

REVAMPING HIGHER EDUCATION IN INDIA: A STUDY OF NEW EDUCATION
POLICY

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Abstract:

This research paper has analysed the need for revamp of higher education and importance of new education policy. Indicators of education development in the country such as Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER), Students-Teacher Ratio, Gender Parity Index (GPI), Expenditure on Education and Research, which are useful in making education more quality and research development, were calculated and analysed from the data collected from All India Survey on Higher Education Institutions (AISHE). The new education policy envisages transformation of higher education by spending around 6 percent of GDP on education and setting up a National Higher Education Commission (NHEC) and National Research Foundation and transforming education institutes into large multidisciplinary universities, higher education clusters, and autonomous degree awarding colleges.

Key words: GER, GPI, NHEC, National Research Foundation

Introduction:

India is an energetic country with younger population and having provided professionals and skilled persons for all the major developed sectors in various countries of the world, such as software, medical, mechanical, engineering sectors. Indian education system is third largest system in the world in terms of students' enrolment. Though Right to Education Act and government other initiatives and participation of private sector has brought about a revolution in the education system of the country with statistics revealing a staggering enrolment in schools over the last four years, country's school and higher education system still suffering with inadequate budget allocation, lack of infrastructure, poor quality of the faculty, inadequate research facilities and poor performance of institutions in global ranking system. It is also evidenced by lack of employability, skill developed and value-added courses in all levels.

Major Challenges and Problems in Higher Education System:

Some of the major challenges currently faced by the higher education system in India include:

- a. Disappointing enrolment ratio in fragmented higher educational ecosystem in India comparing with other developing Countries. According to the All-India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) Report 2021, the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) increased to 27.1% which a marginal growth over last year's growth 26.3%. The GER is quite low as compared to developed countries as well as developing countries. The total enrolment in Higher education was 3.42 crores in 2014-15, 3.74 crores in 2018-19 and it was increased to 3.85 crores by 2019-20. The enrolment growth rate during 2018-19 and 2019-20 was 3.04 percent.
- b. Especially in HEIs, less emphasis on the development of cognitive skills and learning outcomes. There is also less priority given for teacher quality and students-teacher ratio (PTR) which led to ambiguity in the system. Pupil Teacher Ratio (PTR) in Universities and Colleges is 28, if regular mode enrolment is considered whereas PTR for Universities and its Constituent Units is 18 for regular mode. Pupil Teacher Ratio (PTR) over the years is shown in the table. State-wise PTR for All Institutions, University/Colleges and University/its constituent colleges for the last 5 years taking the enrolment through Regular Mode of education. It is pertinent to mention that PTR for the year 2016-17 and 2017-18, is showing declining trend.

Teacher-Students Ratio for Regular Enrolment

Year	Universities/Colleges	Universities/Its Constituency Units
2015-16	21	16
2016-17	25	19
2017-18	30	20
2018-19	29	18
2019-20	28	18

Source: All India Survey on Higher Education 2019-20

- c. A rigid policy prevailed with separation of disciplines, with early specialisation and streaming of students in to narrow areas of study
- d. Limited access particularly to students of socially and economically disadvantaged areas, with few HEIs that teach in local languages.
- e. Most of the HEIs had limited teacher and institutional autonomy with less academic flexibility.
- f. Inadequate mechanisms former it-based career management and progression of faculty and students and insufficient funds allocation for it. During 2015-16 to 2018-19, the country spent less than 3 per cent of its GDP on education sector. Thus, public education spending could not reach the benchmark set by government education policies. This led to poor facilities and lack of accommodation, poor laboratory and research facilities in higher educational institutions even after 70 years of independence.

Year	Expenditure as % of GDP	Expenditure as % of Budget
2013-14	3.1	1.47
2014-15	2.8	1.29
2015-16	2.8	1.43
2016-17	2.8	1.47
2017-18	2.9	1.62
2018-19	3.0	1.43

Source: Economic Survey 2018-19, Volume 2

Source: Union budget, GOI.

- g. Very less emphasis on research in all spheres at most universities and colleges and lack of research funding across disciplines since independence and poor research facilities also led to low teacher retention rate in the system. Poor infrastructural facilities and lack of qualified faculty are another issue in higher educational institutions. However, the government is focussing on improvement of these facilities, a greater number of institutions is suffering with lack of all facilities and less financial support. So, it is posing a challenge to them in retaining well qualified teachers in their institutions. The impact of poor facilities in schools/colleges can also be seen in students' dropout rates.
- h. Sub optimal governance and leadership of universities and colleges and an in effective regulatory system led to poor quality in education system, which is not enabling us to compete with the world.
- i. Large affiliating universities and autonomous colleges also resulting in low standard so funder-graduate as well as post-graduate education.

Transformation of HEIs through NEP:

The Education Policy lays more emphasis on the development of the creative potential of each student. It is based on the principle that education must develop not only cognitive capacities such as critical thinking and problem-solving capacities, but also social, ethical capacities and dispositions.

The New Educational Policy (NEP) in 2020, announced by the Indian Government, envisages major initiatives for the transformation of school and higher education in India in the following manner:

The budget allocation for education will be increased to 6 percentage of GDP. This may cater the financial needs for the development of academic and research activities in higher education.

Establishment of National Higher Educational Commission (NHEC) and National Research Foundation (NRF) help in strengthening of HEIs and enable them to meet the challenges of the future as well as the aspirations.

Transforming Higher Educational Institutions into large multidisciplinary universities, higher education clusters and autonomous degree colleges may give liberation to HEIs in designing and developing the curriculum and co-curriculum with more focussing on skill and value-based education and to offer employability courses to their stakeholders, along with catering their students' educational needs.

The quality teaching is imperative, in order to attract learners to higher educational institutions. Currently, colleges and universities across the country are short on quality faculty. Country needs 3.3 million more teachers in educational institutions to improve the teacher-student ratio, from 1:28 to an ideal 1:15.

The teacher must be given more priority in the fundamental reforms in education system. The new policy must help to recruit the very best and bright esttoenter this most respectable teaching professional levels, by ensuring livelihood, respect, dignity, and autonomy, while also in stilling in the systematic methods of quality control and accountability.

There is a need for the implementation of innovative practices and transformational approach to make Indian educational system more relevant and competitive at national and international level. A quality higher education must enable personal accomplishment and enlightenment, constructive public engagement and to do productive contribution to the society. It must prepare students for more meaningful and satisfying lives and work roles and enable economic independence.

Government must take initiatives for the collaborations and generate linkages between Indian higher education institutions and international institutions and also linkages between national research laboratories and research centres of top institutions of the world for better quality and collaborative research. Then the graduate students and research scholars can achieve excellence, gain deeper knowledge of subject so that they will settle with a best career after recruitment in the companies. Then the higher education institutions will succeed in producing globally capable younger generation with more diversified qualities.

This policy envisions the re-energising of the higher education system to over come these challenges and there by deliver high-quality higher education, with equity and inclusion. The policy's vision includes the following key measures to address the above challenges in present system:

- (a) Transforming Higher Educational Institutions into large multidisciplinary universities, higher education clusters and autonomous colleges may give liberation to HEIs in designing and developing the curriculum and co-curriculum with more focussing on skill and value-based education and to offer employability courses to their stakeholders, along with catering the students' educational needs.
- (b) Moving towards faculty and institutional autonomy for universities and its affiliated institutions.
- (c) Revamping curriculum, pedagogy, assessment, and student support for enhanced student experiences and skills.
- (d) Through merit-appointments and career progression based on teaching, research, and service, it can reaffirm the integrity of faculty and institutional leadership positions.
- (e) By establishing a National Research Foundation, allocate funds for outstanding peer-reviewed research and to develop seed research in universities and colleges.
- (f) Governance of HEIs by high qualified independent board will give more academic and administrative autonomy to the institutes.
- (g) Regulation by a single regulatory authority for higher education.

- (h) Increased access, equity, and inclusion through above measures, provide greater opportunities for outstanding public education, online education and Open Distance Learning (ODL) and scholarships by private/philanthropic universities for disadvantaged and underprivileged students will also be ensured.
- (i) Internationalisation of education includes the various initiatives which will also help in having large numbers of international students studying in India and provide greater mobility to students in India who may wish to visit, study at, transfer credits to, or carryout research at institutions abroad and vice versa.
- (j) Provide more financial assistance and scholarships to socio-economically disadvantaged students and enhance access by establishing more high-quality HEIs in aspirational districts and Special Education Zones containing larger numbers of Socially and Economically Disadvantaged Groups (SEDGs)
- (k) Provide education with new curricular and pedagogical structure, with emphasis on child care and education, the 10+2 structure of school curricula is to be replaced by a 5+3+3+4 structure corresponding to ages 3-8, 8-11,11-14 and 14-18 years respectively, in which UG course will be for 4 years instead of 3
- (l) A National Mission for Mentoring (NMM) provides a large pool of outstanding senior and retired faculty including those with the ability to teach in Indian languages- who would be willing to provide short and long-term mentoring and professional support to university and college teachers.
- (m) In order to enhance learning, assessment, planning and administration in education, the National Educational Technology Forum (NETF), an autonomous forum, will be created which provides a platform for the free exchange of ideas on the use of technology.

Conclusion:

In addition to teaching and research, HEIs will have other crucial responsibilities, which they will discharge through appropriate resourcing, incentives, and structures. Students are the prime take holders in the education system. A good and vibrant campus life is essential for high-quality teaching- learning processes. Towards this end, students will be given plenty of opportunities for participation in sports, culture and arts clubs, eco-clubs, activity clubs, community service projects and others. In every education institution, there shall be counselling systems for handling stress and emotional adjustments.

Another most important factor in the success of higher education institutions is the quality and engagement of its faculty. Understanding and acknowledging the criticality of faculty and limitations in achieving the goals of higher education, various initiatives have been introduced in the past six decades. However, despite these various improvements in the status of the academic profession, faculty motivation in terms of teaching, service and research in HEIs, remains far lower than the desired level. The various factors that lie behind low faculty motivation levels and poor-quality teaching must be addressed to ensure that each and every faculty member is happy, enthusiastic, engaged and motivated towards advancing the students, institution and profession of their own.

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