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**REFORMS NEEDS IN HIGHER EDUCATION IN INDIA****Research paper in Education**

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**Abstract**

*We have seen in the past some of the teachers in the higher learning institutions have produced outstanding scholars. During those days there was no NAAC, there was no academic audit and no attendance and yet they produced talented students from the institutions. The students came out from the academic institutions were with self confidence. The present ratio of student: teacher in the country is almost 20:1, colleges having about 4, 21,000 teachers and universities 79,000. More than 25% colleges' and almost 35% universities' teaching positions nationwide are vacant, and 57% of college and 22% university teacher lack either a master's or Ph.D. degree.*

*India's one of the major wealth is youth (18-40 years of age) which presently stands at almost 80 million, 62% of the total population (127 million, male 65.6 million and female 61.4%). Despite growing education, 25% of its population is still illiterate; and just 18% go*

college and university. The quality of higher education is significantly poor. India's post secondary institutions offer only enough seats for 7% of India's college-age population.

## Introduction

India is one of the most populated countries in the world. Every 6<sup>th</sup> person on the earth is an Indian. The population is still growing at the rate of 1.4%. Incidentally India has 2.4% of total global land area and contributes only 5.5% of the total world income. As a result, 30% of the population lives below poverty level. The reasons for this are poverty and illiteracy.

The higher education system as a whole is face with many challenges such as financing and management, access, equity, relevance and reorientation of policies and programmes for laying emphasis on values, ethics and quality together with the assessment of institutions and their accreditation. These issues are of vital importance for the country, since higher education is the most powerful tool to build a knowledge based society for the future. The enormity of the challenge of providing equal opportunities for quality higher education to an ever growing number of students is also a historic opportunity for correcting sectoral and social imbalances, reinvigorating institutions, surpassing international benchmarks of excellence and extending the frontiers of knowledge.

The student enrolment of 3, 97,000 (girls 43,000) in 1950 has surged to 20, 00,000 (girls 46%) in 2013-14. Out of total colleges, 37 % belong to Arts and Humanities, 19% Science, 18% Commerce and Management, 16% Engineering and Technology, and 4% Education, 4 % Medicine, 2 % Law, 0.5% Agriculture, 0.1% Veterinary and 1% others. The number of graduates coming out of technical colleges was slightly over 700,000 in 2012-2013. However, 75% of technical graduates and more than 85% of general graduates are unemployable by India's high-growth industries, including information technology.

The present ratio of student: teacher in the country is almost 20:1, colleges having about 4, 21,000 teachers and universities 79,000. More than 25% colleges' and almost 35% universities' teaching positions nationwide are vacant, and 57% of college and 22% university teacher lack either a master's or Ph.D. degree.

India's one of the major wealth is youth (18-40 years of age) which presently stands at almost 80 million, 62% of the total population (127 million, male 65.6 million and female 61.4%). To provide scope for skill development and education for value addition to this huge manpower base, the country has to substantially increase higher education institutes like universities, IIMS, IISCs, IITs and NITs. India continues to face stern challenges in the education front. Despite growing education, 25% of its population is still illiterate; and just 18% go college and university. The quality of higher education is significantly poor. India's post secondary institutions offer only enough seats for 7% of India's college-age population.

It is in historical context one should realize and be concerned about the quality of education provided by the universities and colleges. All along even, even long before independence, following the British model we have adopted an external 'examination' system for the graduates trained by the colleges through what is now known as an affiliation system. Thus externalizing the evaluation of the quality it is true for individual students and also for the institutions. Externalisation of evaluation of the quality of institutions is normally done through:

- 1) Recognition
- 2) Affiliation
- 3) Accreditation
- 4) Academic audits and the like.

Most of these processes in vogue use a two point scale i.e. recognized or not, but never indulge in grading. Understandably when education is included as a tradable commodity in GATS under WTO, some of the advanced countries that could export education attempted to add value to their educational products through international ratings of the exporting institutions and ranking to succeed in the international educational market.

The quality of higher education continues to be a major concern. In fact, acquisition of quality with access and equity is the great challenge faced by all higher education institutions in India. In spite of several initiatives by the government, UGC and the universities, the quality of higher education still present a lot of challenges for further improvement. The quality of teaching and research is closely associated with continuous development of educational infrastructure, instructional design process, quality of curricular competence and motivation of

the faculty and reforms in the examination system. The process of curricular design and implementation needs greater attention. The method of instruction of competent teachers in our universities and colleges too needs revamping.

Due to the rapid changing circumstances at home and abroad, expectations and demands from universities, such as the development of cultured human resources with deeply specialized knowledge and contributions to the solution of various kinds of social issues, such as poverty, gender discrimination, human rights and liberty, impact of globalization, environmental concerns, skill development are increasing day by day. They can be addressed through – access, equity, quality and relevance of higher education.

Several of the problems in the state universities are linked to the archaic system and regulations that govern them. Without bringing about reforms in the existing governance and regulatory systems, it will not be possible to unleash the potential of the state universities. The reforms initiated under RUSA will build a self-sustaining momentum that will push for greater accountability and autonomy of state institutions and impress upon them the need to improve the quality of education.

There are many quality gaps with respect to curriculum design and development, teaching-learning, and evaluation, research consultancy and extension, infrastructure and learning resources, student support and progression, governance, management and leadership. The Indian education system has been struggling hard to evolve itself into a National System where graduates can move across the State boundaries and beyond ever since independence. With great difficulty and after five decades we had adopted a 'National Qualification Framework (NQFW) for the schools with 12 years of study to be at par with the rest of the world. We have not evolved one for higher education system even today.

The major challenge is to provide jobs for 116 million youths who would be in the age group of 20-24 years. In India where there are 729 universities and 37, 000 colleges ranking through may not be difficult, the ranks at the bottom or even at the middle range can never help the institutions to make an effort to improve. What would be the incentive for a university which is placed in 320<sup>th</sup> rank (out of 729) to reach to the top. Public universities and colleges will have no resources of their own to compete in the race. Also it will be difficult to assess for the

ranking every year by a central body. Multiple agencies may not be comparable in their choice of criteria and methods. Institutions may not be prepared to come up for such frequent assessment. The research and development is the weakest link in our higher education system. Innovations in higher education system are insignificant. In spite of the large number of higher education institutions in the country, we do not figure in the first 200 world class institutions.

It is during the last one decade that the university ranking have taken the forefront and a number of agencies including universities have commissioned themselves for task of global ranking of universities. The Times Higher Education (THE) 'World University Rankings' and the Shanghai Jiao Tong Institute of Higher Education's (SJTU) 'Academic Ranking of World Universities (ARWU)' are among the most popular ones.

We have seen in the past some of the teachers in the higher learning institutions have produced outstanding scholars. During those days there was no NAAC, there was no academic audit and no attendance and yet they produced talented students from the institutions. The students came out from the academic institutions were with self confidence. At one point of time some of the students have expressed that they need only self confidence that they can lead a life with their own strength, capacity and capability as the students in the west. In such a way students have to be prepared whether students from higher learning institutions are coming out with self confidence despite these accountability measures is yet another question to be answered. We find variations in terms of institution capacity structurally and functionally and hence one will find variations among the product of these institutions.

Independent of these developments, related with the overall quality of the higher education system, A National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) was established following the world wide practice of quality assurance through external assessment procedures. In its formative years NAAC had consciously used 3/5 point grading, to help the institution to know their strengths and weaknesses explicitly outlined in the detailed commendations and recommendations of the peers in their report. In the report interest, it was considered as the best option. NAAC, at that time was advised by many experts mostly from abroad, not to get into even grading into categories. The American Accreditation system do not grade or rank even today.

Gnanam A. (2014) said that Grading or ranking as on sees in the league tables annually prepared and published in the media of the inter university football or base ball teams participating in the university or national league matches. They usually rank not more a dozen or two participating in the competition. Looking at the not so positive side, one has to think whether it should be possible to close down the institutions that are placed in last 5-10% of them. Mr. Kaw, the Secretary of MHRD in late 1990s advised the NAAC not to fail any of the institutions and the government will not be able to close the down-even the public ones. That is the reason why NAAC us asking it's assesses who could not make the grade to come for reassessment after stipulated number of years instead of declaring them as failed.

### **Conclusion**

World class does not happen overnight whatever may be the support system. With the sustained quality research proven through publications, technology development and transfer, as well as production of quality students suitable as per employers' requirement they could obtain the status. The very nature of work culture, appointment and retention of the best faculty, dedicated research for technology generation publication and teaching, wide array of courses, full administrative support, academic and research freedom, as well as provision and maintenance of good infrastructure facility are the driving forces. There is a need to engrave confidence in our research for the generation of new knowledge and technologies to serve the need of the country and humanity. In common parlance if we want to reform our system we must develop all round quality development i.e. infrastructure, faculty, research, library and teaching to produce quality education and reforms.

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