
The Emergence of the Re-engineered Higher Education in India

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Abstract

The higher education sector in India is witnessing positive, purposeful and interesting changes. This article brings awareness about the various changes that have been witnessed in the higher education in the recent past. It is a touch down upon the public as well as private sector initiatives which are propelling a positive change in Indian higher education. This is expected to further boost the Indian economy in the years to come. In this article we shall see the impact of the private and deemed universities that have come up, the industry education partnership, foreign university collaboration and government initiatives to boost and regulate the sector.

Keywords: Higher Education, Government Initiatives, Foreign Collaborations, Private/ Deemed Universities

Introduction

Indian higher education system is world's third largest education system (NIRF 2015; Sharma and Sharma 2015). It is witnessing interesting, positive and purposeful changes. In the last few years India has become more advanced economically, technologically, medically, socially and with this change, the aspirations of its young people are also changing. The young and intelligent youth of India have become more discerning and demanding. Moreover, the demographic constitution of India is inclining towards the youth. With the median age of the Indian population at 27.9 years and half of the Indian population (53.7 per cent) being below 25 years of age (Census India 2011). It can rightly be said that 'the oldest nation on earth is about to become the youngest country of the world'.

The number of youth affected by and affecting the higher education (within the age group of 18-23 years) are a whopping 14.18 crores. (AISHE 2017-18).

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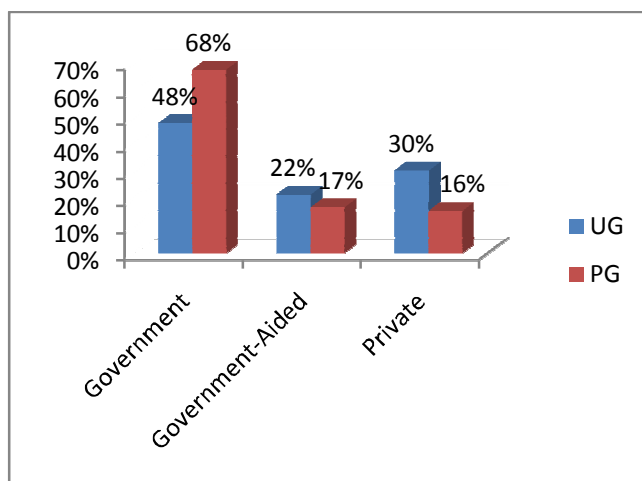
Objective:

Managing the higher education in a large country like India is a gargantuan task and the government is taking many initiatives to boost, regulate and control this sector. This study highlights the unprecedented steps taken by the government in the recent past. This study also brings to light the various initiatives being taken by the private universities and changes taking place in the higher education scenario in India.

Emergence of many private and deemed Universities

The last decade has seen the emergence of a large number of private universities. As many as 175 new private universities have opened in the last decade bringing the total number of private Universities to 342 out of a total of 903 Universities in India. (AISHE (2017-18)). There have been various pros and cons of having this large number of private institutions in the education system of the country.

Figure 1: Distribution of student enrolment in Academic Programmes



Source: AISHE (2017-18)

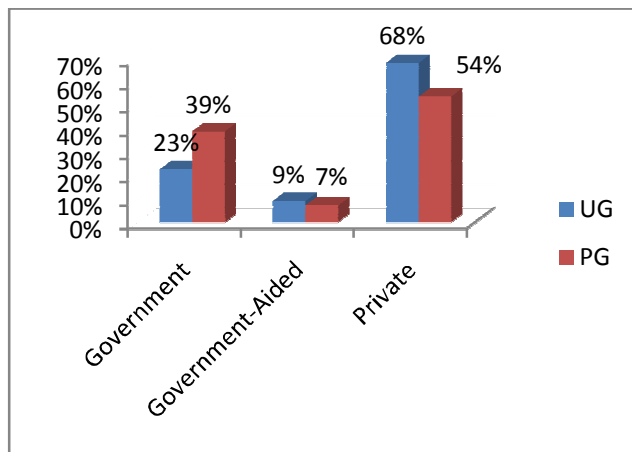
Firstly, these private universities have greatly contributed in the penetration of education in both urban and rural areas especially for undergraduate students. As can be seen from Figure 1, thirty percent of students in India at UG level for academic courses are studying in private universities. The contribution of private universities has been more for the professional courses as against academic courses (Figure 2). These Universities have also generated employment for a large number of people (Aithal, Shailashree and Kumar 2016).

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With increased competition among private universities, they are creating their own USPs (Unique selling propositions). Universities are speeding up to offer new features in their courses, curriculum, placement, tie-ups etc. (Aithal, Kumar and Revathi 2018). One such new feature is opening of their own incubation centres. An incubation centre gives practical training on entrepreneurship and allows students to try out their ideas commercially in a simulated set up. These centers help the students in various stages of the new startup/ venture from ideation to its conceptualization, growth etc. by providing knowledge and industry network.

Figure 2: Distribution of student Enrolment in Professional Programmes



Source: AISHE (2017-18)

Some Universities have performed very well in India and have moved on to establish campuses outside the country. This has led to enhancement of the Indian education brand abroad besides bringing in foreign exchange for the country. Manipal University has the distinction of being India's first transnational University with campuses in Malaysia, Antigua, Nepal, Dubai, Qatar (Manipal University 2019). Amity University has its foreign campuses in London, Singapore, Dubai, Abu Dhabi, Mauritius South Africa, China and Romania etc. (Amity University 2019). India has started being perceived as a quality education provider owing in part to these private education providers.

The drawback however, has been that a large number of private universities have mushroomed all across the country in the past few years. Some colleges are being run primarily for pecuniary benefit. In such colleges, the faculty pay is low, working conditions and perquisites are low, job security is not there, etc. Their pedagogical standards are therefore not up to the mark. They are not able to attract the more capable or academically sound students i.e. the student intake quality is poor. All this adversely affects the quality of students passing out from such colleges. The government has had the arduous task of maintaining the quality of education provided by them.

To ensure quality of dissemination of knowledge by this growing number of private universities, the government has made it compulsory for all higher education institutions to get accreditation by NAAC (National Assessment and Accreditation Council). NAAC follows a detailed review on various aspects like teaching, infrastructure, research, student support,

institutional values and best practices etc.(NAAC 2019). It's a very detailed and comprehensive testing system, making it slightly complicated to follow the first time. To ease this process of NAAC accreditation, on 16th July 2019, the UGC has initiated a scheme of mentoring facility whereby the aspiring institutions (who want NAAC accreditation) shall be mentored by other well established institutions to promote quality assurance in the country (University Grant Commission, July 2019). This shall ease the accreditation process greatly.

In future the government intends to make NAAC into an independent and autonomous body by separating it from UGC. Then, it is expected to assess higher educational institutions once every five to seven years. The government also plans to consolidate around 800 universities and 40,000 colleges into about 15,000 large well-resourced vibrant multi-disciplinary institutions (Draft of National Education Policy 2019, MHRD, GOI official website).

The two most important aspects of quality control in education are process quality control and intake quality control. To ensure quality intake of candidates, a common National Testing Agency (NTA) has been established by the government of India recently in 2017. NTA conducts entrance examinations for admission in various higher educational institutions. For Engineering, the (JEE – Joint Entrance Exam) is conducted by NTA, for management, CMAT Common Management Admission Test (CMAT) for Pharmacy, the GPAT (Graduate Pharmacy Aptitude Test) National Eligibility Test (NET) for Assistant Professors and Junior Research Fellowships etc.(NTA 2019).

Corporatization of education: Industry education partnership

The past two decades especially have seen the entry of many well-known business houses in the arena of education. Arvind Mills group opened the Ahmadabad University in 2009, JK cement Industries have opened the JK Lakshmipat University in Jaipur in 2011 to name a few. GD Goenka, Wipro, HCL, NIIT, Ansal, Nirma are a few more business houses in the list. Reliance has been in the news in the recent past with regard to their Jio University (Table 1).

The pioneer business house to enter the field of education was the Tata Group who opened the Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS) in 1936, and Tata Institute of Fundamental Research (TIFR) in 1945 (TISS 2019; TIFR 2019). Followed by Birla Group opened the Birla Institute of Technology in 1964 (BITS, Pilani 2019).

The partnership between the business houses and education is being perceived as a win-win situation for both the company and the education sector. Businesses/corporate houses stand to gain from the reputable business that higher education offers whereas the education industry gets a readymade placement market for its students as well as practical training grounds as part of its courses. In fact many of these corporates are entering the field of education through the CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) route. Spending around 2% of average company's profits under Corporate Social Responsibility was introduced in the Companies Act 2013 (Ministry of Corporate Affairs, Government of India 2013). Education is one of the arenas of utilizing the funds available under CSR. Though most corporate have focused on primary education, some have also invested in higher education and training. One such example is of Infosys, the famous

IT giant of India runs the Campus Connect program. This programmed works in close association with engineering colleges. It has launched many elective subjects, keeping in mind the industry requirements, to help engineering colleges run new programs within their curricula. In FY 2018-19, around 52,051 students indirectly received training by Infosys (Infosys 2019).

Emergence of new non- traditional courses and Course combination Offers

Increased competition amongst Universities has forced them to create their own USPs in terms of newer and improved courses are being offered to students. In the past students could graduate in limited traditional courses. Earlier, limited specialization choices were available under science, commerce or humanities. Now the students have got a wide variety of courses to choose from like transport logistics design, digital marketing, data analytics, event management, fashion designing etc. Many of these specialized courses were unheard of in the past like 'fashion-communication', 'sports-management' etc. Similarly B. Tech with CSE (Specialisation in Artificial Intelligence, Machine Learning, and Data Analytics etc.) (VIT 2019) are being offered now.

The 'study-work-retire financials' are changing across the globe and India is no exception. 'Study work retire ratio' refers to the number of years on an average spent by a person in studying, working and retired life. Youth of today have to study for a longer period and also save enough for a longer retirement life period, with the working period being shorter than in the past. Retired life has increased because life expectancy has improved owing to better standards of living and advancement in medical sciences. It has been estimated that the previous generation roughly spent 20 years studying, worked for 25 years and retired for 15 years. This has now changed to an average of 25 years of study time, 25 years of working time and increased retirement of around 30 years.

Keeping in mind these revised study, work and retire financials and in making students ready for industry faster; private Universities are offering course combinations. Many Universities are offering combination of professional courses along with traditional graduation courses for example a combination of B. Com with ACCA (Association of Chartered certified Accountants, UK), B. Com with ICMA (Institute of Cost and Management Accountants) (DY Patil University, Pune website, 2019). Law colleges are offering an BBA with LLB integrated programme.

Many courses in engineering, accounting, computing, life sciences are integrating management education in their courses, obliterating the need of the student to separately undertake an MBA programme in the future.

UGC is currently seriously looking into the practicalities of allowing students to undertake multiple courses/degrees simultaneously (UGC 21 July 2019).

Foreign University collaborations

Foreign University collaborations are now fulfilling the desire of many students to study in prestigious universities abroad while living in India. These collaborations and twinning agreements offer completion of the courses abroad or student or faculty exchange programme or

joint teaching agreements, holding of joint conferences, research projects etc. A twinning programme offers an Indian student to develop a global perspective at an affordable cost. It has opened opportunities for world class education to the middle class in India. Students learn about other cultures through student exchange programmes, are able to study an improvised curriculum etc. Foreign Universities are also keen to tie up with Indian Universities as it gives them access to local talents. With foreign collaborations, the students remain in India and the Indian economy stands to gain from the study in India programme as foreign exchange drain is prevented and such collaborations are in fact, likely to attract foreign students to India to study here. This migration of foreign students to Indian Institutions will greatly help to improve the rankings of prestigious Indian Institutes (IITs/IIMs) which are in reality world class in terms of teaching, research, technology, infrastructure etc but have lost ground primarily on two aspects which are number of foreign faculties teaching there and the intake of foreign students in their programmes. (SPARC 2018).

Some Universities however, were showing foreign collaborations simply as a marketing gimmick to attract students. To prevent this wrongful alluring of students, and to maintain the standards of quality in collaborations, UGC has made specific regulations for foreign collaborations. For collaborations and twinning programmes in the field of technical research and training, the AICTE norms have been set which need to be followed. (Press Information Bureau 2016).

Government initiatives

The government of India has taken some commendable initiatives in terms of imparting education to all under three cardinal principles of free and easy access and quality of information provided, on the basis of equity. The mediums of Television and Internet have primarily been used to impart education. *Swayam Prabha* was launched on July 9, 2017. It is a group of 32 DTH television channels broadcasting educational content for post graduate and undergraduate level covering almost all disciplines. It also assists finishing school students to prepare for competitive examinations (Press Information Bureau 2017).

Massive Open Online Courses (MOOC)

Realizing the role internet technology can play in educating the Indian masses the government has started the SWAYAM portal where anyone irrespective of educational, financial background can enroll for courses in varying fields from engineering, management, finance, humanities etc. for free. He/she can choose any course and sit for an exam and qualify and generate his own certificate for a nominal fee of Rs 1,000. The *SWAYAM (Study Webs of Active Learning for Young Aspiring Minds)* has been developed by the Ministry of Human Resource Development under 8 National Coordinators (The NPTEL, UGC, CEC, IGNOU, NCERT, IIMB, NIOS, NITTR) under The course durations range from 4-12 weeks. About 56,000 hours of video content has already been uploaded and more than 471 million views have been made on the

NPTEL website (making it most accessed library of peer-reviewed educational content in the world. The SWAYAM portal allows students to watch videos; download and print study material, and also chat with other students registered for the particular course (SWAYAM NPTEL 2019).

The chart shows a commendable enrolment in SWAYAM courses in such a short span of time. The numbers are expected to grow exponentially as the awareness grows. This is a very productive way of utilizing technology to disseminate knowledge to the large student and faculty community.

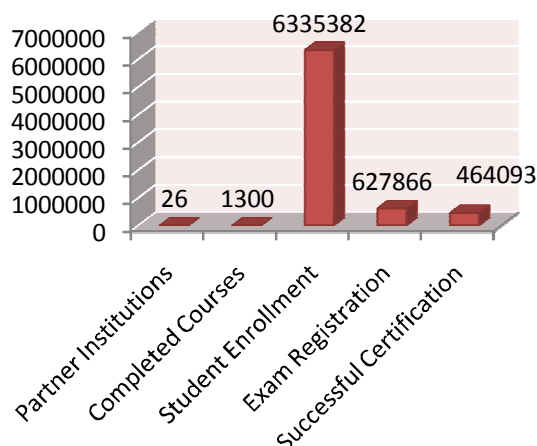


Figure 3: Performance of SWAYAM

Source: https://swayam.gov.in/nc_details/NPTEL

National Digital Library(NDLI)

NDLI is another initiative of the MHRD. This digital repository of lectures, textbooks, articles, audio books, videos other kinds of learning material has been dedicated to the nation on June 19, 2018. Developed by IIT Kharagpur, The NDLI collects and collates metadata, providing full text index from several national and international digital libraries and other sources. Its website is ndl.iitkgp.ac.in. With NDLI anybody can access digital library free of cost, giving access to more than 1.7 crore content in over 200 languages. Its popularity can be judged by the fact that by Jan-2019, it already had more than 2 million users. This has already crossed 3 million mark as on date (NDLI (2019)).

The UGC- Bachelor of Vocation (B.Voc.)

The B.Voc.(Bachelor of Vocation) programme is skills development based on higher education with multiple entry and exit options. It is targeted for the youth who want to learn, earn and grow. B Voc is a three year undergraduate course that can be pursued after class 12, in various fields like hospitality, healthcare, beauty and wellness, graphic designing, etc. with continued exposure to industry The multiple exit points allow the students to get credit, certification at all levels. For e.g., after completing first year students get a diploma certificate, after second year they get advanced diploma certificate and after completion of 3 years, B.Voc. degree is awarded. B.Voc. (UGC 2013). programmes have 40% curriculum is based on theory- business management concepts and 60 % on practical aspects and this is set to change the old perception that vocational

courses are for blue collared jobs. B. Voc. degree programmes are offered in over 200 colleges across the country with the government giving handsome financial incentives to the colleges.

Research

Research is one area where India has shown improvement but a lot of dedicated effort is still required. The state of research in India is quite dismal keeping in mind the potential, size and the intelligence of the Indian academia. For this a mind-set or an attitudinal change is required. Indian students are used to 'learning by rote'. They need to be encouraged to have critical thinking from an early age and secondly research has to be taught at undergraduate level. This second positive change can be witnessed with many universities now having included subjects like Research Methodology, Market research etc. in their undergraduate curriculum.

The quality and authenticity of research needs improvement. The number of research projects is also low. As per World Bank data, there were only 216 researchers per million population in 2015. In 2018 only 1.61 lakh students were enrolled in Ph D. programmes. This comprises less than half a percent of total student enrolment.

To improve the above scenario, Government of India has increased its budget for research. The Prime Minister's research fellowship was announced in the annual budget of 2018 with a budget allocation of INR 16.5 billion (Sengupta 2019). It has also announced the "Institutes of Eminence" scheme where it has decided to support 20 Institutes to become world class Universities. The draft policy also recommends the professional development of faculty by introducing continuous professional education of faculty.

The extent of research in alternative medicine however has been unprecedented. The past decade has seen the emergence of indigenous medical treatments like Ayurveda etc. India has realized that these alternative treatments have great potential to contribute to the economy of the country. AYUSH is a \$10 billion market and is expected to grow to a \$15 billion market by 2020 (Rai 2018). However, a scientific thinking, procedures and methodologies and a lot of research still needs to be undertaken to realize its potential. The government of India established a separate Ministry of AYUSH in November 2014, with a view to developing and propagation of AYUSH systems of Healthcare (<http://ayush.gov.in>). AYUSH includes Ayurveda, Unani, Yoga, Naturopathy, Siddha and Homeopathy. There has been steady increase in graduate and postgraduate institutes for the study of AYUSH medicine. Central regulatory councils are also being established to create infrastructure and put in place a strong regulatory framework.

Conclusion

We have observed above that a lot of initiatives have been taken by private players and the government. However, these have been quite recent. We as a country still have some way to go especially in terms of Gross Enrolment ratio (GER) and reducing underemployment.

According to the All India survey on higher education, the gross enrolment ratio GER in higher education in India has increased from 20.8% in 2011-12 to 22.8 % in 2017-18. However

India still lags behind with China which has a GER of 39.4 percent USA which had a GER of 80 6.7% and Germany which had a GER of 65.5 percent. Hence a lot of work needs to be done to improve the enrolment of students in higher education.

Moreover, a better match between skills-set developments and their future demand is required. We need to anticipate the skill, qualification requirement on a macro-economic level on the basis of expected sectorial, industry development in the future keeping in mind the technological, social, political and legal changes in the economy. This will go a long way in optimizing the human resource of India. This will help to balance out the demand and supply of human resource and avoid the incidence of underemployment in any field. For example, the past decade witnessed great underemployment of engineers; with the demand lagging behind the supply.

The quality of Indian education especially of premier institutes has been very commendable. Proof of this has been the high number of CEO and other top positions of global companies the world over occupied by alumni of the Indian higher education system.

Indian higher education system is also quite economical in relation to cost of education in other countries. A three year BBA (Bachelor of Business Administration) programme has a course fee of around 3.76 lakhs in a prestigious private University in India while the same course costs Rs 21.15 lacs in the same University's Dubai campus. The course fees in an International University are much higher.

India's higher education thus stands re-engineered with the positive initiatives taken by the government and is geared up to develop and impart world class education, catering to all budgets. If things continue the way they are then the dream of our Prime Minister that India should start exporting education to the world is bound to be fulfilled in the future.

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Table 1: Private Universities Run by Corporate Houses

Name of the Private University	Established on	Business House	Owner	Official Website
O.P. Jindal Global University, (JGU), Sonapat	2009	Jindal Steel and Power	Naveen Jindal	http://www.opju.ac.in/
G.D. Goenka University, Gurgaon,	2013	G. D. Goenka Group,	Shri A.K. Goenka	http://gdgoenkauniversity.com/
Ahmadabad University, Ahmedabad	2009	Arvind Mills Ltd, Ahmedabad	Sanjay Lalbhai	https://ahduni.edu.in/
DhirubhaiAmbani Institute of Information and Communication Technology, Gandhinagar	2001	Anil DhirubhaiAmbani Group.	Anil Ambani	http://www.daiict.ac.in/
Nirma University, Ahmedabad.	2003	Nirma Group	Karsanbhai Patel	http://www.nirmauni.ac.in/
Ansal University, Gurgaon,	2012	Ansal Properties & Infrastructure	SushilAnsal	http://ansaluniversity.edu.in/
BML Munjal University, Gurgaon	2014	Hero Group	Dr. Brij Mohan LallMunjal	https://www.bml.edu.in/
Jaypee University of Information Technology, Solan	2002	Jaypee Group	Manoj Gaur	http://www.juit.ac.in/
Usha Martin University Ranchi	2012	Usha Martin	Mr. PrashantJhwar	https://www.ushamartinuniversity.com/
J.K. LakshmiPat University, Jaipur	2011	JK Cement Limited	Shri Bharat HariSinghania	http://www.jklu.edu.in/
Mody University of Science and Technology, Sikar	1998	Hindusthan Engineering & Indus (Chemicals)	Rajendra Prasad Mody	www.modyuniversity.ac.in
NIIT University, Neemrana, Rajasthan.	2009	NIIT Ltd	RajendraPawar	https://www.niituniversity.in/
AzimPremji University	2010	Wipro Ltd	AzimPremji	https://azimpremjiuniversity.edu.in/
Shiv Nadar University	2011	HCL Technologies & Shiv Nadar Foundation.	Shiv Nadar	https://snu.edu.in/
Amity University	2005	AKC Group of companies	Dr. Ashok Chauhan	http://www.amity.edu/
Birla Institute of Technology & Science, Pilani	1964	Aditya Birla Group	G D Birla forefather of Kumar Mangalam Birla	http://www.bits-pilani.ac.in/

Source: Compiled from official websites of various universities