



## A Study on Indian Higher Education: Challenges & Opportunities

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**Abstract:** In terms of students, India's Higher Education system is world's third largest next to china and United States. University Grants Commission is the main governing body which enforces standards, advices the government and helps coordinate between the center and the state. Indian Higher Education is radical in terms of accessibility and needs radical reforms in standards giving value and pacing. Higher education plays a very important role in the overall development of country by providing quality based education in field of education and research. This paper includes the key issues and challenges faced by Indian higher education system and the opportunities way ahead.

**Key words:** *Higher Education, Opportunities, Challenges, Universities, Gross enrolment ratio, strategic engagement*

### Introduction:

Higher education in India remained highly inward oriented despite several post-independence reforms in education sector. In terms of number of educational institutions, India has the world's largest higher education system. Higher education deals with the tertiary level of education. Undergraduate colleges, Post-graduate College, Universities and centers, of advanced studies are coming under scope of higher education.

**Objective of Higher Education:** The University Education Commission -1048-49 have made a number of significant recommendations on various aspects of higher education.

1. **Wisdom and knowledge:** Since education is both a training of minds and training of souls, it should give both knowledge and wisdom. No amount of factual information would take ordinarily into educated men unless something is awakened in them. Therefore, there should be inculcation of wisdom and knowledge.
2. **Aims of the social order:** Our education system must find its guiding principle in the aims of the social order for which it prepares. Unless we preserve the value of democracy, justice, liberty, equality and fraternity, we cannot Preserves our freedom.



3. Love for higher values of life: The greatness of a country does not depend on the extent of its territory, the length of its communication or the amount of its wealth, but on the love for higher values of life. We must develop thought for the poor and sufferings, regards and respect for women, faith in brotherhood regardless of race, colour, religion etc.
4. Training for leadership: One of the important aims of higher education is the training for leadership in the profession and public life. It is the function of universities to train men and women for wise leadership.

In 2020, the higher education ecosystem has undergone a dramatic and undeniable makeover. All institutes, from the progressive to the highly resistant have had to accept the proliferation of digital tools and technology platforms that have restructured not only the academic aspects, but also the experiential and administrative functions of Higher Education Institutes (HEIs). The education sector was among the initial impact bearers of SARS CoV2 Virus (COVID-19) lockdowns. Even now, as we have moved towards staggered unlocking, it remains among the last to open. HEIs have moved into an online mode of delivery to attenuate this challenge - creating and establishing a “new normal” and evolving the face of education for future generations.

**Objectives of study:**

1. To analyze the present status and position of higher education system in India.
2. Issues and challenges faced by higher education system in India.
3. Opportunities to overcome issues and challenges related to higher education in India.

**Research methodology:** The study is based on secondary data from websites, journals, and articles.

**Regulatory Bodies:**

1. University Grant Commission (UGC)
2. All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE)
3. Council of Architecture (COA)

**Research Councils:**

1. Indian Council of Historical Research (ICHR)
2. Indian Council of Social Sciences Research (ICSSR)
3. Indian Council of Philosophical Research (ICPR)



4. National Council of Rural Institute (NCRI)
5. Project of History of Indian Science Philosophy and Culture (PHISPC)

**Institutional framework of Higher education in India:**

Type of university	Number of Universities
Central University	48
Central Open University	1
Institution of National Importance	135
State Public University	386
Institution Under State Legislature Act	5
State Open University	14
State Private University	327
State Private Open University	1
Deemed University- Government	36
Deemed University- Government Aided	10
Deemed University- Private	80
Grand Total	1043

**Challenges in Higher Education:**

India is an independent nation. After independence various government come and go and took many steps to improve the standard of higher education system but we are still facing the challenges to establish Indian Education System as strong and great education system. Currently we are not able to list in top 100 universities of the world. The new global scenario possesses new challenges in the higher education system. The University Grants Commission stated that this new scenario is more skill demanding from the graduates of different disciplines like humanities, social science, natural science, commerce, Agriculture, law, management, medicine and engineering. The challenges in higher education are:

1. Enrolment: Gross enrolment ratio of India is 27.1% for age group 18-23 years which is quite low as compared to other developing and developed countries. The supply of higher education is low to fulfill the demand in the country.



2. **Equity:** There is no equity in the Gross Enrolment Ratio in higher education in India. GER for male population at all India level is 26.9% whereas for SC Male it is 22.8% and 18.2% for ST male. Similarly, GER for female population at all India level is 27.3% whereas for SC female it is 24.1% and for ST female, it is 17.7%.
3. **Quality:** Quality is a multi-dimensional concept in higher education and ensuring quality in education is still the biggest challenge in front of India. 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.
4. **Infrastructure:** Apart from the highly recognized higher educational institutes in India most of the colleges and universities lack the basic and infrastructure facilities. Many institutes are running without the facility of library, hostels, transport, sports etc. which is desirable to rank the quality institution
5. **Political Interference:** Many educational institutions are owned by political leaders who use the innocent students to organize their political campaigns and because of this the students forgets their main objective of study. The political leaders also plays ket role in the governing bodies of higher education.
6. **Faculty Ratio:** In most of the state and central universities more than 30% of faculty positions are lying vacant. Faculty shortages and the inability of the state and central educational system to attract and retain well qualified teachers have been posing challenges to quality education.
7. **Accreditation:** According to the report of National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) which is an organization that assesses and accredits higher education Institutions in India not even 25% of the total higher education institutions in the country were accredited. And among those accredited, only 30% of the universities and 45% of the colleges were found to be of quality to be ranked at 'A' level.
8. **Research and Innovation:** Research in higher education institutions is at its lowest ebb. There is inadequate focus on research in higher education institutes and there are limited numbers of quality faculty to advice students



9. Structure of Higher Education: Management of the Indian education faces challenges of overcentralisation, bureaucratic structures and lack of accountability, transparency, and professionalism. As a result of increase in number of affiliated colleges and students, the burden of administrative functions of universities has significantly increased and the core focus on academics and research is diluted.
10. Lack of Flexibility: Rigidity in the process of selection of course and aiming the career in that course is also a big challenge in front of higher education system.
11. Inadequate Financial Support: There is a serious problem of inadequate and diminishing financial support from government and society for higher education in India

### **Opportunities for Higher Education:**

India is a large country, with an estimated population of young people aged between 18 to 23 years to be around 150 million. India now boasts of having more than 33,000 colleges and 659 universities, which has been quite a remarkable growth during the last six decades. The year 2019-20 witnessed 27.1% enrollments but unfortunately, the educational infrastructure of India is inadequate to handle such huge volumes. Therefore, higher Education sector has now been identified as one of the promising areas for private and foreign investments. It offers immense investment opportunities in both non-regulated and regulated segments.

With the help of new-age learning tools, it is easy for country like India to overcome the problems and bring a paradigm shift in the country's higher education sector. With such a vibrant country with huge population properly educated, the possibilities are endless. If knowledge is imparted using advanced digital teaching and learning tools, and society is made aware of where we are currently lagging behind, our country can easily emerge as one of the most developed nations in the world. There are opportunities for strategic engagement and capacity building in higher education leadership and management at the state level. There are opportunities for India to collaboration at national and international level on areas of systemic reform, including quality assurance, international credit recognition, and unified national qualifications framework.

Equality of educational opportunity in higher education is considered essential because higher education is a powerful tool for reducing or eliminating income and wealth disparities.



The idea of equalising educational opportunities also lies in the fact that the ability to profit by higher education is spread among all classes of people. There are great reserves of untapped ability in the society; if offered the chance they can rise to the top. A great deal of talent of the highest level is, in fact, lost by an inequalitarian system of education.

The need to enhance the employability of graduates is presenting entry points for collaboration in enterprise education and entrepreneurship, links with industry, research skills and the wide range of transferable skills, including English. The emerging interest in Indian higher education institutions in the vocational skills market provides areas for potential engagement with international partners. There is a need to build stronger relationships and increase mutual understanding in higher education by increasing support and participation in platforms (conferences, workshops, seminars) which enable debate and dialogue with other countries of the world.

**Suggestions:**

1. Student and teacher ration should be at ideal level and proper training should be provided to the teacher to brush up their skills and capabilities.
2. The curriculum should be made dynamic and progressive. The curriculum in our country is outdated in most of the cases.
3. Government should provide adequate funding to the institutions so that the financial status of the institutions can be improvised.
4. The campus of the institutions should be politics free with no or less political interference in the governing bodies also.
5. Adoption of PPP (Public, Private Partnership) model is the best solution for overcoming many challenges faced by higher education as government alone is helpless in countries like India.
6. There is a need to implement innovative and transformational approach form primary to higher education level to make Indian educational system globally more relevant and competitive.
7. Government must promote collaboration between Indian higher education institutes and top International institutes and also generates linkage between national research laboratories and research centers of top institutions for better quality and collaborative research.



8. There is a need to focus on the graduate students by providing them such courses in which they can achieve excellence, gain deeper knowledge of subject so that they will get jobs after recruitment in the companies which would reduce unnecessary rush to the higher education.
9. There should be a multidisciplinary approach in higher education so that student's knowledge may not be restricted only up to his own subjects.

### **Conclusion:**

The study highlights the different challenges and opportunities related to Higher Education in India. No doubt India is facing various challenges in higher education but to tackle these challenges and to boost higher education is utmost important. Opportunities are available but how to get benefits from these opportunities and how to make them accessible to others is the matter of concern. To improve the higher education system we need to improve teaching pedagogy, build synergies between research and teaching, and facilitate alliance of higher institutions among themselves, research centers and industries.

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