Education.

Table 4, represented faculty-wise students enrolment in Indian Higher Education. It was revealed that more than one third of student’s enrolment (36.39%) was occupied by Arts students. Enrolment of Science, Engineering/Technology, and Commerce/Management students were similar in percent (16%-18%) but less than Arts enrolment. Teacher Education and Medicine was again similar in enrolment (3%-4%). Enrolment in Agricultural courses was very less (0.55%). In all most all the faculties Boys enrolment was more than Girls enrolment. The average Boys enrolment was 58.47 percent whereas Girls enrolment was 41.53 percent. In all

Table 4: Faculty-wise student’s enrolment in Indian Higher Education (2010-11)

Faculty	Total	%	Boys	%	Girls	%
Arts	6177730	36.39	3273000	52.98	2905000	47.02
Science	3127042	18.42	1778000	56.86	1349000	43.14
Commerce/Management	2904752	17.11	1768000	60.87	1137000	39.14
Education	569961	3.36	246000	43.16	324000	56.85
Engineering/Technology	2862439	16.86	2062000	72.04	801000	27.98
Medicine	652533	3.85	322000	49.35	330000	50.57
Agriculture	93166	0.55	68000	72.99	25000	26.83
Veterinary Science	27423	0.16	20000	72.93	7000	25.53
Law	327146	1.93	243000	74.28	84000	25.68
Others	232691	1.37	145000	62.31	87000	37.39
Total	16974883	100	9925000	58.47	7049000	41.53

(Source: Higher Education at a Glance, UGC, 2012)

most all the faculties, Girls enrolment was less than the Boys except Education and Medicine. Girl's enrolment in Engineering & Technology, Agriculture, Veterinary Sc, Law, and Commerce & Management was very less (25%-39%).

Analysing the above data we found that still we have to give more attention for the development of science subject. To cope with the contemporary development of the society, the subjects like; Science, Engineering and Technology, and Management need to be developed. On the other side Teacher Education and Medicine is also equally neglected. For the sound development of a country its educational standard and public health is very crucial factor to develop. We have to re-think, how to broaden this two faculties. Girl's enrolment is always inferior with comparison to Boys, which is not a good sign for a progressive country; it needs to adopt some strategies for achieving equal participation of both Boys and Girls. In India, more than 70 percent population depends upon agriculture but student's enrolment in agriculture is just 0.55 percent. It is a very disgusting fact for us. It needs to enlarge agricultural colleges all over the States and Regions. Girl's need to be motivated for the faculty of Science, Engineering, Agriculture, Commerce, and Law.

Table 5, reflected the data related to students enrolment in different levels. It was found that more than 86 percent students had enrolled in Graduate level, only 12 percent were coming for Post-Graduation level, and one percent had enrolled in Diploma/Certificate courses. The status of research in Higher Education found very week. It was observed that only one percent students had enrolled in research. Most of the researches had conducted in Science subjects (34%5). 31 percent students had registered for research in Arts subjects. Researches in other field had found negligible. In UG/PG/Research, again Boys enrolment had observed more than the Girls. The difference in different levels observed 18-20 percent.

It is a crucial fact before the intellectuals, that enrolment in researches in higher education is very less. We observed that most of the good researches conducted in overseas countries are in the Universities, but somewhere we are not understood the fact. It's good sign that UGC and the other Academic Bodies have increased their research fund tremendously in the 12th plan. We

Table 5: Level-wise Students Enrolment in Indian Higher Education (2010-11)

Level	Total	%	Boys	%	Girls	%
Graduate	14616473	86.11	8580000	58.70	6037000	41.30
Post-Graduate	2049124	12.07	1167000	56.95	882000	43.04
Research	137668	0.81	81000	58.84	56000	40.68
Diploma/Certificate	171618	1.01	98000	57.10	73000	42.54
Total	16974883	100.00	9926000	58.47	7048000	41.52

(Source: Higher Education at a Glance, UGC, 2012)

also have experienced that the faculties in Universities and Colleges are less interested to apply for research. Enrolment of girls is always an unhappy experience in Indian Higher Education. A clear gap of 18-20 percent is not an impressive result for any nation. The social construct of the country may be hampered by this type of result. Higher Education Authorities should think over it.

Table 6, discusses growth of teaching staffs in colleges and universities. It was observed that since independence till the end of eleventh five year plan; a continuous expansion of the numbers of teachers had taken place. It was 23549 in 1950-51, but in 2010-11 it expanded 35 times and reached at the number of 816966. It was observed that in every 10 years more than 185 percent of teaching staffs had expanded. But still many colleges and Universities are running with scarcity of staffs.

Table 6: Growth of Teaching Staff (Universities & Colleges) in Indian Higher Education (2010-11)

Year	Number of Teaching Staff	Percentage of Increase
1950-51	23549	-
1960-61	59673	253.4
1970-71	128876	215.97
1980-81	193341	150.02
1990-91	263125	136.09
2000-01	411628	156.44
2010-11	816966	198.47

(Source: Higher Education at a Glance, UGC, 2012)

Maintaining better teaching-learning process at the higher education institute depends up on three things, a better curriculum, well qualified teaching staffs, and supporting staffs. Though the expansion of teachers in Indian Higher Education has occurred but it needs to reach at its apex point as many HEIs are still running with shortage of staffs. National Knowledge Commission has rightly pointed out this issue and in the coming 12th five year plan most of the HEIs are expected to get huge human resources. The initiation has been started from the last three years when many central universities had permitted to establish.

Table 7, highlighted the issues of expenditure in Higher Education. Data revealed that since independence to till today we have we have allocated an average of 2.99 percent of GDP in education. It was observed that in 2010 budget 41.8 percent of education budget had used for elementary education, 25.6 percent for secondary education, and 32.3 percent for higher education. To make it more specific the fact came to the context that in last five year (2006-2010) we have used an average of 1.18 percent of GDP as expenditure in Higher Education. When we compare our expenditure of Higher Education with other countries like USA, China we found it is very less.

Good finance in education results better development of the country. We perhaps unable to realise this, continuously, we allot a less percentage of GDP expenditure in education and in the same way in higher education. A developing country needs to spend more in education so that the people will be educated and skilled, those will enhance the productivity of the nation in different ways. It is time to introspect and allot a very good budget for educational expenditure of the country men.

Suggestions and Implications

When we go through the above data, its analysis and discussion, we find many weaknesses, which need to remove. Let us discuss some of the suggestions and implications of higher education for minimising the gaps and establishing better participation of learned society.

Definite plan should be prepared for establishing new universities and colleges. Population percentage and parameter must be taken into consideration for establishing

new institutes. The ratio of University and Colleges, Higher Education Institutes and students strength should be maintained equal.

- Budget of research should be increased in the level of UGC, Regulatory Body, Other research funding agencies, Universities, and at the College level. The faculties may be motivated for some individual research work in his/her department itself. A very flexible policy should be adopted for any research grant.
- Regular curriculum review need to be done in the university level and it should be according to standard national curriculum.
- Care should be taken for establishing a better teaching-learning environment in the institutes. Varieties of methods and media should be used in the higher education institutes.
- Regular seminar/symposia/workshop/conferences/fieldtrips should be organised in departmental level.
- Poor socio economic status and eligible girls should be motivated to enrol in higher education institutes by making her admission fees free.
- There is the need of establishing more agricultural institutes in each states and regions for motivating the students towards agricultural education.
- The recommendation of NKC should be followed religiously and care should be taken to reach at the GER of 15 percent by the end of the year 2015.

Table 7: Expenditure on Higher Education in India (% of GDP)

Year	Expenditure on Education (% of GDP)		Expenditure on Higher Edu. (% of GDP)
1950-51	0.64		-
1960-61	1.48		-
1970-71	2.11		-
1980-81	2.98		-
1990-91	3.84		-
2000-01	4.28		-
2006-07	3.64		1.14
2007-08	3.4		1.09
2008-09	3.77		1.23
2009-10	3.85	Sector	1.25
		Elementary Edu	41.8
		Secondary Edu	25.6
		Higher & Tech. Edu.	32.3
		Adult Edu.	0.3

(Source: Higher Education at a Glance, UGC, 2012)

- There is the need of increasing GDP percentage for higher education. It may be 7-8 percent for over all education and 3-4 percent for higher education.
- There is a hue and cry situation of the strength of faculties in higher education institutes. Even it has observed that, many universities, departments, and colleges are running with rapid scarcity of faculties. Most of the departments are running with ad hoc or contract staffs. Even if the departments having the courses like UG, PG, M.Phil, Ph.D., are running with two/three regular faculties. It seems, there is the need of rapid enhancement of faculties in the higher education institutes.
- Less enrolment of girls is also another factor for maintaining a balance social development. As we have earlier discussed that there is a clear gap of 18-20 percent enrolment of girls. UGC should come out with a suitable plan and procedure for motivating girls towards higher education.

Examination reform should be carried out in the universities and colleges as a result; academic session should be maintained, conduction and declaration of result should be done in proper time, copies should be checked carefully, less cases should come for revaluation, practical/projects interview should be conducted just before the theory exam.

- Humanities, Arts, and Science subjects should be given equal importance in higher education.
- There is the need of establishment of more government medical and teacher educations in the States and regions. As we realise that health and education are the prime focus for any nation.

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