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Emerging issues and challenges in digitalization of higher education

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Abstract
Education places an important role in overall development of individuals thereby contributing immensely to the overall development of a country. Education system all over the world has gone through a dramatic change. Higher education system plays an important role for the country, overall development which includes industrial, social, economic etc. Indian higher education system is the third largest in the world. The system has many issues of concern at present, like financing and management, adequate infrastructure, technology and research, access and equity, safeguarding of national academic standards, ethical relevance, improvement and enhancement of quality of higher education together with assessment of institution and their accreditation. Under–investment in libraries, information technology, laboratories and class rooms makes it very difficult to provide top quality instruction or engage in cutting edge era. These issues are important for the country, as it is now engaged in the use of higher education as a powerful tool to build knowledge based information society. At present there is a vast need to analysis critically over higher education system and to measure for making India a knowledge based democratic and wisdom society.

Keywords: Higher Education System, Quality Education, Indian Higher Education

Introduction
India's higher education system is the world's third largest in terms of students, next to China and the United States. In future, India will be one of the largest education hubs. India's Higher Education sector has witnessed a tremendous increase in the number of Universities/University level Institutions & Colleges since independence. The 'Right to Education Act' which stipulates compulsory and free education to all children within the age groups of 6-14 years, has brought about a revolution in the education system of the country with statistics revealing a staggering enrolment in schools over the last four years. The involvement of private sector in higher education has seen drastic changes in the field. Today over 60% of higher education institutions in India are promoted by the private sector. This has accelerated establishment of institutes which have originated over the last decade making India home to the largest number of Higher Education institutions in the world, with student enrolments at the second highest (Shaguri, 2013). The number of Universities has increased 34 times from 20 in 1950 to 677 in 2014. Despite these numbers, international education rating agencies have not placed many of these institutions within the best of the world ranking. Also, India has failed to produce world class universities.

Despite these challenges higher education system of India equally have lot of opportunities to over come these challenges and have the capability to make its identity at international level. However, it needs greater transparency and accountability, the role of universities and colleges in the new millennium, and emerging scientific research on how people learn is of utmost important. India provides highly skilled people to other countries therefore; it is very easy for India to transfer our country from a developing nation to a developed nation.

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Emerging issues

Education, Commission, 1964-66 rightly pointed out, saying, 'The destiny of India is being shaped in her classrooms.' In fact, classrooms are the places where the future citizens of the country are reared, trained, educated and motivated to accept the new challenges and to face the changing situations. The system of Indian Higher education is the second largest in the world which fulfills the educational needs of millions of students who come from different sections of the society because it is the student community that can help to generate healthy academic atmosphere in institutions of higher learning. No doubt that India faces today a number of problems pertaining to illiteracy, poverty, unemployment, crisis of moral and spiritual values. India has been a multi-cultural, multi-religious, and multi-linguistic society. Every State has a different and distinct identity. Dealing with various aspirations of such people in a democratic country is indeed a challenge to the Govt. of India. The various issues are outlined here:

Lack of quality education

In the top 100 universities list by 'Times Higher Education World Reputation Rankings', none of the Indian universities could be found in the list. In the 2017 rankings by the HRD ministry, only 2,995 institutions (6%) participated from around 51,000-strong higher educational institutions in India. There is severe regional imbalance too. In the overall rankings, of the 100 best institutions, 67 are from just eight states. Among the best 100 universities, 40 are in three states. Among the best 100 colleges, 77 are from just five states (Nanda, Prashant K. 2017).

Corruption in education

Corruption in Indian education system has been eroding the quality of education. It is one of the major contributors to domestic black money. Payment to Management at dark rooms and seeking admissions is increasing. 'Get full salary in the account, pay back part to Management by blank signed cheques' is also a practice in some private schools.

No proper value education

Value education is not offered in the schools and colleges. If offered, religion and hatred are spread in the name of value education. Many of the doctors, lawyers, CAs, politicians and Govt servants who are supposed to be the saviours of the society, suffer from serious charges of corruption. Old-age homes are increasing. Suicides are increasing. The meaning of love is eventually changing. The education-led technology, inventions and innovations are being misused.

Poor Women's education

Women have a much lower literacy rate than men. Conservative cultural attitudes prevent girls from attending schools. Despite Govt's attempts to provide incentives viz. midday meals, free books and uniforms, girls' attendance is poor. Though the minimum age for marriage is eighteen, many girls get married much earlier. Therefore, at the secondary level, female drop-out rate is high.

Lack of Facilities

As per 2016 Annual Survey of Education Report, 3.5% schools in India had no toilet facility while only 68.7% schools had useable toilet facility. 75.5% of the schools surveyed had library in 2016, a decrease from 78.1% in 2014. Percentage of schools with separate girls' toilet has increased from 32.9% in 2010 to 61.9% in 2016. 74.1% schools had drinking water facility and 64.5% of the schools had playground.

Curriculum issues

There are many different curriculum systems that confuse the students who wish to achieve the same objective such as Engineering, Medical and Business Administration. At the higher education level, there is no uniformity in the syllabuses taught for the same programme. Syllabus revision is done quite often without considering the contemporary requirements of industries. There is lack of diversity in the subjects one can take in colleges. Flexibility to cross over streams is also lacking.

Public school workforce absenteeism

Teacher absenteeism in India is exorbitant. World Bank estimates show the cost in salaries paid to absent teachers is US $2 billion every year. In a study by Kremer, etc, they found 25% of private sector teachers and 40% of public sector medical workers were absent during the survey. Absence rates among them ranged from 14.6% in Maharashtra to 41.9% in Jharkhand.

Wrong societal outlook

For Governments, more scoring is success. English is becoming the measure of intellect. Hence, parents of today take least interest in vernacular medium of education. Due to the perceived notion of inferior quality, Govt schools are becoming the last choice for many. Education-seeking migration has become a matter of pride for many families. Most of the school students spend majority of their learning time in preparing for competitive exams. Coaching classes too flourish due to this unwarranted competition, leading to a class-divide.

Emerging Challenges

Still we are facing lot of challenges in our education system some of the basic challenges in higher education system in Indian are discussed below:

Gap between the Supply and demand: In higher education, India has a low rate of enrolment i.e. gross enrolment ratio (GER), at only 19%. If we compared to China and Brazil GER is 26% and 36% respectively.

Lack of Quality Research work: There is no shortage of funding for the top Indian Institutions such as IITs, IIMs and other institutes of national importance. However, budget for the Research is not under spent due to the insufficient good quality research work. Due to the limited focus on Research and Internationalization, very few Indian higher educational institutes are globally recognized.

Shortage of Faculty and High Student-Faculty Ratio: In most of the state and central universities more than 30% of faculty positions are lying vacant. While the student enrolment in higher education is growing with faster rate in the last few years.

Inadequate Infrastructure and Facilities: Apart from the highly recognized higher educational institutes in India most

of the colleges and universities lack in the basic and high-end research facilities. Many institutes are running without proper infrastructure and basic facilities like library, hostels, transport, sports facility etc. which is desirable to rank the quality institution.

Low employability of graduates is one of the major problem in India. Only a small proportion of Indian graduates are considered employable. Placement outcome also drop significantly as we move away from the top institutes.

Enrolment: The Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) of India in higher education is only 15% which is quite low as compared to the developed as well as, other developing countries. With the increase of enrolments at school level, the supply of higher education institutes is insufficient to meet the growing demand in the country.

Equity: There is no equity in GER among different sects of the society. According to previous studies the GER in higher education in India among male and female varies to a greater extent. There are regional variations too some states have high GER while as some is quite behind the national GER which reflect a significant imbalances within the higher education system.

Quality: Quality in higher education is a multi-dimensional, multilevel, and a dynamic concept. Ensuring quality in higher education is amongst the foremost challenges being faced in India today. However, Government is continuously focusing on the quality education. Still Large number of colleges and universities in India are unable to meet the minimum requirements laid down by the UGC and our universities are not in a position to mark its place among the top universities of the world.

Infrastructure: Poor infrastructure is another challenge to the higher education system of India particularly the institutes run by the public sector suffer from poor physical facilities and infrastructure. There are large number of colleges which are functioning on second or third floor of the building on ground or first floor there exists readymade hosieries or photocopy shops.

Political interference: Most of the educational Institutions are owned by the political leaders, who are playing key role in governing bodies of the Universities. They are using the innocent students for their selfish means. Students organise campaigns, forget their own objectives and begin to develop their careers in politics.

Faculty: Faculty shortages and the inability of the state educational system to attract and retain well qualified teachers have been posing challenges to quality education for many years. Large numbers of NET / PhD candidates are unemployed even there are lot of vacancies in higher education, these deserving candidates are then applying in other departments which is a biggest blow to the higher education system.

In the globalized economy, the competence and the quality of our product have to meet the world standards. Globalization is progressing so rapidly that we have no alternative rather than to accept the fact and that the Higher Education has been playing crucial role in preparing ourselves for task.

Our heterogeneous education system, based on geographical, rural-urban, rich-poor set up has posed in great challenge for the educational institutions. Varieties of colleges, universities, technical institutions have produced and different types and quality of Education. Some of them are really imparting qualitative education while a few others are doing the dirtiest job. Thanks to UGC, for publishing the list of such a fake Universities and Institutions indulging in educational malpractices.

Teaching of English in the multilingual context.
Language has been accepted as a major vehicle for conveying thoughts and feelings and there by storing our experiences and establishing relationship in the society yet, the teaching of languages in general and the teaching of languages of instruction in particular is taken for granted which is unacceptable in the multilingual milieu of globalized world. Therefore, the use of languages other than English in higher education needs to be viewed creatively. Most important of all, there is a need to improve language competence in general.

Interference of political factors:
Most of the Institutions, imparting education (Aided-non-aided) are owned by the dominant political leaders, now playing key role in governing bodies of the Universities. They have established their own youth cells and encourage students' organization on political basis. They exploit the students' energy for their political purposes. The students forget their own objectives and begin to develop their careers in politics.

Lack of Moral values
Rapid growth of science and technology and subsequent industrialization has caused a great and danger to our old moral and values. The younger generation's dissatisfaction and revolt is the outcome of a decaying system of values.

Conclusion
Higher education in India has expanded very rapidly in the last six decades after independence yet it is not equally accessible to all. India is today one of the fastest developing countries of the world with the annual growth rate going above 9%. Still a large section of the population remains illiterate and a large number of children's do not get even primary education. This is not only excluded a large section of the population from contributing to the development of the country fully but it has also prevented them from utilizing the benefits of whatever development have taken place for the benefit of the people. No doubt India is facing various challenges in higher education but to tackle these challenges and to boost higher education is utmost important. India is a country of huge human resource potential, to utilize this potential properly is the issue which needed to discuss. Opportunities are available but how to get benefits from these opportunities and how to make them accessible to others is the matter of concern. 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. To reach and achieve the future requirements there

is an urgent need to relook at the Financial Resources, Access and Equity, Quality Standards, Relevance, infrastructure and at the end the Responsiveness.

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