

6.HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM IN INDIA-THE ROAD AHEAD

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ABSTRACT:

Higher Education in India has evolved itself at various historical times-ancient, medieval, colonial and post- independence period. Besides analyzing type wise educational institutions (universities and colleges), gender wise enrolment since 1950-51 has also been dealt. Significant expansion in Higher Education has been witnessed since Independence. In this context, it is pertinent to consider the issue of expected future trends in student enrolment in Higher Education for devising effective programmes and policies by the Government of India in the future education planning process. The important issue that commands immediate attention is: In the light of current gross enrolment rate (GER) in Higher Education in the country, what would be the projected enrolment if the current policies and programmes continue? Invariably, the article discusses the impact of demographic changes on the future of accessibility to Higher Education. The subject of demographics is a subject of concern for planners, educationalist, researchers etc. Therefore, an attempt has been made to discuss, and project population and enrolment in Higher Education so as to understand the nature of future structure of the Higher Education system in the country. Old age encompasses increasing needs for which additional government resources are required for pension, healthcare and other related services. The latter half of the article evaluates the effect of projected population of senior citizens on policies determining Higher Education in the country.

INTRODUCTION:

The Indian Higher Education system is considered to be the world's third largest, preceded by China and United States. The enrolment at a particular level of education, however, is determined primarily by the size and structure of population in the relevant age group. The age-cohort for Higher Education in India stands at 18-23 years. The human capital theory asserts the relevance of a highly educated citizenry and skilled workforce so as to contribute towards economic growth in a country. Higher Education, as it stands today, has evolved through the ages and much progress is anticipated in the future.

OVERVIEW OF INDIAN HIGHER EDUCATION:

Modern system of Higher Education, as it exists today, has emerged after being evolved for ages passing through

various periods, viz. ancient, mediaeval, colonial. The nature of Higher Education after independence has been quite different than that of pre independence period.

HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE PRE-INDEPENDENCE PERIOD:

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g ancient period, Higher Education was mainly religious. The basic religions were Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism. Religion-based education in ancient India had an outstanding role in creating, transforming and transmitting knowledge to the people in society. In this ancient system of education (the guru-shishya parampara) all children whether normal, gifted or physically or intellectually disabled were taught together, be it under a shady tree or in the Gurukul, Agrahars and Viharas, and were seen as worthy of the benefits of education each according to her or his abilities. It was inclusive education in the truest sense.

The mediaeval era in the history of India signified a major phase of social and cultural synthesis. Early Indian education and many of its centres continued in the middle ages, but Madrasas emerged as important centres of education. Thus, the early Indian tradition of learning co-existed with the newly instituted Madrasas, making both continuity and change important features of Higher Education during the period. Banaras, Mithila and Nadia became centres of intellectual activities in mediaeval India. There were usually three conduits through which knowledge was acquired - Maktab, Madrasa and Khangah. While Maktab was a place where elementary education was imparted, higher learning was pursued at a Madrasa and religious education or theology was discussed at a Khangah, the birth place of Sufism or spiritualism in Islam.

It is generally accepted that the current university system in India is a creation of the British colonial influence. The Britishers set up network of schools to impart western education in English medium. The watersheds of the period are the McCauley's Policy of 1835 to promote European learning through English and Wood's Education Despatch which recommended the establishment of modern universities in India. As a consequence, three universities in the presidency towns of Bombay, Calcutta, and Madras were set up in 1857. The then existing 27 colleges were affiliated to these three universities. The main function of these universities was to conduct examinations and award degrees, while teaching was to be done in the affiliated colleges. This was, in fact, an adoption of the London University model.

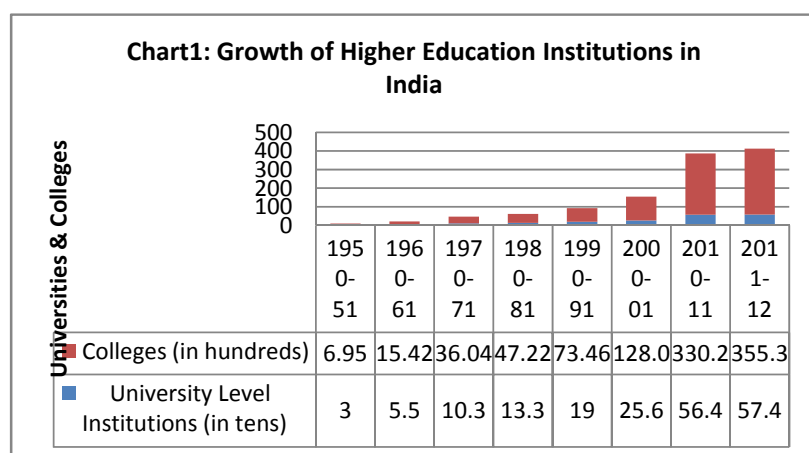
HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE POST-INDEPENDENCE PERIOD:

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India achieved freedom in 1947, the Department of Education (founded in 1945) was converted into a full-fledged Ministry of Education. Higher education was the first sector of

education to attract the attention of the Union Government. As a first step, the University Education Commission (1948-49) was appointed, which recommended rapid expansion of Higher Education in India on a priority basis. The Radhakrishnan Commission (1948) recommended the reconstruction of university education as it was essential to meet the demand for scientific, technical and other human resource need for the socio-economic development of the country. The University Grants Commission (UGC) came into existence in 1956 and assumed the most important role in the co-ordination and development of universities in India. The Commission also made several other recommendations having significant bearing on future development of Higher Education in the country. The National Policy on Education (NPE) of independent India was passed in 1968 but had to be reformulated in 1985 since it lacked financial and organizational support. NPE (1986) formally stated equality of opportunity as a goal of education for the first time and the “education for the handicapped” also became a matter of concern.

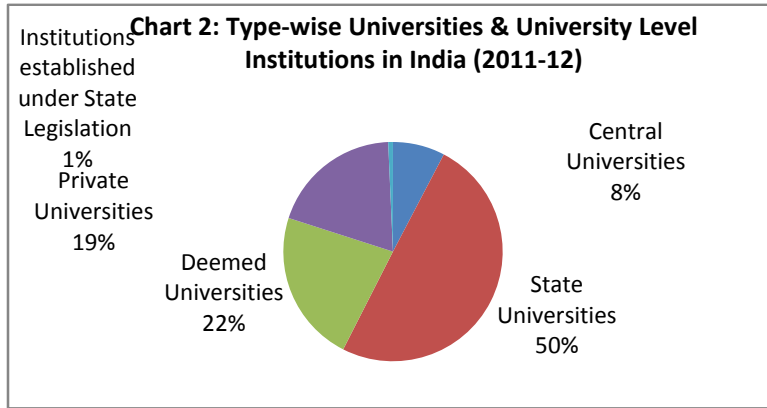
The planned expansion of Higher Education began after independence in the year 1951. While there were 30 universities and 695 colleges in the year 1950-51, their number grew to 574 and 35539 respectively in 2011-12 (Chart1).



Source: From 1950-51 to 2010-11 from UGC, Higher Education at a Glance (2012) & 2011-12 from UGC, Annual Report, 2011-12.

The universities may be Central, State, Deemed or a Private University. While the Central and state universities are established by the Parliament and State Legislature respectively, the deemed universities are those established by the Central government after the recommendation has been made by the UGC. Private universities have been in vogue, particularly after the liberalisation regime followed by the Indian government in 1990. Such universities have been established under the state legislature. There are certain other universities of national importance, established by the State and Central Legislature. The Universities comprise 44 Central, 286 State, 111 State Private Universities, 129 Deemed to

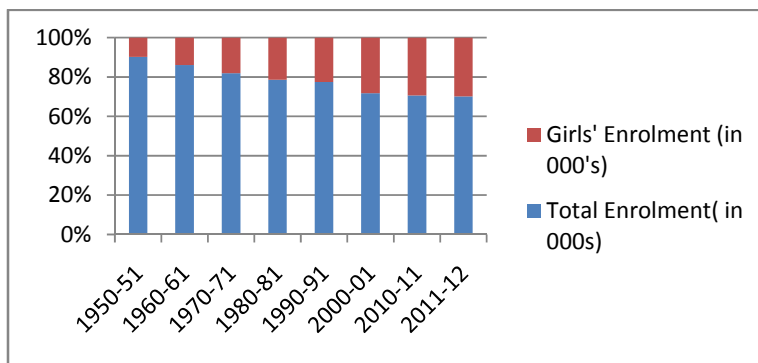
be Universities and 4 Institutions established under the State Legislations by the end of March, 2012. It is also notable that the state universities have a dominant share in terms of the total number and therefore, can be considered as a significant feature of the University system in India. The relative share of universities in 2011-12 is depicted in Chart 2.



Source: UGC, Annual Report, 2011-12.

The growth in the institutions of higher learning in our country is the response to the rising student enrolment over the years. The growth of student enrolment since 1950-51 is depicted in Chart 3.

Chart 3: Growth of Student Enrolment (%) in Higher Education in India

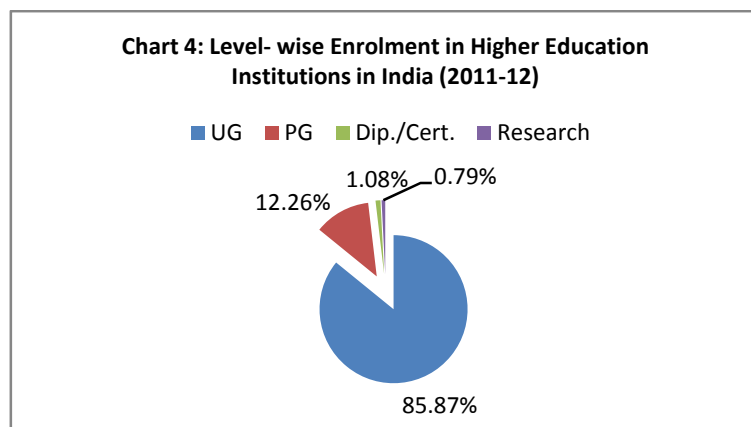


Source: From 1950-51 to 2010-11 from UGC, Higher Education at a Glance (2012) & 2011-12 from UGC, Annual Report, 2011-12.

The total enrolment in the institutions of higher learning in 1950-51 was 397000, with enrolment of girls being 43,000 (10.83 percent). There has been a tremendous growth in enrolments which increased to 20327478 with enrolment of girls being 8672431 (42.66 percent) in the year 2011-12 (UGC, Annual Report, 2011-12).

ENROLMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION BY LEVELS:

The Higher Education consists of students enrolled in either University Departments/ University Colleges or colleges affiliated to some Indian university. According to UGC, Annual Report, 2011, as on 31st March, 2012, out of total students enrolled, about 28.07 lakhs (13.81 percent) were in University Departments/ University Colleges while about 175.20 lakhs (86.19 percent) were in affiliated colleges. Higher education is imparted at various levels of study (undergraduate, post-graduate, research and diploma/certificate) in the country. The level-wise Higher Education Enrolment for 2011-12 is shown in Chart 4.



Note: UG-Under-Graduation, PG-Post- Graduation, Dip./Cert.- Diploma/Certificate.

Source: UGC, Annual Report, 2011-12, P 342.

The major share of enrolment (85.87 percent) is at the undergraduate level while the post-graduate enrolment is 12.26 percent with the proportion of enrolment in research and diploma/certificate courses being around 1 percent each of the total enrolment during 2011-12.

DEMOGRAPHIC PROJECTIONS:

Demography is the study of human populations in relation to the changes brought about by the interplay of births, deaths, and migration. The future population size, distribution, fertility and mortality levels in a country would determine the structure of future Higher Education. Population projection provides a broad framework to the planners and policy makers for the detail planning of different segments of the population, viz. age and sex composition, rural-urban population, school going population, labour force, housing etc. It is of paramount importance to project the population with the help of the present trend and size of population for effective administration of future plans and policies. The latest projections available so far are those made by the Census of India 2001 Report of the Technical Group on "Population Projections for India and States 2021-2026" made in 2006. This provides information only on the population totals by sex in 5 year age bracket groups like 0-4, 5-9, 10-14 and so on. For the purpose of estimating the population in the age group of 18- 23 years for Higher Education study, the Sprague Multipliers have been used, which are certain coefficients deduced by Glover, J.W. (1921) on the basis of a graduation formula devised by Sprague. These multipliers yield population in single years by enabling splitting of the population in conventional five year age groups. The total population along with population in the age group 18- 23 years from 2001 to 2026 has thus been projected as shown in Table 1.

Table1: Projected population (18-23 years) as on 1st March 2001-2026 (in 000's)

Year	Total Projected Population (000 ³)	Population (18-23 years)			% of population (18-23 years) to total population
		Male	Female	Total	
2001	1,028,610	59055.08	53719.15	112774.18	10.96
2006	1,112,186	69442.60	61623.93	131065.79	11.78
2011	1,192,506	75758.28	68200.90	143959.18	12.07
2016	1,268,961	74860.16	69703.11	144562.54	11.39
2021	1,339,741	72127.15	65802.98	137929.46	10.30
2026	1,399,838	71139.20	63012.71	134150.50	9.58

Source: Report of the Technical Group on Population Projections for India and States, 2001-2026, National Commission on Population,

 New Delhi, 2006.

The population of India is expected to rise to 126896 thousand in 2016 and further to 1399838 thousand in the year 2026. The population in the age of 18 to 23 (the age cohort for Higher Education) is expected to rise to roughly 144563 thousand by 2016 by which time it is seen to be stagnating. It thereafter shows a declining trend, the projected value being 134151 thousand in 2026. In percentage terms, 18- 23 age cohort is expected to increase to 12.07 percent in 2011, but is likely to gradually fall to 11.39 percent in 2016 and further to 9.58 percent in 2026. Enrolment ratio in Higher Education is associated to a large degree on the composition of population in the 18-23 years. Enrolment projection of the future trends deserves to be cautiously followed for guidance rather than forecasting purposes. The target for GER by the Planning Commission has been 21 percent to be achieved by the end of Twelfth Five Year Plan with an interim target set for 15 percent by 2011-12, the terminal year of the Eleventh Plan and further for 30 percent by 2026. The projections made about future enrolment in higher education in the country have been done following the Planning Commission's targeted GER (Table 2).

Table 2: Projected Enrolment (based on Planning Commission targets (in 000's))

Year	Total Population in age group-18-23 years	Gross Enrolment Ratio (%) based on Planning Commission's Target	Projected Enrolment
2001	112774.2	N.A.	N.A.
2006	131065.8	N.A.	N.A.
2011	143959.2	15	2159388
2016	144562.5	21	3035813
2020	144999	30	4349970

Note: Projected Population for 2020 has been derived from the previous table, taking Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) of 0.08 percent between 2011 and 2016.

Source: MHRD, Deptt. of Higher Education, Consolidated Working Group Report of the Deptt. of Higher Education for XII Five Year Plan on Higher Education, Technical Education and Private Sector Participation including PPP in Higher Education.

It is observed from the table that enrolment is likely to increase from 2159388 thousand in 2011 to 3035813 thousand in 2016 with increase in GER from 15 percent to 21 percent respectively. In 2026, student enrolment of 4359970 thousand would result with GER of 30 percent targeted by the Planning Commission. UGC, on the other hand assigned a target of 15 percent by the end of the XI Five Year Plan (2007-2011). The targeted lower band of GER in Higher Education is fixed at 23.5 percent and the upper band at 27 percent by the end of the XII Five Year Plan (2011-2016) shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Projected Enrolment by the end of XII Five Year Plan (based on UGC targets) (in 000's)

Terminal Year of XII Five Year Plan	Total Population in age group-18-23 years	Target at the lower end		Target at the upper end	
		Gross Enrolment Ratio (%) based on UGC Target	Projected Enrolment	Gross Enrolment Ratio (%) based on UGC Target	Projected Enrolment
2016	144562.5	23.5	3397220	27	3903188

Source: UGC (2011), Inclusive & Qualitative Expansion of Higher Education, XII Five-Year Plan, 2012-2016.

The data signifies that when compared to 2011 enrolment levels, 1237832 thousand additional students would enter the Higher Education system in 2016 if target GER is taken to be 23.5 percent. If the target GER of 27 percent is adopted, 1743801 thousand students are likely to be added by the same criterion. So in order to achieve the target, the primary objective of the XII Five Year Plan would be expansion of Higher Education in the country. MHRD carried out an all India survey on Higher Education in 2010-11 in order to find the status of Higher Education in the country. The survey included students enrolled in universities and colleges in the country as regular and those in open universities (distance education). It showed GER of 15 percent in 2009-10 (provisional) and estimated GER of 18.8 percent for 2010-11. It would be quite logical to believe that India no longer has elite Higher

Education system (GER of less than 15 percent) as GER has already surpassed 15 percent, if we take into account the estimates of MHRD. Infact the elite-mass-universal access to Higher Education model was propounded by Trow, M. (1974). Positive futuristic approach suggests that India would gradually transform into mass Higher Education system (GER between 15 percent and 50 percent). The future scenario of Higher Education in India is depicted in Table 4. In the year 2021, however, estimated 4551672 thousand students are expected to be in the system on the basis of the projected GER of 33 percent. If we expect enrolments to increase modestly, there would definitely be universal Higher Education system (GER more than 50 percent) by 2026 as student enrolment ratios would increase nearly to 51 percent. The population in the age cohort that is projected to be in the system would be around 6841675 thousand by the same year. Such a scenario is based on the assumption of CAGR of 9.33 percent between GER for 2016 (21 percent) and 2020 (30 percent) targeted by the Planning Commission.

Table 4: Future projected Higher Education enrolment in India (in 000's)

Year	Total Population in age group-18-23 years	Gross Enrolment Ratio (%)	Projected Enrolment
2011	143959.2	15	2159388
2016	144562.5	21	3035813
2021	137929.5	33	4551672
2026	134150.5	51	6841675

Source: Author's calculations

Increased enrolment ratios would demand greater resources by the Higher Education institutions so as to channelize them towards desired goals. MHRD in the reports titled "Analysis of Budgeted Expenditure on Education" gives the sector-wise allocation on education made by the Education Department and certain other government departments for various years. The reports reflect that the expenditure on Higher Education by the Education Department has increased marginally from 0.39 percent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 1993-94 to only nearly 0.40 percent in 2009-10 (Budget Estimates). The GDP on education however increased from 2.96 percent in 1993-94 to nearly 4.66 percent in 2009-10 (BE). The GDP allocations to education in general, and Higher Education in particular, are still far below the recommended levels advocated by most of the commissions and reports from time

to time. The Kothari Commission (1964-66) recommended 6 per cent of GDP to be earmarked for education. Similarly, the National Knowledge Commission (NKC) in 2006 also favoured 6 percent of GDP on education with at least 1.5 percent, if not 2 percent on Higher Education which was endeavoured to be achieved by 2012.

Besides projecting large student age population in Higher Education, projections also accompany increasing elderly population in the future. Obviously, additional resources in the social sector on pension, healthcare and other related services for the elderly would be required. Elderly or old age consists of ages nearing or surpassing the average life span of human beings. Government of India adopted 'National Policy on Older Persons' in January, 1999. The policy defines 'senior citizen' or 'elderly' as a person who is of the age of 60 years or above. (Central Statistics Office, 2011). Table 5 shows the gradual rise in the projected elderly population in India.

Table 5: Elderly Population (60+ Age Group) in India (in 000's)

Year	Total Projected Population	60+ age group population	& of elderly population to total
2001	1,028,610	70686	6.9
2006	1112187	83580	7.5
2011	1192507	98470	8.3
2016	1268961	118099	9.3
2021	1339741	143244	10.7
2026	1399838	173182	12.4

Source: Report of the Technical Group on Population Projections for India and States, 2001-2026, National Commission on Population, New Delhi, 2006.

The perusal of the table indicates that from 6.87 percent in 2001, the proportion of India's projected population above 60 years would account for 12.4 percent of the total population in 2026, nearly doubling in size. The absolute number of the elderly would rise up from 70686 thousand in 2001 to 173182 thousand by 2026. Such demographic changes may be owing to improved medical facilities and well-being of this population sub-group. In the future, increasing aged population would require greater monetary allocation by the government on health care expenses besides provision for pension.

Some of the concerns of the Government of India, other than looking after the aged population, have constantly been issues in the social sector like sanitation, water, defence,

etc. which seek government funds. Besides, Right to Education ought to be attended well with increased allocation of resources for elementary education in the future thereby making inroads into the allocation for the Higher Education sector. It ought to be a matter of concern for the planners and the government to look for measures to finance future Higher Education. Considering the success of Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) of several internationally acclaimed universities and institutions, which is an online course aiming at large-scale participation and open access via the web, MOOCs are likely to be the future of Higher Education in India with certain modifications dovetailed for our education system.

SUGGESTIONS:

With the need for allocation for Higher Education competing fiercely with monetary needs of the elderly population along with other social sectors, efforts at increasing enrolment rates in the future would encompass innovations in funding and resource allocation for which a few suggestions in this regard are as follows:

- 1) Continuous research should be promoted and demographic studies need to be carried out to study the needs for the elderly and find out alternative avenues for resource funding and modification in policies and strategies for achieving the targeted growth in Higher Education.
- 2) The government as the provider of the wherewithal for the citizenry, must increase educational infrastructure in the country. The NKC estimated the need for 1,500 universities by 2020 in the country which appears to be highly ambitious and needs matching resources to strike a balance for fulfilling the aspirations of the next generation vis-a-vis those of the elderly. The country had 564 universities in 2010-11 and the required need is about three-fold.
- 3) Besides traditional university system in the country, Information and Communication Technology (ICT) needs to be heavily deployed through encouragement to Open Universities. The brick and mortar university system needs to be broken down and followed up with the world- wide revolution in Higher Education taking place using ICT. With technological advances of broadband connectivity and future 3G/4G Communication Technology penetrating the block level in the districts, the present class-room with limited seating capacity would become a virtual limitless one with the capacity to take in as many students and seekers of Higher Education as are available. The concept of anytime, anywhere education would metamorphose into anyone, anywhere, anytime Higher Education regardless of caste, creed, financial capacity or gender and then the thirst of the seekers of Higher Education would be quenched with equal opportunity for all.
- 4) Quality in Higher Education through greater number of accredited universities and colleges also needs to be addressed. Besides making accreditation by a regulatory authority, the peer review by eminent educationists should also be inculcated by devising a system in place so that the hapless student is not taken by surprise and transparency in private sector is also put in place.

5) Public-Private- Partnership (PPP) model in Higher Education would also bring about efficiency in management, governance and financing. The physical available resources of some of the private universities/colleges which are on the verge of closure can be nationalised in public interest and can be brought under the control of the government for better allocation and optimum utilization by some of the existing premiere institutions for opening up their branches in the places of need.

6) Privatisation would shoulder responsibility in the provisioning of Higher Education in the future. The government needs to regulate fees in such institutions so that high fee structure does not discourage students from pursuing Higher Education in the future. There is also an urgent need for the corporates to allocate greater resources for larger common good in tune with their avowed goal of corporate social responsibility.

7) The Foreign Universities are likely to cater to an elite section of students in the future if the proposed Foreign Educational Providers Bill (2012) is passed in the parliament. This might involve a churning on account of the complacency that has set in some of our Institutions of Excellence on account of the complacency seeping on account of lack of locally available other institutions of world-class. Good practices from world class Higher Education Institutions should be unhesitatingly adopted into our system so that some of the Indian ones are also categorised as world-class, an issue which has been rankling the policy planners and educationists recently and India too, can literally “Think Global, Act Local”.

One of the greatest achievements for Indian Higher Education has been the recent announcement made by the UGC whereby foreign universities would be allowed to set up and offer wide set of programs in India under certain rules and regulations (Economic Times, September 24th, 2013).

CONCLUSIONS:

The government responsibility for the socio-economic concerns of the elderly population cannot be brushed off, although a sound policy ought to be devised for increased provisioning of resources to the Higher Education in the country. Such augmented resources would become possible only when there is national will coupled with adoption of technological breakthroughs in the Higher Education system in the country. The future of Higher Education in terms of accessibility appears to be bright, as the projections portrey. However, the projections have been based on assumptions of stable economic, social and political situation requiring continuity of thought process for Higher Education growth in the country, which are likely to have implicit effect upon the future demographics and learners’ base of Indian population. An occurrence of a change in either political or economic event is bound to cause changes in the demographic patterns of future population. Thus, forecasting probably ignores possible events which might occur in the future. In order to project about Higher Education scenario, much research ought to be encouraged which is bound to

highlight certain structural changes that would shape Higher Education system in the country. Accelerated efforts however need to be made to adapt to the changes, technology being the key mover so that the country accelerates towards achieving the prime status in the world stage in overall growth and development.

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