Higher Education Sector in India: Issues and Imperatives

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The 21st century is marked by a paradigm shift in education that has resulted both in threats and opportunities. It has brought new challenges and an opportunity for higher education. Higher education in India is undergoing rapid changes. The challenges ahead are multifaceted and multidimensional. Though the data show a massive growth in the number of students' enrollment in colleges/universities, holistic view reveals that still only a meager of the total population has access to higher education. Globalization and privatization are imposing new challenges but the nations are still entangled in solving the basic problems of accessibility to higher education for all. In the wake of the transition from elitist to mass education, universities worldwide are under pressure to enhance access and equity, on the one hand, and to maintain high standards of quality and excellence, on the other. Today the notion of equity not only implies greater access to higher education, but also opportunities for progress. In recent debates on higher education, the notions of equity and access go beyond minority to diversity. Affirmative action, too, has become race-exclusive and gender-neutral.1

Objectives of the Study:

1. To analyze the higher education system in India.
2. To describe the problems faced by the higher education sector in India.
3. To analyze the growth and present status of higher education sector in India.

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4. To suggest corrective measures to strengthen the higher education sector in India.

This research work is primarily based on secondary data published in various journals and government reports. It is descriptive in nature.

While delivering the convocation address at the 18th convocation of Pondicherry University on May 20th 2008 the Chairman of the University Grants Commission Prof. Sukhadeo Thorat, expanding the higher education system through establishment of new universities, increase in intake capacity with prime importance to inclusive education and quality would be the key areas of focus for higher education in the Eleventh Five Year Plan. He said higher education has been neglected in the last few decades and certain issues need to be addressed immediately. In the early 1950's the enrolment ratio was less than one per cent. Today, it has increased to 10 per cent. Yet this is low when compared to the world average of 23 per cent. Countries falling in the middle income group have a ratio of 35 to 37 per cent, while Europe and United States have over 40 per cent he has stated. Embarking on an ambitious target, the UGC would aim to scale the enrolment ratio by five per cent in five years. This would be achieved through increasing the number of educational institutions and the intake capacity of existing institutions he pointed out. Accordingly, 16 new central Universities at Rs. 50 crore and 14 Universities of th hig academic standards at Rs. 60 crore would be established in five years. The Central government will start 370 model colleges and 370 districts which have low enrolment ratio than the national average. Providing equal opportunities to all, particularly SC/ST/OBC,. Girls, Students from minorities especially Muslims, physically challenged and poor, would also be a key focus of the plan he said. Also added that this would be done through provision of scholarships, hostel facilities and remedial coaching for English. For this UGC is increasing the funds for construction of hostels for women from Rsl 25 lak to Rs. One crore. The UGC has identified 90 districts with higher proportion of Muslim population. The Universities and colleges here will get additional grants.. Universities and colleges falling in the "C" grade category would receive a one time grant from the UGC to improve the quality. Nearly 70 State Universities and 6000 colleges do not receive UGC grants as they do not meet the minimum academic standards. The UGC will provide a one –time grant to these institutions.

Educational Development in India

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India's education has a long history dating back to institutions such as Nalanda.India, being a developing nation, struggles with challenges in its primary education. Literacy rate has increased from around 3% in 1880 to around 65% in 2001. Net enrollment of 6-10 years old Indians increased from 68 percent to 82 percent between 1992/93 and 1998/99. Yet great challenges remain as The Economist reports that half of 10-year-old rural children can't read at the basic level, over 60% is unable to do simple division, and half drop out by the age 14. Fewer than 40 percent of adolescents in India attend secondary schools. Around 1 in 10 young persons has access to tertiary education. Mercer Consulting estimates that only a quarter of graduates are "employable". All levels of education in India, from primary to higher education, are overseen by the Ministry of Human Resource Development, Department of Higher Education, India and Department of School Education and Literacy, and heavily subsidized by the Indian government, though there is a move to make higher education partially self-financing. The Indian Government is considering allowing 100% foreign direct investment in Higher Education.(2)

Higher Education in India has evolved in distinct and divergent streams with each stream monitored by an apex body, indirectly controlled by the Ministry of Human Resource Development. The 415 universities/ institutions are mostly funded by the state governments. However, there are 24 important universities called Central universities, which are maintained by the Union Government and because of relatively large funding, they have an edge over the others. The engineering education and business schools are monitored and accredited by the All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) while medical education is monitored and accredited by the Medical Council of India (MCI). Like-wise, agriculture education and research is monitored by the Indian Council for Agriculture Research. Apart from these, National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE) controls all the teacher training institutions in the country.3

Higher Education System in India:

Higher Education in India is one of the most developed in the entire world. There has in fact been considerable improvement in the higher education scenario of India in both quantitative and qualitative terms. In technical education, the IITs, and in management, the IIMs have already marked their names among the top higher educational institutes of the world. Moreover the Jawaharlal University and Delhi

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University are also regarded as good higher educational institutes for doing postgraduates courses and research in science, humanities and social sciences. As a result, students from various parts of the world are coming today for higher education in India. **Higher Education system in India:** There are at present 227 government-recognized Universities in India. Out of them 20 are central universities, 109 are deemed universities and 11 are Open Universities and rest are state universities. Most of these universities in India have affiliating colleges where undergraduate courses are being taught. According to the Department of higher Education, government of India, there are 16,885 colleges, 99.54 lakh students and 4.57 lakh teachers in various higher education institutes in India.

Key players in the Higher Education System in India: The University Grant Commission of India is not only the lone grant giving agency in the country, but also responsible for coordinating, determining and maintaining the standards in institutions of higher education. Apart from the UGC here are various professional councils that are responsible for recognizing courses, promoting professional institutes and providing grants to undergraduate programmes. They are All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE), Distance Education Council (DEC), Indian Council for Agriculture Research (ICAR), Bar Council of India (BCI), 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), Dentist Council of India (DCI), Central Council of Homeopathy (CCH) and the Central Council of Indian Medicine (CCIM) are the statutory professional councils of India.

India has one of the largest 'Higher Education System in the world. Main players in the higher education system in the country are: University is responsible for coordination, determination and maintenance of standards, release of grants. Professional Councils are responsible for recognition of courses, promotion of professional institutions and providing grants to undergraduate programmes and various awards. Central Government is responsible for major policy relating to higher education in the country. It provides grants to the UGC and establishes central universities in the country. The Central Government is also responsible for declaration of Educational Institutions as 'Deemed to be University' on the recommendation of the UGC. Presently there are sixteen (18) Central Universities in the country. In pursuance of the Mizoram Accord, another Central University in the State of Mizoram is planned. There are 99 Institutions which have been declared as Deemed to be

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Universities by the Govt. of India as per Section of the UGC Act, 1956. State Governments are responsible for establishment of State Universities and colleges, and provide plan grants for their development and non-plan grants for their maintenance.

The coordination and cooperation between the Union and the States is brought about in the field of education through the Central Advisory Board of Education (CABE).

Special Constitutional responsibility of the Central Government: Education is on the 'Concurrent list' subject to Entry 66 in the Union List of the Constitution. This gives exclusive Legislative Power to the Central Govt. for co-ordination and determination of standards in Institutions of higher education or research and scientific and technical institutions.4

India is today one of the fastest developing countries of the world with the annual growth rate going above 9%. In order to sustain that rate of growth, there is need to increase the number of institutes and also the quality of higher education in India. Therefore the Prime Minister of India has announced the establishment of 8 IITs, seven Indian Institutes of Management (IIMs) and five Indian Institutes of Science, Education and Research (IISERs) and 30 Central Universities in his speech to the nation on the 60th Independence Day. The outlay for education during the 11th Five Year Plan, which runs from the current fiscal to 2012-13, represents a four-fold increase over the previous plan and stands at Rs 2500 billion.5

The thrust of the policy underlying the Eleventh Five Year Plan for Higher Education is on increasing access to quality higher education while ensuring equity. A new Scheme for Reduction in Regional Imbalances, Social Gaps and Promotion of Inclusiveness in Higher Education has been introduced by the University Grants Commission (UGC) in the XI Plan, which will serve the rural and tribal areas as well. Central Universities have been established in all the states in the North-Eastern Region including in states with predominately tribal population. In addition, during the XI Plan a Central University will be established in each of those states where there is no Central University. 374 new colleges are proposed to be established one in each district where the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) is lower than the national average. In the XI Plan, a target has been set to increase the GER of students in the eligible age group of 18-24 years in higher education by 5 percentage points by the end of the Plan. Provision for infrastructural and other requirements for this purpose is required to be made by Central and State Governments.6

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Growth of Higher Education in India

Since ancient times, India has been a centre of excellence in the field of higher education. Nalanda, Vikramashila and Takshashila were few of the oldest universities in the world and were the most renowned seats of higher education during their time. Students' from far off countries came to study in these universities. Today India has one of the largest higher education systems in the world and also some world-class institutions for higher education. The present system of higher education dates back to Mountstuart Elphinstone's minutes of 1823, which stressed on the need for establishing schools for teaching English and the European sciences. Subsequently, the universities of Calcutta, Bombay and Madras were set up in 1857, followed by the university of Allahabad in 1887. The first attempt to formulate a national system of education in India came in 1944, with the Report of the Central Advisory Board of Education on Post War Educational Development in India, which recommended the formation of a University Grants Committee, which was formed in 1945 to oversee the work of the three Central Universities of Aligarh, Banaras and Delhi. After independence, a full-fledged Ministry of Education was established on 29th August 1947. In 1952, the Union Government decided that all cases pertaining to the allocation of grants-in-aid from public funds to the Central Universities and other Universities and Institutions of higher learning might be referred to the University Grants Commission (UGC). The UGC was formally established in November 1956 as a statutory body of the Government of India through an Act of Parliament for the coordination, determination and maintenance of standards of university education in India. 7

India has significant advantages in building a large, high quality higher education system. It has a large higher education sector – the third largest in the world in student numbers after China and the United States. It uses English as a primary language of higher education and research. It has a number of high quality institutions that can form the basis of a world-class higher education system. Nevertheless, the system only enrolled 9 million students in 2003/04 (equivalent to a 9-10 percent enrolment rate as estimated by the Ministry of Human Resource Development). This compares to with more than half of the young people in major developed countries and about 20 per cent in China. Similarly, the world-class institutions in India that are known globally -- mainly the IITs and the IIMs – are small, enrolling well under 1 per cent of the student population.

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The Government will take strong steps in the 11th Five Year plan to increase opportunities in Higher education, relieve skill shortages in the economy, and increase competitiveness. The goal for the 11th Five Year plan for 2007-2012 is an increase of five percent in the enrolment rate of higher education equivalent to the creation of approximately 8 million new seats in Indian higher and technical education. Some of the steps are: (i) establishment of a central autonomous university in each state, (ii) higher education institutions in each district of the countries, (iii) private institutions may be granted deemed university status, (iv) creation of more Inter-University Centers, and (v) funding of up to 150 new polytechnics autonomous colleges. Further, all institutions are asked to make higher education more inclusive, more responsive to economic needs, and raise quality. Therefore, the public and the government are likely to increase investment into higher education, and in return demand accelerated change in the higher education sector.

The governance of the Indian Higher education sector is changing. Like the Indian economy underwent a liberalizing in the 1990s, the education system is gradually being opened up for change and decentralization. In particular, the federal and state governments are gradually giving higher education institutions more decision and spending power. This represents a move away from detailed government control over spending, teaching, and curriculum decisions, which required frequent approval from federal or state government officials. Besides the 11th Five Year Plan, several facts pay witness to this movement:

- Many institutions have become autonomous during the 10th plan Five Year plan through an increase in the number of autonomous institutions: Central Universities (2), State Universities (39), "deemed-to-be" Universities (50), and Private Universities (10).
- Two recent reports from the Central Advisory board of Education (CABE) on respectively the 'autonomy of higher education institutions" and 'financing of higher and technical education' recommend changes to governance of the higher education institutions.
- The Oversight Committee on the Implementation of the New Reservation Policy in Higher Educational Institution equally recommends increased autonomy to institutions within recruitment and remuneration of faculty and admission policies to find the right balance between equity and excellence for each institution.

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Forum on Governance of Higher Education in India: How Best to Strike the Balance between Autonomy and Accountability?

Higher education in India has grown large since the country's independence in 1947. Starting from a small base, the pace of growth was initially rapid. Initially, the pace of growth was rapid. Enrolments grew by 13 to 14 per cent per annum during the 1950s and 1960s. Over the past few decades, the growth rate has declined noticeably. Since then it has remained stable between 4 and 5 per cent.8

National Knowledge Commission:

Assocham Press Trust of India has suggested that Government should deregulate higher education in India: It has stated that The National knowledge Commission's report on higher education is one in the series that started with the report of the Dr.Radhakrishnan Commission (1948). It recommended that 1.5 to 2 per cent of GDP for higher education from .7 per cent at present, assuming a provision of 6 per cent for education, and the observation that implicit politicization has made governance of universities exceedingly difficult and much more susceptible to non-academic intervention from outside are worth emphasizing. In order to increase the gross enrolment ratio to 15 per cent, the commission suggests that India needs as many as 1500 universities by 2015.

The knowledge commission found the following problems related to higher education.

1. With 90 per cent of the undergraduate students and 66 per cent of the postgraduate students studying in affiliated colleges, we have today a system that is overwhelmed by affiliated colleges which are in many cases only marginally better than good higher secondary schools.
2. we have in the affiliated colleges 84 p percent of the total faculty in higher education, comprising only lecturers of different grades who do not, and are not expected to pursue any research. Consequently only the faculty members in the universities who constitute a mere 16 per cent of the total are expected to do research.
3. Universities which are to be the prime centers of scholarship and where there is an uninterrupted flow of young minds, play an insignificant roles in generating a base for creating new knowledge and technologies. This is regrettable. While China published 72,632 research papers with citation in

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2005, in India the number was 25, 227. The progressive decline in Indian research can be seen from the fact that the corresponding figures in 1990 were 6991 for China and 11563 for India. Prof. V.C.Kulandai Swamy has reported that the research potential of Indian Universities is alarmingly poor. The urgent step that is needed to improve the health of higher education and research which is really anemic is to increase the number of universities and transfer higher education from affiliated colleges to university campuses.

The number of universities that has been suggested is not too large. Japan with a population 123.7 crore has 726 universities, Germany with 8.2 crore has 350, UK with 6.1 crore has 12.5 and the US. With a population of 30.4 croe is reported to have 2466. China, according to National Knowledge Commission has created 1250 new universities in the previous three years.

Having suggested a massive increase in the number of universities, the commission has broadly outlined acceptable measures to achieve it, namely, the establishment of 50 national universities, the up gradation of deserving colleges in the deemed universities, and the establishment of new universities by the Central and State governments and private provides.

The role of the private sector in higher education has been stressed by the commission in unambiguous terms. Consequent to the increase in demand and inadequate response on the part of governments, there has been in recent years a quite but steady increase in private participation in general and professional education. The world is also witnessed a gradual transformation of higher education from public to private good. The commission recommends," there is a clear need to establish an Independent Regulatory Authority for Higher Education (IRAHE). Such regulatory authority is both necessary and desirable.9

India's government will create 12 new central universities, adding to the 18 that currently exist. This is a mammoth undertaking and the equivalent of US$73 million has been allocated from the central government budget to it. Earlier this year India announced it would create 30 'world class' universities, eight new Indian institutes of technology and seven Indian institutes of management in the coming five years. On the recommendation of the National Knowledge Commission, the central government is planning massive investment to upgrade and expand higher education. Other plans include enhancing the salaries of college and university academics - boosting salaries by as much as 70%. This prospect represents welcome news since India currently lacks world class universities according to the international rankings, and Indian academics, when compared internationally, are rather poorly paid. Students also suffer an immense shortage of places in India's top academic institutions and throughout the

higher education system. India today educates only half as many young people from the university age group as China and ranks well behind most Latin American and other middle income countries. India exhibits a special problem at the top of its higher education hierarchy. With the notable exceptions of the institutes of technology and institutes of management, and a small number of outstanding non-university research and training institutions - such as the All India Institute of Medical Sciences - top-notch schools are rare. Indeed, none of India's 348 universities is ranked in the top 100 in the world. Generally, when India has wanted to innovate in the higher education sector, it has side-stepped the universities and has started entirely new institutions such as the institutes of technology. However, if India invests large amounts of money and human capital into academic improvement and expansion without undertaking strategies to ensure that the investment will yield results, resources will be wasted and failure will be assured. Despite a discussion of organizing some of the new universities based on the American model, so far neither the ideas nor the funding seems adequate. Yet, a newspaper reported that one official said: "The view was that there should be no hierarchy or disparity in standards amongst universities, and the reforms and changes suggested for world class universities should be applied to all universities." This attitude shows a complete misunderstanding that the American system institutes significant hierarchy among the public universities. Just pumping money and resources into a fundamentally broken university system is a mistake. Establishing new universities, especially those intended to be innovative, requires careful planning and an understanding of the weaknesses of the current system.10

Problems Associated with Higher Education in India

Philip G. Altbach in his work on higher education in India has described the bad shape of India's higher education system. India has significant advantages in the 21st century knowledge race. It has a large higher education sector — the third largest in the world in student numbers, after China and the United States. It uses English as a primary language of higher education and research. It has a long academic tradition. Academic freedom is respected. There are a small number of high quality institutions, departments, and centres that can form the basis of quality sector in higher education. The fact that the States, rather than the Central Government, exercise major responsibility for higher education creates a rather cumbersome structure, but the system allows for a variety of policies and approaches.

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Yet the weaknesses far outweigh the strengths. India educates approximately 10 per cent of its young people in higher education compared with more than half in the major industrialized countries and 15 per cent in China. Almost all of the world's academic systems resemble a pyramid, with a small high quality tier at the top and a massive sector at the bottom. India has a tiny top tier. None of its universities occupies a solid position at the top. A few of the best universities have some excellent departments and centers, and there are a small number of outstanding undergraduate colleges. The University Grants Commission's recent major support of five universities to build on their recognized strength is a step toward recognizing a differentiated academic system — and fostering excellence. At present, the world-class institutions are mainly limited to the Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs), the Indian Institutes of Management (IIMs) and perhaps a few others such as the All India Institute of Medical Sciences and the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research. These institutions, combined, enroll well under 1 per cent of the student population.

India's colleges and universities, with just a few exceptions, have become large, under-funded, ungovernable institutions. At many of them, politics has intruded into campus life, influencing academic appointments and decisions across levels. Under-investment in libraries, information technology, laboratories, and classrooms makes it very difficult to provide top-quality instruction or engage in cutting-edge research.

The rises in the number of part-time teachers and the freeze on new full-time appointments in many places have affected morale in the academic profession. The lack of accountability means that teaching and research performance is seldom measured. The system provides few incentives to perform. Bureaucratic inertia hampers change. Student unrest and occasional faculty agitation disrupt operations. Nevertheless, with a semblance of normality, faculty administrators are able to provide teaching, coordinate examinations, and award degrees.

Even the small top tier of higher education faces serious problems. Many IIT graduates, well trained in technology, have chosen not to contribute their skills to the burgeoning technology sector in India. Perhaps half leave the country immediately upon graduation to pursue advanced study abroad — and most do not return. A stunning 86 per cent of students in science and technology fields from India who obtain degrees in the United States do not return home immediately following their study. Another significant group, of about 30 per cent, decides to earn MBAs in India because local salaries are higher — and are lost to science and technology. A corps of dedicated and able teachers work at the IITs and IIMs, but the lure of jobs abroad and

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in the private sector make it increasingly difficult to lure the best and brightest to the academic profession.

Few in India are thinking creatively about higher education. There is no field of higher education research. Those in government as well as academic leaders seem content to do the "same old thing." Academic institutions and systems have become large and complex. They need good data, careful analysis, and creative ideas. In China, more than two-dozen higher education research centres, and several government agencies are involved in higher education policy.11

Higher education is necessary for one to achieve excellence in the line one is best. But one should be selected for higher education on the basis of merit only. Further, fees for education in general should not be high; especially, the fees for higher studies should be within the reach of every class of people in the nation.12

Ramesh (2007) in his work on <u>Analysis</u> Present System & Higher Education in India has stated that the present system of higher education does not serve the purpose for which it has been started. In general education itself has become so profitable a business that quality is lost in the increase of quantity of professional institutions with quota system and politicization adding fuel to the fire of spoil system, thereby increasing unemployment of graduates without quick relief to mitigate their sufferings in the job market of the country. So, the drawbacks of the higher education system underscore the need for reforms to make it worthwhile and beneficial to all concerned. Next to China, India is the most populated country in the world. Naturally there is too much rush and competition in every field. So, rush to technical and higher education has increased as scope for arts and science has become lesser and lesser due to lack of reforms and up gradation in the course structure and materials according to the developments of the world. Also, qualification in higher education gives added advantage to face successfully competition in the job market. Purpose of Education. All round development of personality is the purpose of education. But the present day education is neither imparting true knowledge of life, world and helping one stand on one's own leg nor improving the talent of a student by which one can achieve laurels in the field one is interested. So, combination of arts subjects and computer science and science and humanities or literature should be introduced so that such courses could be useful for the students to do jobs after recruitment in some companies which would reduce unnecessary rush to higher education.13

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Professor Philip G Altbach has outlined some of the problems with respect to establishing world class Universities in India that need fixing before resources are given. 14

1. India is world famous for sclerotic bureaucracy, and higher education fits into that mold. Few decisions can be made without receiving permission from an authority above, and the wheels of decision-making grind slowly. Fear of corruption or of a loss of control entrenches bureaucracy. Teachers and academic leaders at colleges and universities have little incentive to innovate higher education - indeed quite the opposite. It is completely impossible to build world class universities in this bureaucratic context. If the new institutions must tolerate responsibilities to both the central government and the states in which they are located, the bureaucratic burden will be completely overwhelming.

2. Great universities need to be located on friendly soil. In general, the best universities worldwide are in or near major urban centres or in places with intellectual traditions and strength. While it is entirely appropriate to have a good university in each of India's states, the idea of a truly world class university (an institution that can compete with the best universities in the world) in cities like Guwahati or Bhubaneshwar is simply unrealistic. It would be extraordinarily difficult to attract top professors or even the best students, and the 'soft' infrastructures,such as most cultural amenities, are missing. High-tech industry is also absent in these locations and world be difficult to lure. No amount of money will guarantee the establishment of a world class university in such a place.

3. Indian academics deserve higher salaries, and the current move to dramatically improve remuneration is a positive step. It would be a serious mistake to simply give more money to the professoriate without at the same time demanding significant reforms in the structure and practices of the profession. Indian academics are rewarded for longevity, rather than productivity, and for conformity rather than innovation. The most productive academics cannot be rewarded for their work, and it is almost impossible to pay 'market rates' to keep the best and the brightest in the universities. World class universities require a salary structure that rewards productivity.

4. Indian universities are enmeshed in a culture of mediocrity, with little competition either among institutions or academics. Universities are subject to the whims of politicians and are unable to plan for their own futures. Academics are seldom

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involved in the leadership and management of universities. Bureaucracy governs everything and holds down innovation.Without essential and deep structural change in how universities are governed and in the culture of institutions, there is little possibility for improvement. An additional challenge is that some of the world class universities are to be created by improving existing state universities. This will be extraordinarily difficult, since these institutions are, with very few exceptions, mired in mediocrity and bureaucracy, and hardly amenable to change and improvement, even with the carrot of additional resources.An element of corruption exists at many levels of the higher education system, from favouritism in admissions, appointment to faculty positions, exam cheating, questionable coaching arrangements, and many others. Damaging at all levels, corruption destroys a research culture and makes a world class university impossible.

5. World class universities are deeply meritocratic institutions. They hire the best professors, admit the most intelligent students, reward the brightest academics, and make all decisions on the basis of quality. They reject - and punish - plagiarism, favouritism in appointments, or corruption of any kind. Much of Indian academe, unfortunately, does not reflect these values. Some of the problem is structural. The practice of admitting students and hiring professors on the basis of rigid quotas set for particular population groups - up to 49% - however well intentioned or justified virtually precludes meritocracy. Deeply ingrained in Indian society and politics, the reservations system may well be justified - but to have successful world class universities, meritocracy must be the primary motivating principle.

6. World class universities are research-intensive. All highly ranked universities in the world exhibit this characteristic. India faces several problems in developing a research culture.It is fair to say that no Indian university today is, as an institution, research-intensive. India's universities can claim a small number of departments that have a high level of research - and many highly accomplished professors work in the system. And some institutions, such as institutes of technology and some non-university agencies like the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research and the All India Institute of Medical Sciences, produce impressive research and are respected internationally. The creation of a research-intensive university is mandatory to achieve world class status.

7. Rs 3,280 crores for the 12 new central universities, plus the other impressive amounts announced for related projects, sounds like a lot of money. In fact, it is very inadequate. Creating a world class research university that can play in the best international leagues is an expensive undertaking - to establish and then to sustain. As

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an example, one large research-intensive new Chinese university cost around US$700 million to build and has a total annual budget of close to US$400 million.

In comparison with China, India probably has more opportunities because of the knowledge of English. The Chinese government, however, has invited more than 50,000 Indians to teach English. But the other advantage for India is its young population. But not only young people, a modern economy need a highly educated and creative population. Reports and research studies on the position of the 11 million students in the 18,000 Indian colleges and universities show that they receive inferior training. Students, educators and business leaders state that there is a heavy stress on obeisance and a neglect of marketable skills. It is not only a lack of knowledge and skills, it unveils the mental behaviour of the graduates. The class room environment infantilizes students up till the age of around 25 years. The emphasis in universities is note-taking and discipline in stead of analysis, debate and persuasion. Except students from the more elite universities, graduates are considered unemployable by top global and national companies. The Indian educational system is locking millions of students in the bottom berth of a two-tier economy of the fullest expression of their talents and denying students a chance to share in the fruits of reform,' writes Anand Giridharadas in the International Herald Tribune (November 20, 2006). Dr. Pratap Bhanu Mehta, a former Harvard professor and former member of the National Knowledge Commission wrote: The University has become a place-holder. My own experiences over the last decades are in accordance with the critical reports. Even more important are the opinions of the students. In open discussions with them, they complained about their education. First of all, they find the approach childish; they are not treated as mature persons. And they express that what the market wants and what the university provides are totally different. They state that they are not learning to communicate effectively and making presentations. There is a lack of the so-called soft skills which are sought by a new generation of employers and international companies. These are still not taught by old fashioned and change-resistant Indian institutions for higher education. We can list the following necessary qualities and abilities: to speak and write in crisp English, to design and give PowerPoint presentations, to write in logical ordered paragraphs, to work in teams, and to grasp aspects of leadership and communication skills. The National Association of Software and Services is an important and influential trade body representing many leading employers in India. In a report this association stated that just 10 percent of Indian graduates with generalist degrees were considered employable. In the current situation colleges and universities are depriving the country of the fullest expression of the students' talents and denying

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them a chance to share in the fruits of reform.   The government approach to protect local universities by implementing bureaucratic rules for foreign universities is contradicting the democratic principles and the academic basis concerning free exchange of information. It will certainly not protect Indian Universities, and is not stimulating economic growth. It might prevent individuals and the Indian society from fully participating in the international community. Reports and the many jobless graduates show a fundamental problem in Indian higher education. This is a worrying problem for the expanding Indian economy.

Based on various reports and personal experiences, one can list the following main   problems:
a. an old-fashioned didactical method and out-dated approach of students'
b. An important gap between what universities offer and what the society needs
c. Lack of learning soft skills

Pawan Agarwal (2006) has put forwarded the following suggestions (1) the need for clear definition of goals and purposes; (2) emphasis on the preservation of inherent quality and diversity; (3) spread of community/junior colleges across the nation; (4) the establishment of open universities; (5) advancement of social justice; (6) that associate in arts degrees be made generally available after the two years of post-10-year school education, to be followed by two- or three-year-degree courses in different faculties (a mix of the U.S.S.R. and U.S. systems); and (7) that all postsecondary education be properly coordinated and systematized. A listing of the universities in India is appended, and a bibliography and index are provided. 15

Higher education in India suffers from several systemic deficiencies. As a result, it continues to provide graduates that are unemployable despite emerging shortages of skilled manpower in an increasing number of sectors. The standards of academic research are low and declining. Some of the problems of the Indian higher education, such as – the unwieldy affiliating system, inflexible academic structure, uneven capacity across various subjects, eroding autonomy of academic institutions, and the low level of public funding are well known. Many other concerns relating to the dysfunctional regulatory environment, the accreditation system that has low coverage and no consequences, absence of incentives for performing well, and the unjust public funding policies are not well recognized. Driven by populism and in the absence of good data, there is little informed public debate on higher education in India. 16

Abhishek Behl (2006) in his paper on Higher Education has analysed the defects of higher education in India and suggested a lot of policy measures to correct it.The

number of Indian students attending higher education institutions in the United States is the highest from a foreign country.Likewise, the number of Indian students going to United Kingdom is increasing and so is the case with Canada, Australia and NewZealand. In monetary terms,Indians are burning millions of dollars to get quality ducation in these countries. And mind you the boys and girls going to foreign shores are not only from the metropolitan cities but also from places like Patiala, Shimla, Karnal, Jammu, KoziKhode, Andamans, Aligarh, Gaziabad and little towns of moffusil India. The reason behind this mass exodus of quality students, willing to shell ten times the amount which they need to spend to get similar education in India perhaps lies in the failure of our education system which has not been able to offer viable and creative solutions meeting emerging demands. Indian universities were designed by erstwhile European rulers and they functioned on the principles laid by Lord Macaulay and the famous Woods Despatch tabled in 1854. These institutions were basically fashioned to produce clerks, who were adept in bureaucratic work and could assist their colonial masters in their plunder.Unfortunately the British legacy was not laid to rest as soon as we attained freedom. Instead of taking on the gargantuan task of reforming the education system, the country under the leadership of a Cambridge educated Nehru decided to create islands of excellence choosing perhaps the easier way out. As a result of this ham-handed socialist policy, we find ourselves in a mess as our educational institutions have failed to come to terms with the needs of a post-colonial country with a burgeoning population. The Indian Universities particularly outside the Metros remained totally out of sync with the ground realities. Mired in the processes and systems which served the British and the socialist Indian state they continue till date to churn Babus, who are of no use to the Indian industry, picularly, post-privatization, when the role of the Indian government as well as its size has shrinked in the public domain.

In the increasingly knowledge and skill based society slowly evolving amidst us, there was and still is, no need for the millions of graduates and postgraduates, who flaunt their degrees but have vastly underrated skills. Perhaps the Indian system has failed to arm the youth with a skill-set which could empower the learners and enable them to perform their jobs in a better way.In this way, these people have been unable to earn their livelihood and failed to become an asset to the economy. Due to this failure, millions of educated youth in this country are facing stagnation and despite spending lakhs on education, they find themselves in the unemployed ranks. And the reason for this failure is obvious-it lies in the way our higher education institutions function. Instead of imparting skills, they have turned simply into examination centres,

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where students enter to pass exams and earn their degrees. Learning, meanwhile, has no role to play in this entire process barring a few institutions. Why this happened-again the answer is simple-education for the last fifty years and even earlier has been the last refuge of those, who were a failure in everything they tried their hands on. Bored wives of politicians and bureaucrats, unsuccessful sons of eminent men and educationists and even the progeny of university clerks, officials and even peons managed to get highly paying teaching jobs in these institutions. For these jobs guaranteed lifelong security of tenure, no responsibility and virtually zero accountability. Naturally, the entry of these people, who had no inclination for teaching and research led to an unmitigated disaster which is hurting India more than any political or financial scandals. The great Indian universities have become mafia rackets where the teachers are the great mafiosi holding the future of the youth and the country to ransom.The syllabus which is being taught here to the undergraduates and post-graduates is the same which was being taught to their grandfathers and great-grandfathers. The so-called Professors do not know what is happening in their respective fields because they are busy in petty intrigues and politics. Instead, of teaching they prefer to become administrators and like to hold posts such as Deans, Registrars and the much touted Controller of Examinations. Lack of accountability and responsibility has been witnessed highest in departments such as Managment and Computer Sciences, where the University run institutes have failed to compete with private sector, despite the fact that they are way ahead in terms of resources. This is perhaps due to the fact that a University teacher has no stake in the future of the students. His job is secure, his promotions secure and his pension all the more secure-so where does teaching come in. Naturally, wealthy Indian students are taking recourse to migrating to the West for higher education.

But, where does this leave us— Just take the example of Jammu University, the University is on an expansion spree, opening new campuses and affiliating numerous B Ed colleges run by politicians and businessmen in tandem. The Graduates and Postgraduates being churned by this university are facing a universal dilemma-although they have degrees but they dont have the skills to be successful in the job market. But, for the ubiquitous state government jobs, these students have no where to go. The problem is well known, but no one wants to bell the cat. This University is the last refuge of the mediocre teaching talent in the state verging on inferiority.

The syllabus is stale and has not been changed for the last twenty years, except few cosmetic changes. Neither the teachers nor the administrations wants to take the pains of changing the rules of the game as every one is enjoying the power and the

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pelf.
The students, ignorant of the fact that they are being taken for a ride are happy with their degrees and life goes on smoothly. Till they face the harsh realities of the job market.

Similarly, the politics in this academic institution is so virulent that teachers are even in their departments are divided into camps as if they are <u>India</u> and <u>Pakistan</u>. You can imagine the affect it has on the quality of <u>education</u>. As far as research and development is concerned, the university might have produced hundred of PhDs, but not a single world class work has come out of the <u>science</u> or social sciences labs. However, the Indian universities take the lead in one sphere-that is for organizing seminars, lectures and symposiums which earn for the participants lot of TA/DA, earned leaves, visits to exotic locations on <u>government</u> expenses, lavish dinners and the chance to bask in glorious sea of mediocrity. Except for the yearly or half-yearly ritual of conducting exams- most of the Indian universities do little concrete to justify the millions of rupees being spent on them yearly. What is the benefit of a Managment Department or a <u>Law</u> Department or a Department of History, when the students passing out are simply not having the skills needed to be a successful manager, lawyer or a <u>art</u> historian. If by reading books one could become a doctor or an engineer or a historian than what is the need of the Universities and their highly paid teachers. All this muddle has led to an acute disenchantment with the higher <u>education</u> system and soon the civil society and the <u>government</u> will have to find a way to clean this mess or else <u>India</u> again will lose the race to become a developed country. We must realize that handful of IIMs and IITs will not make <u>India</u> a superpower and the sooner, we do so, the better it will be.17

UGC Review Committee

The Government should deregulate higher education in the country to prevent repatriating over Rs 50,000 crore per annum as nearly five lakh students still go abroad to acquire better skills, industry body Assocham said. The chamber said that higher education in India is so subsidized that on average, an IIT or an MBA student in reputed institutions shell out $120 per month as fees, while people who go for studies abroad spend between $1,500 and $5,000 fee per month for getting engineering or management degrees in the U.S., Canada, Australia and the U.K.. "If higher education is deregulated, there is no reason why India cannot earn $50-100 billion per year and provide at least 10-20 million additional jobs in the field of education alone," it said. Countries like Singapore are planning to have 1,50,000

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foreign students. Australia has about four lakh, which earns for the country A$12 billion per year, it said, adding that India has only 27,000 foreign students and has no plans for any regulated increase because of controls in higher education. The primary reason why a large number of Indian students go out of the country is mainly lack of capacity as domestic institutions are constrained in that respect. About 99 per cent of those who appear in entrance examinations at the IITs and IIMs get rejected. Over 1,50,000 students every year go overseas for university education, which costs India a foreign exchange outflow of $10 billion per annum. This amount is sufficient to build many IIMs and IITs, in India. 18

Suggestions

Human Resource Development Minister Arjun Singh informed the Lok Sabha that there are "significant disparities in the availability of colleges in the rural and urban areas in the country". "Over three fifths of colleges imparting courses in general education are located in urban areas. This figure is over 80 per cent in the case of technical and professional colleges," Singh said in a written reply. He said the government is working to bring improvement in the situation. It has been proposed to start 370 colleges in districts where the enrolment ratio is very low, he said. "Most of these districts also have a concentration of Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and minorities," he informed. The ministry is also planning to support over 6,000 colleges, which were not given any funding by the University Grants Commission (UGC).There is also a proposal to launch incentive-based schemes for state governments for expanding and starting new institutions of higher education. The UGC provides special grants to universities and colleges located in backward areas to improve their infrastructure to a level where they are able to introduce innovations and meet challenges of globalization of higher education. On the vocational education side, the HRD ministry is planning to establish 600 polytechnics on public-private partnership basis. Similarly, another 400 polytechnics in the private sector are on the anvil, the minister said." The above proposal will ensure support for starting a polytechnic in every district which do not have a polytechnic," the minister added. Only 20 per cent professional colleges in rural India. Rural India, where 65 per cent of the population lives, has less than 20 per cent of the country's professional colleges to fulfill their skill-based educational needs.19

Stressing the need for quality upgradation of higher education, Kerala Governor R S Gavai while addressing the Republic Day parade after unfurling the national flag at the central stadium in Thiruvananthapuram, on January 26, 2009 stated

universities in the state had to be transformed into centres of excellence in research and development and converging the latest trends in knowledge industry". Innovative academic policy and creation of more employment opportunities for the youth is the need of the hour," 20

Promoting discipline and traditional respect for education and the Guru will strengthen India as the choice destination for higher education evoking the traditions of the oldest universities in the world such as those at Takshashila and Nalanda. When efforts are on to build the nation into a strong and vibrant knowledge economy in coming years through initiatives such as National Knowledge Commission, youth and students of the youngest nation of the world have to become partners in sustaining and nurturing the traditional values of respect for education, which is a great civilizational value. In these testing times, it is our dharma to uphold the tradition exemplified by the great tenet: aano bhadraah krtavo yantu vishvatah (let noble thoughts flow from all sides).21

The Ananthamurty Committee, which was entrusted with drafting a policy on the State Higher Education by the Kerala Government, has recommended various policy measures from setting up a college service commission for recruitment of teachers to constituting a scholarship fund for quality improvement in the higher education sector. The report holds that quality is premised on equity. Peaks of excellence arise from a broad base. It steers clear of populist and elitist approaches to higher education and tries to evolve an ambitious model of development within the limits of ground realities. The report tries to balance the claims of the mother tongue and English in the learning process; autonomy and accountability; private and public initiatives in higher education; and functional efficiency and- democratisation of administration. Stating that democratisation of the administration of universities and colleges would compensate to a great extent the shortcomings of administrators; Dr. Ananthamurthy urged the government to set up a college service commission for the appointment of teachers to government, aided and un-aided institutions. While appointment to government institutions could be made by the commission directly, private institutions can appoint teachers from the list prepared by the commission. 22

The Ananthamurthy Committee (drafted a policy) on higher education has proposed a five-year action plan for revitalizing the higher education sector in Kerala. This can be treated as a model for the entire country. The major 'recommendations made by the committee are:

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1. Student should get opportunities for acquisition of existing knowledge and generation of new knowledge. Written assignments, seminars, problem solving sessions, projects, field studies and so on should become integral to any reform in pedagogy. Through a dialogic process, the teacher should induce the student to think, innovate and challenge existing ideas and generate new knowledge.

2. The method of evaluation should be progressively changed to continuous internal evaluation by evolving an open, transparent and fool-proof system with an appropriate mechanism for effective grievance redressal. The credit and semester mode should be preferable to the uniform, annual mode, as the former would give the students an opportunity to select subject combinations of their choice and to encourage more focused learning by dividing the content into manageable chunks.

3. While English may continue as the medium of instruction in the universities and colleges, there has to be some provision for the production of knowledge and its dissemination in the mother tongue -in the- University. This is because there is a greater possibility for the production of knowledge, especially in humanities and social sciences, in the mother tongue than in other languages.

4. Autonomy should be linked up with accountability. We need a decentralized democratic system of academic governance that would translate the ideal of socially accountable autonomy into a living reality:

5. All institutions for higher education, including universities and colleges, should set up Social Accountability Cells (SACs). A system of academic audit and compulsory disclosures should be put in place through these cells.

6. The Right to Information Act (RTI) should be implemented in all higher education institutions. Each institution and each individual teacher should maintain a web site in which basic data regarding the institution, individual and self-assessment reports should be compulsorily posted and updated at regular intervals.

Conclusions:

Speaking at the 90th Annual Convocation of the Benaras Hindu University (BHU), our Prime Minster has stated "Only 10 per cent of India's youth go to college as against 40-50 percent in the developed Western countries". Referring to the quality of education, he observed: "What is even more serious is that two-thirds of India's universities are providing sub-standard education while 90 per cent colleges are below average". It was to improve higher education that the central government had decided to set up 30 new central universities across the country together with six Indian Institutes of Science on the lines of the IISc at Bangalore, he said. Manmohan Singh was of the view that despite the constraints, India's advancements in technology could not be underscored. "The Green revolution and IT revolution in the country were the results of the growth in higher education," he observed." However, we still have a long way to go to meet the challenges thrown by the developed western world." If any country has to attain an important place in the international community and wants to progress there are three requisites - a strong base of science and technology, a strong defense system and a strong economy," said Manmohan Singh, a former professor of economics. Besides being chief guest on the occasion, Manmohan Singh was also honoured with a D.Litt. degree that was conferred on him by BHU chancellor Karan Singh. The Prime Minister also emphasized the need for universities to play a larger role in disseminating knowledge to the rural areas. "Universities must realize their responsibility in this regard," he stressed. Prime Minister called for improving higher education. Expressing concern over the availability and quality of higher education, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh asked colleges and universities to raise their standards

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