

## PARADIGM SHIFT IN INDIAN HIGHER EDUCATION- CHALLENGES AHEAD

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### **Abstract**

*Indian higher education is changing very rapidly from the 11<sup>th</sup> Five year plan (2007-2013). These changes are however noticed in three basic areas, viz. the national system of education become global, the education has become the priority and lifelong education for the mass people rather than one time formal education for the fewer ones, as well as it changed into learner centric, rather than teacher centric. These changes are throwing new demands and pose fresh challenges to our established educational system as well as the practices in our country. This paper is an attempt to analyze those challenges and to establish a link with the present scenario of the higher education in our country. There are certain goals to be achieved in the field of higher education and these are expansion, equity and excellence as per mentioned by N.K.C. Here in this paper an attempt has been made to reflect how far these goals have been achieved by the higher educational system at present. Lastly, an overview of the higher education system has been presented with some suggestions to meet the challenges of higher education in India.*

**Keywords:** *paradigm shift, higher education, challenges in education*

Indian higher education system is changing very rapidly from the 11<sup>th</sup> five year plan (2007-2012). These changes are however noticed in three basic areas, viz, the national system of education become global, the education has become the priority and lifelong for the mass people rather than one time formal education for the fewer ones, as well as it changed into learner centric rather than teacher centric. These changes are throwing new demands and pose fresh challenges to the established educational system as well as the practices in the country. On analyzing the challenges and the present scenario of higher education in India, it is observed that - 1) India is the second largest system of higher education but the total numbers of students hardly represent 12.5% of the age group of 18-23 year, which is much below than the world average. 2) Our 550 million people are below the age of 25 which reflects that our human capital is a great asset, still our higher education system could not able to utilize the potentialities. From this, it can be said that the demand of higher education is increasing for the age group of 18-25 years. 3) There are great disparity in the rate of higher education in terms of ratio between urban-rural, general-other backward classes, schedule caste-schedule tribes and minorities, among gender as well as inter district, inter religion and so on. 4) Though India has 611 universities and university level institutions and 31,324 colleges (as on Aug, 2011), but not a single university can be placed in the top 200 universities in the world. 5) A large number of colleges are still affiliated to one university which are creating problem for the governance and maintaining quality. 6) Many segments of population still appear to be left out from the scenario of higher education system. 7) Only 32% of the universities are rated as A grade or above and only 9% colleges are rated as A grade by NAAC in terms of quality parameters. 8) Students are becoming knowledgeable even informally through IT generated gadgets like mobile, internet, I-pod as well as 3G technologies but at the same time our higher education institutions are not able to cope with the changing time. From the last two decades these are the scenario of higher education in India.

Higher Education System of India from the Context of XI<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan: India from the last five year plan aspires to create a knowledge Society and plan to produce human resources which can compete in the global market. To meet the global challenges with the other parts of the world, Prime Minister of constituted National Knowledge Commission on 13<sup>th</sup> June 2005 with the vision to strengthen the roots of the country's capacity and capability building, NKC aims- to transform India into a vibrant knowledge based society and to increase participation and a more equitable access to knowledge, across all section of society. For achieving those goals NKC gave importance on three focal themes to be implemented on higher education- EEE. These are 1) Expansion 2) Equity and 3) Excellence. Most of the recommendations of NKC have been envisaged in the 11<sup>th</sup> Five year plan (2006-2011). 11<sup>th</sup> plan brings higher education at the priority list. Some of the initiatives taken during the 11<sup>th</sup> plan are - University Grant Commission made estimate to financial requirement of 15% target i.e., allocation from 3,294 crores 10<sup>th</sup> plan to 46449 crores in 11<sup>th</sup> plan; to meet the challenge of expansion of institutional capacity in Higher Education (15% GER) it was proposed to establish 15 new central universities, 14 national universities, 374 model colleges in educationally backward districts and strengthening the state universities; for enhancing quality, UGC has taken many steps like- establishment of Quality Assessment Cell in universities and colleges, appeared the reform for affiliation, academic reforms like semester, grading, choice based credit system, regular curriculum development, exam reforms etc.; for the quality improvement UGC also suggested many reforms for faculty development like- pay revision, improvement of the Academic Staff College, and subject based association of teachers by holding conferences, discussion, organizing seminar, publishing research journal etc.; for maintaining equality and expansion some major steps was also undertaken. Some of these are- 750 Ph.D fellowship, special grant to colleges in 90 Muslim concentrated districts, women hostels for minorities, Residential Coaching Academy to prepare students belonging to minority community for competitive exam like civil services, state services and bank services exam. Moreover establishment of equal opportunity offices in central and state universities to operate the schemes related to SC/ST, OBC, minorities, physically challenged students and women etc also proposed in the 11<sup>th</sup> five year plan. Overview of the achievement of XI<sup>th</sup> five year plan: The access of higher education attained is 12.5% which is still less than the minimum international level. Though a large number of institution are established during 11<sup>th</sup> plan but the distribution of institutions are still skewed. Curricular reforms, introduction of semester system, choice based credit system, examination reforms are yet to take place in higher education across the country. Majority of higher educational institutions are performing poorly in the country. Hence not a single Indian university can be placed in the top 200 universities in the world. Disparity in terms of gender, religion, caste and on different occupational groups though lessen down in the 11<sup>th</sup> plan, but still the gaps remain if we see the statistics –(Age group 18-23)

Age group 18-23	
GER of Male- 55.63%	GER of female- 48.5%
GER of Male (Hindu)- 13.07%	GER of female (Hindu)- 9.32%
GER of Male (Muslim)- 7.77%	GER of female (Muslim)- 5.81%
GER of Male (Christian)- 17.21%	GER of female (Christian)- 16.60%
GER of Male (Sikh)- 18.90%	GER of female (Sikh)- 12.25%

Inter Caste Disparity (18-23 years)	
Schedule Tribes	61.50%
Schedule Caste	51.21%
OBC	50.05%
Others	53.90%

Different occupational groups (agriculture)		
GER (daily wage earner)	Rural- 1.41%	Urban- 3.26%
SC	Rural- 1.63%	Urban- 2.61%
ST	Rural- 0.67%	Urban- 1.53%
OBC	Rural- 1.93%	Urban- 3.34%

**Sources: 12<sup>th</sup> Five year plan, UGC.Report, New Delhi**

Thus the government of India has taken many initiatives through the 11<sup>th</sup> Five year plan (2206-2011) and achieves different goals of the National Knowledge Commission. The said Plan gave major thrust for expansion of higher education and promotion of greater regional and social equity with continuous focus on achieving quality by increasing/allowing nine fold jump in the funding of higher education. Still we have challenges and more to achieve. Hence, 12<sup>th</sup> five year plan seeks to keep up the momentum of higher education through escalating the reforms that begin in the 11<sup>th</sup> five year plan by giving importance on three major goals like- access, equity and inclusion and quality. Some of the major steps are the engagement of Rastriya Ucca Siksha Abhiyan (RUSA) for increasing access, financial support from enrolment to pass out for all socially disadvantaged groups, to bring equality and to reduce imbalances, proposed to setting up 1000 poly-techniques, 800 constituent colleges in the already existing 40 central universities and establishment of 20 exclusive universities for women etc. The overall proposal budget requirement is 1, 84,740 crores.

Suggestions to meet the challenges of higher education in India: To meet the challenges of higher education in India, government has taken many initiatives through 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> five year plan. Still the following points can be taken into consideration. A) To meet the challenges in relation to access: 1) Though there are inequalities of gross enrolment ratios (GER) in higher education we have to increase the number of institutions in each state both in rural as well as urban areas. But the same time we have to be careful that the education which the student will get from higher education institute should enable them to acquire skills that will aid them in raising income through self or wage employment. Higher education should elevate economic status and quality of life as well as help them to contribute the country's economic growth. 2) Public and private sector should come forward for achieving in the increase in GER. 3) There are a large number of students drop out at +2 levels are found which create paucity of students in higher education institutions. 4) Measures should be taken for retaining and attracting students. They should be made motivated by offering need based vocational courses. 5) In university level too the need based course structure i.e., syllabus should be developed so that our student can compete with the best universities of the world. B) To meet the challenges in relation to equity and inclusion- 1) To promote equality, particularly at higher levels sufficient financial support should be given to the students so that there will be no stagnation and drop-out. 2) To reduce regional imbalance, need based vocational courses through poly-techniques should be given to the students particularly to the rural students. 3) To

retain students from deprived group in higher education scholarships, book grants, hostel facilities and special coaching should be given. 4) Equal opportunity cell proposed by 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> Five year plan should do their job properly to help the weaker section of the students. C) To meet the challenges in relation to quality and excellence- To enhance quality in higher education, UGC made many bold steps which have already been implemented. Still, not a single university of India can be placed in the top 200 universities of the world. Hence, we have to take many more steps for enhancing quality and making our universities world class. For that the following points should be taken into consideration: 1) The undergraduate programmes should be attached with the university campus rather than having affiliated system of college education under any university. 2) As per the proposal of 12<sup>th</sup> Five year plan Multi-Campus Universities (MCU), should be created. 3) Infrastructure and physical facilities should be improved as we have to go a long way still now. 4) Standard of students to be developed. This can be done if there is a proper link between primary, secondary and higher education whose standard are equally high. 5) Teachers should be trained in such a way so that the teacher exchange programme among the state, nation or world can be made.

### **Conclusion**

India is really passing through a critical stage in relation to higher education. in the era of globalization our higher education is not reached to that point so that we can compare our self with the most developed higher educational system in the world. We are trying to make our society developed by the year 2020 but at the same time we are lagging behind with world average in terms of access, equity and inclusion. Higher education throughout the globe is a driving force to touch all the strata of the society for a better quality of life and living conditions. But our higher education fails to promote better quality of our life as our universities are transmitting such knowledge to our students with which they cannot face the challenge of the globalization. Therefore we need a paradigm shift in higher education which can focus on creating more talented work force through world class curriculum and providing excellent learning environment. For achieving these goals a proper public-private partnership is needed. Through proper planning and partnership India can meet all the challenges of higher education and become a developed country by 2020

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