



Issues In Higher Education Institutions In India

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This article is based on **“Need for re-orientation”** which was published in The Hindu on 20/03/2020. It talks about issues in higher education institutions in India.

After more than 70 years of independence, India's higher education system has still not been developed fully. It is evidenced by its poor performance in institutional rankings (not a single Indian university in top 100 universities of the world), the poor employment status of its students, poor track record in receiving national awards and recognition, poor share in research funding and so on.

Moreover, the status of state public universities that produce over 90% of the graduates in India is more dismal.

Commonly stated reasons for these observations are

- **Enrollment:**

- According to the All-India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) report 2018-19, the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in Higher education in India is only 26.3%, which is quite low as compared to the developed as well as, other developing countries.
- With the increase of enrollments at the school level, the supply of higher education institutes is insufficient to meet the growing demand in the country.

- **Quality:**

- Ensuring quality in higher education is amongst the foremost challenges being faced in India today.
- However, the Government is continuously focusing on quality education. Still, a 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 their place among the top universities of the world.

- **Political Interference:**
 - Increasing interference of politicians in the management of higher education jeopardises the autonomy of HEIs.
 - Also, students organise campaigns, forget their own objectives and begin to develop their careers in politics.
- **Poor Infrastructure and Facilities:**
 - 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.
 - 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 though there are a lot of vacancies in higher education.
- **Inadequate Research:**
 - There is inadequate focus on research in higher education institutes.
 - There are insufficient resources and facilities, as well as limited numbers of quality faculty to advise students.
 - Most of the research scholars are without fellowships or not getting their fellowships on time which directly or indirectly affects their research. Moreover, Indian Higher education institutions are poorly connected to research centres and to industries.
- **Poor Governance Structure:**
 - Management of Indian education faces challenges of over-centralization, bureaucratic structures and lack of accountability, transparency, and professionalism.
 - As a result of the increase in the 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.

Reason for a more dismal performance in state-level universities.

- The above-stated issues are faced by both central and state's higher education institutions (HEIs), but the state is handicapped at one more front.
- Central government HEIs are hardly ever short of funding and patronage has been ensured by the Central government and its arms; national-level parties, industries and businesses; and the national elite and the intelligentsia. This appears to be the key factor for the better performance of Central government HEIs.

- However, similar arrangements have never been built between the State universities and State governments, State-level political parties and organisations, industry and businesses; and the elite and the intelligentsia. This may be because:
 - The aims, goals, methods and priorities of these institutions are pretty much the same as those of the Central institutions.
 - The only real value adds that the State universities are doing for the State and its people seems to be that of enabling a few lakhs to become graduates every year.

Way Forward

- **Revamping State HEIs:**
 - In order to receive much more funding and support from the State system, State universities would have to commit to delivering lots more to the State and its people where they are located.
 - They must come up with a new vision and programmes specifically addressing the needs of the State, its industry, economy and society, and on the basis of it make the State-level players commit to providing full ownership and support to them.
- **Foreign Collaboration:**

Government must promote collaboration between Indian higher education institutes and top international institutes and also generate linkages between national research laboratories and research centres of top institutions for better quality and collaborative research.
- **Multidisciplinary Approach:**

There should be a multidisciplinary approach in higher education so that students' knowledge may not be restricted only up to their own subjects.
- HEIs in both public and private must be away from political affiliations, provided with good infrastructure and facilities.

Higher education in India has expanded very rapidly in the last seven decades after independence yet its accessibility and quality both remain a concern. If India wants economic gains and development to percolate at the grassroots level, it needs to invest in education on a priority basis.

Drishti Mains Question

Discuss the issues faced by Higher Education Institutions in India and suggest some measures to resolve them.