



HISTORY AND PROGRESS OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN INDIA

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Abstract :- India's higher education system is the third largest in the world, next to the United_States and China. ¹ The main governing body at the tertiary level is the University Grants Commission, which enforces its standards, advises the government, and helps coordinate between the centre and the state.² Accreditation for higher learning is overseen by 15 autonomous institutions established by the University Grants Commission - As per the latest 2011 Census, about 8.15% (68 million) of Indians are graduates, with Union Territories of Chandigarh and Delhi topping the list with 24.65% and 22.56% of their population being graduates respectively. ³ Indian higher education system has expanded at a fast pace by adding nearly 20,000 colleges and more than 8 million students in a decade from 2000–01 to 2010–11.⁴ As of 2016, India has 799 universities, with a break up of 49 central universities, 402 state universities, 124 deemed universities, 334 private universities, 5 institutions established and functioning under the State Act, and 75 Institutes of National Importance which include IIMs, AIIMS, IITs, IEST and NITs among others. Other institutions include 39,071 colleges as Government Degree Colleges and Private Degree Colleges, including 1800 exclusive women's colleges, functioning under these universities and institutions as reported by the UGC in 2016. ⁵ Colleges may be Autonomous, i.e. empowered to examine their own degrees, up to Ph.D._level in some cases, or non-autonomous, in which case their examinations are under

the supervision of the university to which they are affiliated; in either case, however, degrees are awarded in the name of the university rather than the college.

The emphasis in the tertiary level of education lies on science and technology. Indian educational institutions by 2004 consisted of many technology institutes.⁶ Distance learning and open education is also a feature of the Indian higher education system, and is looked after by the Distance Education Council. Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) is the largest university in the world by number of students, having approximately 3.5 million students across the globe.⁷ Some institutions of India, such as the Indian Institutes of Technology. Indian Institute of Engineering Science and Technology, National Institutes of Technology. Indian Institute of Science, Indian Institute of Science Education and Research University of Delhi, University of Calcutta (1857), University of Madras (1857), University of Mumbai (1857) and Jawaharlal Nehru University (1969), have been globally acclaimed for their standard of education.⁸ The IITs enrol about 8000 students annually and the alumni have contributed to both the growth of the private sector and the public sectors of India. However, Indian universities still lag behind universities such as Harvard, Cambridge, and Oxford.⁹ Indian higher education is in need of radical reforms. A focus on enforcing higher standards of transparency,¹⁰ Strengthening of the vocational and doctoral education pipeline, and professionalization of the sector through stronger institutional responsibility would help in reprioritizing efforts and working around the complexities.¹¹ The rise of IT sector and engineering education in India has boxed students into linear path without giving them a chance to explore and discover their passions. Concerted and collaborative efforts are needed in broaden student choices through liberal arts education.¹²

Inundation :-

India is believed to have had a functioning system of higher education as early as 1000 B.C. Unlike present day universities, these ancient learning centres were primarily concerned with dispersing Vedic education. The modern Indian education system finds its roots in colonial legacy. The British Government used the university system as a tool of cultural colonization—Colonial efforts in higher education were carried out initially through the East India Company, followed by the British parliament and later under direct British rule. The first institution of higher learning set up by the British East India Company was the Calcutta Madrasa in 1781. This was followed by the Asiatic Society of Bengal in 1784, Banaras Sanskrit College in 1791 and Fort William College in 1800. With the Charter Act of 1813,

the British Parliament officially declared Indian education as one of the duties of the state. The same act also removed restrictions on missionary work in British India, thus leading to the establishment of the evangelist Serampore College in 1818. Thomas Babington Macaulay's famously controversial Minute on Education (1835) reflected the growing support of a Western approach to knowledge over an Oriental one. Soon after, in 1857, the first three official universities were started in Bombay (Mumbai), Calcutta (Kolkata) and Madras (Chennai). These universities were modelled after the University of London and focused on English and the humanities.

The British control of the Indian education system continued until the Government of India Act of 1935 that transferred more power to provincial politicians and began the "Indianisation" of education. This period witnessed a rise in the importance of physical and vocational education as well as the introduction of basic education schemes. When India gained independence in 1947, the nation had a total of 241,369 students registered across 20 universities and 496 colleges. In 1948, the Indian Government established the University Education Commission to oversee the growth and improvement of higher education. In the 1960s and 1970s, the government increased its efforts to support higher education by not only setting up state-funded universities and colleges, but also providing financial assistance to private institutions, resulting in the creation of private aided/grant-in-aid institutions. Despite the leave of the British, Indian higher education continued to give importance to the languages and humanities until the 1980s. Institutes of professional education like the Indian Institutes of Technology, Regional Engineering Colleges and Indian Institutes of Management were some of the more prominent exceptions to this trend. These institutions drew inspiration from reputed universities in the United States and also received foreign funding. Post 1980s, the changing needs of the economy, a growing middle class and an increased strain on government financial resources, slowed the growth of state-funded higher educational institutions. This led to an increased role of the private sector in the education system.¹³

Universities :-

Universities in India have evolved in divergent streams with each stream monitored by an apex body, indirectly controlled by the Ministry of Human Resource Development and funded jointly by the state governments. There are most universities are administered by the States, however, there are 18 important universities called Central Universities, which are maintained by the Union Government. The increased funding of the central universities give

them an advantage over their state competitors. The University Grants Commission estimated that in 2013–14, 22,849 PhDs and 20,425 MPhil degrees were awarded. Over half of these were in the fields of Science, Engineering/Technology, Medicine and Agriculture. As of 2014–15, over 178,000 students were enrolled in research programs. Apart from the several hundred state universities, there is a network of research institutions that provide opportunities for advanced learning and research leading up to a Ph.D. in branches of science, technology and agriculture. Several have won international recognition. 25 of these institutions come under the umbrella of the CSIR – Council of Scientific and Industrial Research and over 60 fall under the ICAR – Indian Council of Agricultural Research. In addition, the DAE – Department of Atomic Energy, and other ministries support various research laboratories.

The National Institute of Technology, Indian Institutes of Information Technology. Indian Institutes of Technology, Netaji are among the most prestigious institutions within the technology sciences. Indian Institute of Science. And Indian Institute of Science Education and Research are the premier research institutes in the field of science education and research. There are several thousand colleges (affiliated to different universities) that provide undergraduate science, agriculture, commerce and humanities courses in India. Amongst these, the best also offer post graduate courses while some also offer facilities for research and Ph.D. studies. Technical education has grown rapidly in recent years. Of 27.3 million students enrolled in undergraduate studies, about 4.5 million are in engineering fields. With recent capacity additions, it now appears that the nation has the capability to graduate over 500,000 engineers (with 4-yr undergraduate degrees) annually, and there is also a corresponding increase in the graduation of computer scientists (roughly 50,000 with post-graduate degree). In addition, the nation graduates over 1.2 million scientists. Furthermore, each year, the nation is enrolling at least 350,000 in its engineering diploma programs (with plans to increase this by about 50,000). Thus, India's annual enrolment of scientists, engineers and technicians now exceeds 2 million. Across the country, tertiary enrolment rates have increased at a compound annual growth rate of 3.5% in the 5 years preceding 2016. Current enrolment stands at 34.58 million, over 15% more than the 29.2 million enrolled in 2011.

International league tables produced in 2006 by the London-based Times Higher Education Supplement confirmed Jawaharlal Nehru University place among the world's top 200 universities.²⁰ Likewise, THES 2006 ranked JNU's School of Social Sciences at the 57th position among the world's top 100 institutes for social sciences. In 2017, THES ranked

the Indian Institute of Science as the eighth best "small university" in the world. A small university was defined as one with less than 5000 students. In 2015, the institute also became the first Indian institute to make it to the top hundred in the THES list of engineering institutes. It was ranked 99. The Anna University, which is of the affiliated type, is a member of the Association of Indian Universities, the Association of Commonwealth Universities and Partner of UNESCO International Centre for Engineering Education (UICEE). UGC have accredited Anna University with Five Star Status in 2002 which is the highest rating. With proven capabilities both in academic and research areas, Anna University was able to receive this honour for a period of five years for excellence in technical education.

The University of Calcutta was the first multi-disciplinary university of modern India. According to The Times Higher Education Supplement's survey of the world's top arts and humanities universities, dated 10 November 2005, this university, ranked 39, was the only Indian university to make it to the top 50 list in that year. Other research institutes are the Saha Institute of Nuclear Physics, the Asiatic Society, and the Indian Statistical Institute.

The National Law School of India University is highly regarded, with some of its students being awarded Rhodes Scholarships to Oxford University, and the All India Institute of Medical Sciences is consistently rated the top medical school in the country. Indian Institutes of Management are the top management institutes in India.

The private sector is strong in Indian higher education. This has been partly as a result of the decision by the Government to divert spending to the goal of universalization of elementary education. Within a decade different state assemblies have passed bills for private universities, including Birla Institute of Technology and Science, Institute of Finance and International Management, Xavier Labour Relations Institute, ICFAI University, Dehradun, O. P. Jindal Global University and many more.

India is also the leading source of international students around the world. More than 200,000 Indian students are studying abroad. They are likely to be enrolled in master's programs with engineering focus which provide them opportunities to enhance career potential. In recent times several international institutes have also reached out to India offering their courses to Indian students. A US based institute in 2015 announced its accounting courses for Indian students.¹⁴

Accreditation :-

Indian law requires that universities be accredited unless created through an act of Parliament. Without accreditation, the government notes, "These fake institutions have no legal entity to call themselves as University Vishwvidyalaya and to award 'degree' which is not treated as valid for academic / employment purposes. "The University Grants Commission Act 1956 explains, "The right of conferring or granting degrees shall be exercised only by a University established or incorporated by or under a Central Act *bon tempore*, or a State Act, or an Institution deemed to be University or an institution specially empowered by an Act of the Parliament to confer or grant degrees. Thus, any institution which has not been created by an enactment of Parliament or a State Legislature or has not been granted the status of a Deemed to be University is not entitled to award a degree." Accreditation for higher learning is overseen by autonomous institutions established by the University Grants Commission.¹⁵

- All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE)
- Distance Education Bureau (DEB)
- Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR)
- Bar Council of India (BCI)
- National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC)
- National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE)
- Rehabilitation Council of India (RCI)
- Medical Council of India (MCI)
- Pharmacy Council of India (PCI)
- Indian Nursing Council (INC)
- Dental Council of India (DCI)
- Central Council of Homeopathy (CCH)
- Central Council of Indian Medicine (CCIM)
- Veterinary Council of India (VCI)

The University Grants Commission has provided guidelines about fake universities/institutions and degrees, including a list of such schools. The issue of assessing and assuring the quality of Indian higher education is a challenge. Instead of aiming for 'world-class' universities through rankings, policy framework must improve the processes that enable accountability through data collection and reporting on parameters of institutional quality. The government should leverage this tool to improve quality of the overall system. A

study was done on autonomous colleges by the Centre for Public Policy Research (CPPR) in Kerala recommended that grading should be done for such institutions to improve their overall performance.¹⁶

Administration :-

The institutional framework of higher education in India consists of Universities and Colleges. As reported in 2015, India has 760 universities and 38,498 colleges. There are three types of universities: Conventional Universities, Deemed Universities and Institutions of National Importance³⁵—While Conventional Universities are established through Act of Parliament or State Legislatures, Deemed Universities award degrees through the notification of the central government. Institutes of National Importance are those that have been awarded the status by Parliament. The education system of India falls broadly under the Ministry of Human Resource Development. Amongst the branches of the MHRD, the Department of Higher Education is responsible for overseeing the growth of the higher education sector. The Department aims to improve quality of and access to higher education for all sections of the population.—One of the key objectives of the Department is to increase the Gross Enrolment Ratio in higher education to 30% by 2020. Some of the other objectives of the department include: expansion of institutional base, greater inclusion of minorities, and removal of regional disparities, infrastructural improvement and increased global participation.¹⁷

Current government initiatives include :-

- **Rashtriya Uchattar Shiksha Abhiyan** - A total of 316 state public universities and 13,024 colleges will be covered under the Rashtriya Uchattar Shiksha Abhiyan, a plan to manage funding for higher education. This is a scheme to develop state university by central govt. funding (60% for general category states, 90% for special category states, 100% for union territories).
- **Scheme of Integrating Persons With Disabilities In The Mainstream Of Technical And Vocational Education** - Caters to around 50 polytechnics in the country and provides them with grants-in-aid aimed at facilitating greater integration of disabled individuals into higher education.¹⁸
- **Scheme of Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya National Mission on Teachers and Teaching (PMMNMTT)** - The purpose of this scheme is to raise the quantity and quality of teaching staff across schools and colleges. It also aims to create better institutional frameworks in order to cultivate change in the positive direction.¹⁹

- **Rankings :-**

University rankings are used to measure and compare institutional quality based on a range of indicators related to research, reputation and teaching.

[1] Indian government's National Institutional Ranking Framework, or NIRF is the mechanism for measuring quality and also intended to determine funding and world-class university endeavours.

[2] The "Institutions of Eminence" initiative by the Government of India aims to build top-ranked Indian universities by providing autonomy and funding (only for public universities) and identified six institutions.

[3] The University of Mumbai was ranked 41 among the Top 50 Engineering Schools of the world by America's news broadcasting firm Business Insider in 2012 and was the only university in the list from the five emerging BRICS nations via Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa. It was ranked at 62 in the QS BRICS University rankings for 2013 and was India's 3rd best Multi-Disciplinary University in the QS University ranking of Indian Universities after University of Calcutta and Delhi University.

Three Indian universities were listed in the Times Higher Education list of the world's top 200 universities — Indian Institutes of Technology, Indian Institutes of Management, and Jawaharlal Nehru University in 2005 and 2006.⁴¹ Six Indian Institutes of Technology and the Birla Institute of Technology and Science – Plain were listed among the top 20 science and technology schools in Asia by *Asia week*. The Indian School of Business situated in Hyderabad was ranked number 12 in global MBA rankings by the *Financial Times* of London in 2010 while the All India Institute of Medical Sciences has been recognised as a global leader in medical research and treatment. The Quacquarelli Symonds World University Rankings published in 2013 ranked IIT Delhi at number 222 with a 49.4% score, IIT Bombay at 233, and IIT Kanpur at 295. No Indian universities appear in the top 200 worldwide except IISc Bangalore which is ranked at 147.

- **Challenges :-**

In the last 30 years, higher education in India has witnessed rapid and impressive growth. The increase in the number of institutions is, however, disproportionate to the quality of education that is being dispersed unplanned over-expansion is often criticized as one of the biggest downfalls of Indian higher education. Many institutions suffer from subpar quality and a lack of funding. As a result, entry into the top institutions is highly competitive and

translates into a contest for higher entrance test scores and better private coaching institutes. Higher education in India faces problems ranging from income and gender disparities in enrolment, to poor quality of faculty and teaching and even to a general lack of motivation and interest amongst students. Industries cite skill shortage as one of the major factors contributing to the mounting number of unemployed graduates some of the main challenges faced by the Indian higher education system include:

- **Financing** - The inability of the state to fund the expanding higher education system has resulted in the rapid growth of private higher education. In addition, diminished governmental financial support adversely affects small and rural educational institutions. A growing number of public institutions are forced to resort to self-financing courses and high tuition costs.⁴³ The private sector's primary modes of financing include donations, capitation fees and exorbitant fee rates. This in turn limits general accessibility to higher education, by catering to only an elite few.
- **Enrolment** – As of 2007, only around 11% of the 18 – 23 year old population of India, is enrolled in higher education. On the whole, India has an enrolment rate of 9% which is similar to that of other lower middle income countries. The population that is enrolled in higher education consists largely of urban metropolitan dwellers. Rural enrolment in higher education is very low Moreover; a majority of the recorded enrolment is at the undergraduate level. Over the last 4 years, Indian higher education has maintained a steady female enrolment rate of around 45%. Although the gender gap in enrolment has decreased significantly post-independence, there still exists a disparity amongst different departments. Technology, medicine and commerce are some of the areas of study that are heavily male-dominated while humanities departments show the opposite trend.²⁰

Student advisory :-

While fee regulatory agencies fix a fee that cover expenses incurred by an institution along with a basic surplus many institutions have been charging a fee that makes the venture profiteering. All India Council for Technical Education, the regulatory body for technical education in India, has called "upon the students, parents and the general public not to pay any capitation fee or any other fee other than that mentioned in the Prospectus of the Institutions for consideration of admission." AICTE also mentions that the fee charged to students, including for programs such as PGDM, has to be approved by the fee regulatory committee of the state, and the institute should mention the fee on its website. As per AICTE norms, the business schools are not meant to charge a fee higher than what is mentioned in

the prospectus. Educational regulatory agencies, at the national level and the regional level, have mandated that an institution should include the fee in the prospectus.

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