

## A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF HIGHER EDUCATION –INDIA v/s CHINA

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### **ABSTRACT :**

*Higher education plays an important role in the economic development of any economy. Globalization has brought education to the forefront and colleges/universities are vying with each other to lure the best possible talents. In the midst of all these are the two Asian countries India and China who have been drawing a lot of attention in recent times. Higher education in India has a long history dating way back to 4th century BC. She has a universally acclaimed Brain Power. Our system has a number of advantages such as large education sector, widespread use of English as a medium of instruction, Prowess in the fields of science and technology, political stability etc. The system, however, is not devoid of demerits. They include poor infrastructure, faculty crunch, bureaucratic inertia, dualistic system of education, outdated syllabus etc. China on the other hand is currently the fastest growing economy ranking first in the world in terms of enrolment. After being under rigid political rule and being influenced by the Soviet Union, the economy implemented reforms in higher education in 1977. Since then the economy has been progressing. The system has advantages in terms of increasing number of foreign students, rising number of institutions, emphasis on research etc. Chinese system of higher education also has demerits in the form of neglect of humanities and social sciences, Chinese legacy, disparity between funding and equity etc. A comparison between the two highlights China's advancement over India in terms of quality, Gross enrolment Ratio, and growth of high quality institutions. The Global Competitiveness Report of 2014- 15, indicates that while India ranks 61, China ranks 30. It is predicted that India will top the world by 2030. However, this has to be accompanied by quality improvement and by laying greater emphasis on research and innovations if India has to make her mark as an Intellectual Super Power.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Education plays a very important role in our lives and one can say that without education training is incomplete. Education, they say, makes a man a right thinker and correct decision maker. It brings him knowledge from the external world, which teaches him to reason and acquaint him with past history. This makes him a better judge of the present. An academic revolution is taking place in the 21st Century. Globalization has profoundly influenced higher education. It has brought the education sector to the market place, where the students are the consumers and colleges and universities are the providers of educational services. In this scenario two emerging economies India and China, occupying the top positions in the present system of enrolment, are competing with each other to capture the global knowledge world. In this Paper an attempt has been made to examine the current state of Indian and Chinese system of higher education, discuss the merits and

limitations of the two systems, briefly compare the two systems and make an attempt to predict the future trend.

### OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study under consideration has the following objectives:

1. To highlight the structure of higher educational institutions in India and China;
2. Draw a comparison between the two systems so as to understand the merits and flaws of each;
3. Most important is to discuss what is best for India which would pave the way for future growth.

The study is descriptive in nature and secondary sources of data are used. Material has been sourced out from journals, periodicals and government publications.

#### Indian System of Higher Education

The system of Indian higher education is both enormous and complex. On account of its huge potential it holds promising prospects. Our system has a long and rich tradition. From Ancient Bharat to Modern India education has always occupied an important place in the Indian society. In the past Takashila (6th century BC), Vikramsila (5th century BC) and Nalanda (4th century BC) were renowned centers of learning. Several universities of national importance including the IITs and the IIMs have emerged as global brands in the world of education and research.

The following table illustrates the growth of educational institutions in India

**Table 1 Growth of higher education in India**

Type of Institution	Number	% of total
Central Universities	43	7.05
State Universities	289	47.38
State Private Universities	94	15.41
Deemed to be Universities	129	21.15
Institutions of National Importance + Other Institutions	50	8.19
Institutions established under State Legislative Acts	05	0.82
Total Colleges	610	

Indian system higher education sector has both its positives as well as its negatives. Let us discuss them.

#### Strengths

India's areas of strengths in the education sector can be discussed as follows:

**Large Education Sector:** India's education sector is one of the largest in the world both in terms of enrolment of students and in terms of the number of institutions;

**Long Teaching and Learning Experience:** India has had a long teaching and research experience. Three main Indian universities, (Mumbai, Kolkata and Chennai) were started in 1857. In addition she has been home to Noble Laureates Rabindranath Tagore and CV Raman

**Extensive Use of English Language:** Even after gaining independence from the British Raj, English in India is being exclusively used as a primary knowledge medium of higher education and research

in several Indian colleges and universities. This gives her a competitive edge in the international knowledge market.

**Good Quality Institutions:** India possesses some high quality institutions, who can match the very best in the world. This includes the IITs, the IIMs and a few other institutions.

**India's Prowess in Science and Technology:** India has a well- acclaimed Brain Power .Our standing in science and technology is ahead of most developing countries and even some of the smaller advanced countries.

**India's standing in the Information and Communication Technology Sector:** India's prowess in the IT sector is universally recognized. This has resulted in an international demand for Indian manpower. **Stable Government:** Ever since the attainment of independence in 1947, India has had a stable democratic government with a sound political history. In fact India is the largest democracy in the world; **Large Market for education:** One advantage of India's teeming population is that she has a large market, catering to the big middle class having adequate purchasing power.

### **Negatives**

**Dualistic Nature of Indian Education:** The education system, in India has acquired a dualistic character. There are wide differences in quality provided to different citizens of our country. Besides the quality imparted in most educational institutions is mediocre, even though there exist a few world class institutions, like the IITs and the IIMs.

**Outdated Syllabus:** Syllabus of Indian institutions is outdated and not comparable with international standards. After completion of studies most of our students fall in the category of unemployable youth. While the academic structure is rigid, the teaching and evaluation methods are outdated.

**Poor Infrastructure:** Infrastructure in a majority of our institutions is very poor, with majority of our institutions characterized by overcrowded classrooms, lack of library facilities, and ill-equipped laboratories.

**Faculty Crunch:** The composition and qualification of faculty may be insufficient to ensure good quality teaching. This is a problem plaguing not only the institutions of general education but also those having the status of national importance.

**Bureaucratic inertia:** Besides our education policies are largely determined by the ruling politicians and not by the academicians having Global Exposure. The existence of multiple controls and regulations exercised by Central and State Governments, statutory bodies (UGC, AICTE and others) in administration and by the local management affects the working of faculty administrators who have to provide teaching, coordinate examinations and grant degrees.

**Brain Drain:** India has suffered from the problem of Brain Drain for decades. Every year graduates from India especially those in engineering, mathematics and other sciences leave India to pursue higher education abroad. This leaves India with shortage of talent.

### **Chinese System of Higher Education**

The traditional Chinese education system is based on legalist and Confucian ideas, which has continued for the last 2500 years. In the early fifties, higher education was brought under Soviet

influence and even today one can see higher education struggling with excessive departmentalization, segmentation and overspecialization. The Cultural Revolution between 1967 and 1976 adversely affected Chinese system of higher education. One can cite the example of enrollment in post - secondary education which dropped from 6, 74,400 to 47,800. This resulted in the decline of the quality of higher education. Deng Xiaoping introduced reforms which had profound influence on Chinese system of higher education. The aim of the Reforms was to provide greater autonomy to higher educational institutions and thereby improve their ability to meet the needs of the students. Since the introduction of the Reforms higher education has made significant achievements, there has been an emergence of a system of higher education with various forms. It covers all branches of learning, combining education and graduate education. The new system has played a key role in Chinese progress in terms of scientific progress and social development. In 2010 there were 2305 higher educational institutions, among which 1090 were universities, 322 were independent colleges and 1215 were non university higher educational institutions. The total enrolment was 21,446,570. The total number of graduate students was 3, 32,641 of whom 23,227 were for PhD and 3, 09, 414 for Master's Degree.

Merits and Demerits of Chinese System of Higher Education

**The following are the merits of the Chinese system:**

Increase in the number of institutions: After the introduction of reforms there has been an increase in the number of educational institutions, where the number has more than trebled and what is more dramatic, is that over the last few years a number of smaller universities have merged into larger academic institutions;

Decline in the number of Chinese students studying abroad: There has been a decline in the number of students studying abroad. Although higher education in China is more expensive, it is definitely cheaper than studying overseas. In addition, an awakening has dawned among the students that the quality of higher education is on par with foreign universities;

Importance of Research: A noteworthy point is that China has realized the importance of research. This is highlighted by the number of publications China has to her credit;

Inflow of Foreign students: China is an attractive destination to several foreign students. They are mainly from Asia, particularly Japan and Korea. This could largely be attributed to making of world class Chinese university and improvement in the quality of teaching and learning;

Diversified system of education: China has established a diversified higher education financing system. Public funding is still an important source of finance, however, its relative proportion is gradually declining and a diversified higher education system is being established.

**Demerits**

Neglect of Humanities and Social Sciences: China is weak in humanities particularly social sciences and law. In fact the Chinese Year Book does not provide any information on sociology, anthropology, political science, international relations, demography, statistics or law;

Chinese Legacy: China still has the legacy of conformity, discouraging innovation and lack of academic freedom. This will nullify the effects of the academic revolution taking place in China.

Disparity between funding and equity: An important issue is one of funding and equity. There is a growing concern about the fact that decentralization and semi-privatization has led to inequality of educational opportunity. This has been accompanied by increasing graduate unemployment rates.

The mind set of Chinese students: It is generally felt that a quality of rote memorization has been instilled in the students. This hampers their creative thinking and their ability to adapt easily to global business environment.

#### A Brief Comparison between Indian and Chinese Education Systems

Until the last decade Indian system of higher education beat the Chinese one in terms of both quantity as well as quality. The situation is however reverse today. In fact the Chinese system is more focused on enhancement of quality than India's.

China ranks as the largest system in the world in terms of Gross Enrolment while India is on top as regards number of higher educational institutions. In terms of Gross enrolment ratio (GER) we find that while China's GER increased from 3-4% in 1990 to 30% in 2010; India's GER in the same period registered a rise from less than 10% to just over 15%.

Thus China has outperformed India in terms of GER. This implies that while China has progressed from elite to mass and further to universal higher education system, India is struggling to achieve mass higher education.

Quality was sacrificed by China in her massive expansion of higher education, but today China boasts of many more universities in the top 200 as compared to India. India has one of the youngest populations in the world. This can have disturbing consequences on the youth.

Her GER for higher education is the lowest among the BRICS nations and one of the lowest in the world.

While the Foreign Educational Institutions (Regulation of Entry and Operations) Bill, which was first introduced in 1995, is awaiting consideration from the Parliament; China has openly embraced internationalization of higher education.

The Global Competitiveness Report published by World Economic Forum says that quality of higher education is crucial for countries who want to move up the value chain beyond simple production process and products. There is need for today's globalizing economies to nurture pools of well educated people who can complete tasks and adapt rapidly to the changing environment and evolving needs of the production system.

The pillar measures secondary and tertiary enrollment as well as the quality of education as evaluated by business leaders. The Report emphasizes the importance of vocational and continuous and on-the job training so as to ensure a constant upgrading of workers' skill. India ranks 61, whereas China was 30 places higher at 30.

#### Future of Higher Education in India

It is predicted that by 2030 India will be the youngest in the world and out of every four graduates, one will be from India. Ever since the introduction of reforms India has transformed its higher education picture. Our education sector is highlighted by being among the top 5 countries in cited research output. 6 people of Indian origin have received the Noble Prize in the last 20 years. It is

visualized that by 2030 India would have the largest population in the higher education. India has the opportunity to become a prominent Research and Development destination. For India to achieve the predicted outcome, we need a healthy education system that can give the desired results. This should be accompanied by institutions of high quality with multiple focus areas.

### **CONCLUSION**

The point to be remembered is that a comparative perspective cannot provide us with plans of action unless accompanied by widening horizons. National way of thinking is a major constraint affecting all the countries. A comparative analysis of this sort is an eye opener of sorts as it provides us an opportunity to work on our deficiencies without in any way impairing the merits. From the Indian perspective, we have to remember that students are at the center stage and to foster innovation and choice. We have to take steps to move ahead towards a desired vision if we have to have any impact on the global front. This will imply a policy framework having a combination of increasing access, equity and quality together with the right mixture of autonomy and regulation.

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