



Higher Education in India - the Road to Progress

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Abstract: By 2030, India will be amongst the youngest nations in the world. With nearly 140 million people in the college-going age group, one in every four graduates in the world will be a product of the Indian higher education system. Over the last two decades, India has remarkably transformed its higher education landscape. It has created widespread access to low-cost high-quality university education for students of all levels. India has also undertaken large-scale reforms to better faculty-student ratios by making teaching an attractive career path, expanding capacity for doctoral students at research universities and delinking educational qualifications from teaching eligibility. India has emerged as a regional hub of education and attracts global learners from all over the world. Students, faculty and employers now flock to India to learn, teach and recruit as India dons the mantle of a higher education leader and emerges the role model for delivering high. The implementation framework suggests the student at the center stage to foster innovation and choice, an ICT architecture that will increase access, equity and quality, and a transparent governance framework that will enable autonomy and self-regulation.

Keywords: Higher Education, vision 2030, Student centric learning

Introduction:

By 2030, India will be amongst the youngest nations in the world. With nearly 140 million people in the college-going age group, one in every four graduates in the world will be a product of the Indian higher education system.

Over the last two decades, India has remarkably transformed its higher education landscape. It has created widespread access to low-cost high-quality university education for students of all levels. With well-planned expansion and a student-centric learning-driven model of education. India has not only bettered its enrolment numbers but has dramatically enhanced its learning outcomes.

A differentiated three-tiered university system where each tier has a distinct

strategic objective has enabled universities to build on their strengths and cater across different categories of educational needs. Further, with the effective use of technology, India has been able to resolve the longstanding tension between excellence and equity.

India has also undertaken large-scale reforms to better faculty-student ratios by making teaching an attractive career path, expanding capacity for doctoral students at research universities and delinking educational qualifications from teaching eligibility.

In recent years, India has undertaken massive structural and systemic changes that have started to yield encouraging results. The country has been touted to have the best-in-class post-secondary education system at present. Some of the significant factors that have contributed to this growth and can help envision the 2030 dream includes:



- Expansion of a differentiated university system with a three-tiered formalized structure
- Transition to a learner-centered paradigm of education
- Intensive use of technology
- Reforms in governance

Highlights Of India's Education Sector:

India is the single largest provider of global talent, with one in four graduates in the world being a product of the Indian system. India is among top 5 countries globally in cited research output, its research capabilities boosted by annual R&D spends amounting to over US\$140 billion.

India is in the fourth cycle of its research excellence framework, with at least a 100 of Indian universities competing with the global best. 23 Indian universities are among the global top 200, going from none two decades ago.

In the last 20 years alone, 6 Indian intellectuals have been awarded the Nobel Prize across categories. India is a regional hub for higher education, attracting global learners from all over the world. The country has augmented its GER to 50% while also reducing disparity in GER across states to 5 percentage points. The Indian higher education system is needs-blind, with all eligible students receiving financial aid. Two-thirds of all government spending towards higher education is spent on individuals, including faculty and students.

India's massive open online courses, started by several elite research universities, collectively enroll 60% of the world's entire student population. Indian higher education institutions are governed by the highest standards of ethics and accountability, with every single one of them being peer-reviewed and accredited.

To achieve the envisioned state in 2030, transformational and innovative interventions would be required across all levers of the higher education system:

Higher Education:

1. Curricula and Pedagogy
2. Faculty
3. Research
4. Partnerships
5. Infrastructure
6. Funding
7. Governance

•By 2030, India will have the largest population in the world, in the higher education age bracket. Increasing urbanization and income levels will drive demand for higher education.

•India's economy is expected to grow at a fast pace; rapid industrialization would require a gross incremental workforce of -250 million by 2030; India could potentially emerge as a global supplier of skilled manpower.

•India has the opportunity to become a prominent R&D destination.

•Given the expected socio-economic scenario in 2030, India would need a robust higher education system that can deliver on multiple imperatives.

•A differentiated system of institutions with differing objectives and focus areas would be critical for achieving the proposed goals.

Vision 2030 can be achieved by doing away with debilitating regulations that inhibit Indian higher education sector. There is a need to restore the autonomy of the institutions of higher education. In the past, institutions of higher learning had to contest many of these stifling regulations and seek justice from the courts. The current rigid and bureaucratic control in higher education can be replaced by an indirect form of



control based on accreditation and performance-linked funding. Regulatory bodies should redefine and reinvent their roles as 'nurturing the quality' and 'promoting autonomy and accountability' which will ultimately lead to 'self-regulation' and 'introspection' among the higher education institutions.

Further, foreign universities should be allowed without any preferential treatment vis-a-vis the Indian institutions. There are some fears about entry of the foreign universities among certain quarters. But by applying principle of 'level playing field', these fears can be allayed. Healthy competition in the market for higher education and providing more choices to the students will be good for the health of Indian higher education.

All the top universities and institutions, both public and private, should be encouraged to internationalize their academic and administrative working by recruiting more and more foreign students and faculty. They should also send their students and faculty to join partner universities abroad. Leadership of these top institutions needs to be encouraged to join global networks of higher education so as to be connected with global trends.

Answering to a question of why 80% of engineering college students is not employable. Dr. Salam commented that the problem lies with the system itself. The system of teachers, syllabus, learning methodologies and curriculum focuses on creating theory experts. There is no focus on practical learning and field awareness. Also, teachers are selected based only on the marks secured in masters and PhD programs. There is no test of skills in pedagogy. The Kerala Government has put forth a proposal to set up 1 year teacher training program for Masters and

PhD graduates to the Central Government.

This year marks 80 years of constitutional democracy. 40 years of economic liberalization, and 20 years of accelerated educational reform. While each of these is a milestone in itself on the road to India's success, the last of these is perhaps the most momentous for India at a time when the world's oldest civilisation is also its youngest nation.

Today, the median age of India's 1.5 billion strong population is a mere 32; a good ten years lower than most other nations in the world. Today, India is the largest contributor to the global workforce, its working age population surpassing 950 million. It is no surprise then that, India has emerged to be the world's third largest economy achievement underpinned, no doubt, by its unique demographic advantage, but also a prospect that would not have translated into reality if not for the country's pioneering reforms in university education over the past 20 years.

Over the last two decades, India has remarkably transformed its higher education landscape. It has created widespread access to low-cost high-quality university education for students of all levels. With well and a student-centric learning-driven model of education. India has not only bettered its enrolment numbers but has dramatically enhanced its learning outcomes. A differentiated three distinct strategic objective - has enabled universities to build on their strengths and cater across different categories of educational needs. Further, with the effective use of technology, India has been able to resolve the longstanding tension between excellence and equity. India has also



undertaken large by making teaching an attractive career path, expanding capacity for doctoral students at research universities and delinking educational qualifications from teaching eligibility.

As a result, today, India's 70 million student population is a force to reckon with. Among them are potential thought leaders - researchers and academics - positioned at the helm of knowledge creation. Among them are entrepreneurs and executives of the future, industry-ready and highly sought after. From among them emerges India's massive workforce, the engine of its US\$13 trillion economy.

Despite these strides of progress, India's higher education institutions are not yet the best in the world fewer than 25 universities in the top 200. Yet, India's post being the best for the world. The promise of excellence and equity has made the Indian higher education system worthy of emulating, certainly in the developing world that faces the same challenges as India did in the decades prior to its higher education reforms, but less obviously in pockets of the developed world which is under tremendous pressure to provide higher education in cost-effective ways.

However, India has emerged as a regional hub of education and attracts global learners from all over the world. Students, faculty and employers now flock to India to learn, teach and recruit as India dons the mantle of a higher education leader and emerges the role model for delivering high.

In short, India has gone from a post-secondary education system that was nearly broken to one that is touted to be best-in-class for the 21st century world in less than two decades, and it is worth taking a closer look at how the country made this remarkable transformation.

While it is important to address the existing shortcomings in the higher education system, it is more important to move towards a bold and aspirational vision.

We strongly believe that a stratified three tiered structure that enables seamless vertical and horizontal mobility of students would be able to create the desired intellectual, economic and social value. The implementation framework suggests the student at the center stage to foster innovation and choice, an ICT architecture that will increase access, equity and quality, and a transparent governance framework that will enable autonomy and self-regulation. A framework for governance has been detailed in the addendum document which proposes a mechanism based on outcomes and strong institutional accountability, clearly delineating the role and responsibilities of the government as well as public and private higher education institutions.

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