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CHALLENGES FOR HIGHER EDUCATION POLICY IN INDIA

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ABSTRACT: *There has been a significant growth in enrolment in higher education in recent years; which has been substantially contributed by the private sector in technical education. However, despite various initiatives, a New Education Policy after 1992 is yet to be promulgated which is in sync with India's liberalization policy to foster quality & improve Human Development Index (HDI). Research and excellence remain a serious challenge, compounded by policy prevarication. Public funding arrangement is grossly inadequate and largely to elitist institutions. The paper argues that our obsession with improving enrolment has to give way to credible quality improvement measures. Specifically there is a need to upscale public spending, treat private sector as a partner, improve industry academia interface, encourage research, Public Private Partnership (PPP), improve infrastructure and encourage FDI into higher education sector through MoUs with reputed foreign universities. The paper also cautions against recent ambivalence towards Open Distance Learning (ODL).*

Keywords: FDI, PPP, ODL, HDI, Liberalization

INTRODUCTION

Higher Education provides people with an opportunity to reflect on the critical social, economic, cultural, moral and spiritual issues facing humanity. It contributes to national development through dissemination of specialized knowledge and skills. Being at the apex of the educational pyramid, it plays a key role in producing quality teachers for the country's education. In the context of unprecedented need of explosion in knowledge, higher education has to be dynamic as ever, constantly entering uncharted areas.

However, India's higher education sector is presently in the cusp of a policy drift and equivocation. After Kothari Commission (1966), National Policy on Education (1986) and revised National Policy (1992), a number of legislative proposals for reforms in higher education have been initiated without culminating into a New National Educational Policy. There is also a prevarication as to whether higher education should be treated as **'merit' good or 'non-merit' good,** and left to the initiative of the private sector predominantly. Though the new government has encouraged of FDI inflow into India in sectors like defense, insurance & real-estate there is no clarity as to whether FDI is welcome in the higher education sector. The role of the private sector and exact nature of PPP envisaged is also unclear. The recurrent

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refrain in higher education is **Access, Equity and Excellence.** This paper tries to sum-up India's higher education journey so far in terms of **policy**, **growth in enrolment, and the myriad challenges being faced by the proposed "strategic shift from mere expansion to improvement in quality"** as per 12th Plan document target and be a global knowledge hub.

Objective of the Study

- Policy Evolution in Higher Education
- Growth in Gross Enrolment & Access to Higher Education
- Trend of Allocation to Higher Education
- Impact on Quality & Excellence: Issues & Challenges
- Identification of major Policy Initiatives for Reoriented

POLICY EVOLUTION IN HIGHER EDUCATION

The following table brings out the major recommendations of the Kothari Commission (1966) and the National Education Policy (1986) and revised National Education Policy (1992).

• Kothari Commission (1966): Improve productivity; treat science as a basic component in education and improve research in S&T • NPE (1986): Greater role in reinforcing integrative character of research, advanced study and international aspects of education and cultural development • NPE (1992): Facilitate inter regional mobility by providing equal access to every Indian. In R&D, S&T special measures will be taken to establish network arrangement between different institutions in the country to pool their resources.

The Annual Report (2012-2013) of HRD ministry highlights the various legislative proposals for reforms in higher education which are at various stages of finalization/consideration namely (i) Higher Education and Research Bill, 2011 (ii) The Educational Tribunals Bill, 2011 (iii) The Prohibition of Unfair Practices in Technical Education Institutions, medical Educational Institutions and Universities Bill, 2010 (iv) The National Accreditation Regulatory Authority for Higher Educational Institutions Bill, 2010, (v) The National Academic Depository Bill, 2011, (vi) The Universities for Research and Innovation Bill, 2012 (vii) The Foreign Educational Institutions (Regulation of Entry and Operations) Bill, 2010, (viii) Institutes of Technology (Amendment) Act, 2012, (ix) Amendment to the Architects Act, 1972, (x) National Institute of Technology (Amendment) Act, 2010 and (xi) Indian Institute of Information Technology Bill, 2013. However a revised education policy for higher education is yet to be put in place. It is therefore, refreshing to lean that the new HRD minister intends to interference a new education policy for higher education.

The new HRD Minister of India has promised to get substantially higher allocation of GDP i.e. from 3.3% to 6% for education and to bolster research and development in the country. The Prime Minister has also highlighted the need to augment use of technology to disseminate knowledge. However there are recent rumblings on scuttling down several programmes under Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) which has been a torch bearer in Open Distance Learning (ODL) to about 41 million students. Such policy ambivalence needs to be carefully calibrated with the need for increase thrust on higher skill acquisition which higher education provides.

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GROWTH IN GROSS ENROLMENT & ACCESS TO HIGHER EDUCATION

The access to higher education is generally measured by Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in higher education. GER measures the access level by taking the ratio of persons in all age group enrolled in various programmes to total population in age group of 18 to 23. The Government has set a target of increasing the GER from the level of about 12% to 15% by the end of XI Five Year Plan and to30%by 2020.

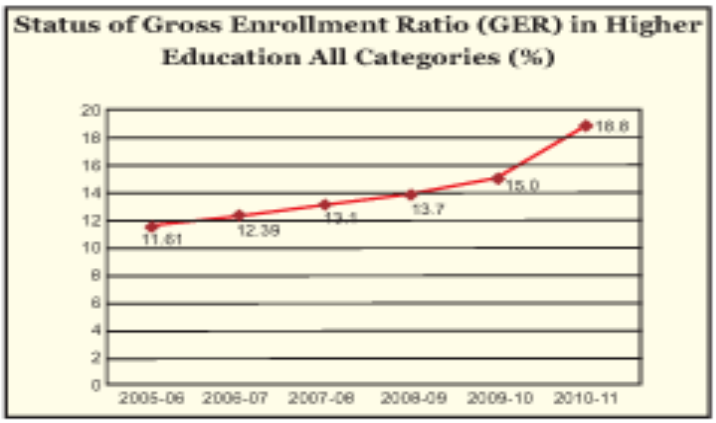

Figure 1: Status of Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) in Higher Education all Categories
Source: Selected Educational Statistics-2005-06; Statistics of Higher and Technical Education -2006-07, 2007-08, 2008 09 (Provisional) & 2009-10 (Provisional), All Indian Survey on Higher Education-2010-11 (Provisional)

It may be seen from the above graph that in Higher Education, the Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) of the country has increased to 18.8% in 2011-12 from 11.55% in 2005-06 indicating increase of 6.45 percentage point. It may be seen that the phenomenal growth of 3.35 percentage point in GER has been witnessed between 2010-11 to 2011-12, which clearly show that higher education system is on right track and if we manage to continue this trend, it would easily be possible to achieve the target of30% GER by 2020.

The growth in the number of universities, professional colleges, technical institutes and technical programmes is summarized as under –

Parameters	2010-2011	2011-2012
Number of Universities	523	574
Number of Professional Colleges	33023	35539
AICTE Approved Technical Institute	11809	13587
Enrollment in ODL (in Lakh)	37.45	38.56
Technical Programmes (in Lakh)	26.15	30.15

Table 1: Education Sector Macro Trends
Source-Annual Report Human Resource Development 2012-2013

The private sector has contributed nearly 60% interms of growth of the above.

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TREND OF ALLOCATION TO HIGHER EDUCATION

The following table will show allocation to General Education, Technical Education and Distance Education.

	2012-13 (Actual)	2013-14		% of Change	2014-15 (BE)	% of Change
		BE	(RE)			
General Education	11878	15693	14539	+22.4	14637	0.6
Technical Education	8513	9390	8441	-0.9	9463	12.1
Distance Education	354	448	186	-48	593	318.8
Total	20423	26750	24885	21.8	27656	+11.1

Table 2: Allocation to Higher Education in Rs. Crore
Source: India Budget 2014-2015

What is disconcerting to note from the above table that there is **considerable under spend at the RE stage last year**. This is particularly disturbing in case of distance education and ITC which can be a powerful source of knowledge multiplier on a virtual basis to distance corners of the country.

Funding under Major Programmes

There are four programmes which aim at bolstering quality of higher education & one which provides subsidized loan and scholarship to students low income families in India.

The trend of allocation and actual spending in these programmes over the last 3 years is as under-

Programme	2012-13 (Actual)	2013-14 (RE)	% of Change	2014-15 (BE)	% of Change
RUSA	-	240	-	-	-
TEQIP	188.6	433	229.5	450	3.9
Technical Education Quality Improvement project of (EAP)	88.3	110	-	80	27.2
Consortium for Higher Education & Technical Resource (CHEERS)	-	-	-	202.5	-
Financial Aid	115.4	195.2	69.1	232.6	19.1
(a) Interest Subsidy	-	1722	-	2081	20
(b) Scholarship	115.4	230	99.3	248	7.8

Table 3: Allocation against Major Programmes
Source: India Budget 2014-2015

The position of each of the under pgoramme is further elaborated

RUSA: It is a major programme where the 12th Plan expects to create 80 universities by converting colleges in cluster to state universities besides creating other related infrastructure as per the Economic Survey 2014-2015. **However there is no fund allocation this year to this major scheme.** Sudhanshu Bhushan has further brought that there is no specific Central

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State funding formula: nor is it clear whether it would be Centrally Sponsored Project or be an add on to the UGC.

TEQUIP: Based on the achievements made during TEQIP Phase-I, TEQIP Phase-II is being implemented as a Centrally Sponsored Scheme (CSS) with the assistance of the World Bank at a total cost of Rs. 2430 crore. Out of the total cost of the scheme, the Central contribution will be 1895.50 crore. Out of which 1395.50 will be reimbursed by the World Bank. The State share will be 518.50 crore and the Share of Private unaided institutions will be 16 crore. The funding pattern will be 75:25 between the Centre and the participating States and for North Eastern States & Special States it will be 90:10. Basically it will cover the following two components.

The TEQIP-II project is for the duration of 4 years covering about 200 institutions based on competitive funding. A total of 187 institutions have been selected under Sub-component 1.1 & Sub-component 1.2. An amount of 188.69 crore has been released as central fund to 187 selected institutions during the year 2012-13. It is disquieting to note that the increase in allocation during 2014-15 is only 3.9% over the previous year for this World Bank funded project meant for improvement of technical education. The allocation against **Cheers** for creating a consortium for higher education in electronic resources is welcome. However, the sharp decrease in allocation against technical education quality improvement project (EAP) is disturbing.

IMPACT ON QUALITY & EXCELLENCE: ISSUES & CHALLENGES

(a) Strategy Framework of 12th Plan for Quality

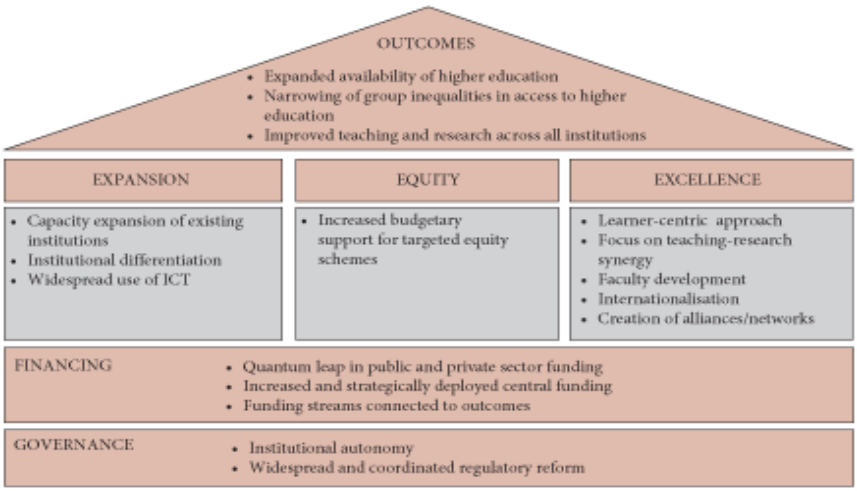

Figure 2. Strategy Framework of 12th Plan
Source: 12th Five Year Plan 2012-2017, Social Sectors Volume-III, Planning Commission, Government of India, Page 91

It would been from the above the 12th Plan consider that the inter linkage between goals of Expansion, Equity and Excellence must be restored further through significant expenditure in public, private sector spending by providing institutional autonomy and better regulatory

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framework. The Knowledge Commission (2014) also reiterates the concerns for greater interface with quality foreign universities and a more sensitive and independent regulatory framework.

Further the 12th Plan has delineated the following for fostering excellence in higher education during 2012-2017.

- A shift from input centric pedagogical approach to learner centric approach
- Ensure availability, recruitment and retention of qualified people to meet the growing need for quality faculty
- Upgrade skills of existing faculty, facilitate translation of academic research into innovation for practical use in society
- Promote internationalization and creation of consortia of academic institutions.

The annual report 2012-2013 while endorsing the 12th Plan has reiterated the need to facilitate inter regional mobility by providing equal access to every Indian, special measures to be taken to establish network arrangement between different institution to pull the resources.

The Results Framework Document (RFD) for 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 has highlighted the following-

- **Realize India's Human Resource Potential to its fullest with equity and excellence**
- Greater opportunity for access to vulnerable sections
- Expand access by supporting existing institutions, establish new institutions, supporting state government and non-government organization to supplement public effort
- Encourage resource and innovation
- **Promote quality by investing in infrastructure and faculty and promoting academic freedom.**

The criteria, weightage and target for achieving excellence can be summed-up as under-

Criteria	Weightage		Target
	(13-14)	(14-15)	
Equity & Inclusion	(13)	(17)	-
Quality Enhancement	(32)	(34)	• Capacity building of teachers under TEQIP-II • Faculty Development Abroad • ICT: Utilization of connectivity • Norm based funding Vs. Demand based
Research & Innovation	(6)	(5)	Establish Design Innovation Centre
Governance Reforms	(9)	(12)	-
Globalization	(5)	(2)	International Collaboration in universities of USA, UK, Australia

Table 4: Criteria, Weightage & Target (Result Framework Document)

Source: Results Framework Document (RFD) for 2013-2014 and 2014-2015, Ministry of Human Resource Development

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The low weightage given towards research and innovation & globalization is highly surprising. It was Roy Harrod and Domar who had brought out the concept of Gross Natural Growth (g_n) to indicate composite of growth of potential labour force and growth of potential labour productivity in a country. G_n is the productive capacity of a country or the long run full employment equilibrium growth rate. Given the fact that India has an unemployment percentage of around 9.9%, and 10 million additional people are likely to enter into the unemployment poll every year the grandiose expectation of RFD 2013-2014 to realize India's Human Resource Potential to the fullest with Equity & Excellence for India would have to be taken with considerable skepticism in view of the following.

(b) Global Comparison in Human Development Index, Research and Publication

The abysmally low ranking of India in terms of Human Development Index, Gender Inequality Index, and Quality in Higher Education is a matter of serious concerns. The comparative position of India with references to other BRIC countries is as under-

Country	GNI($)	HDI	GII
Russia	22617	0.778	0.314
Brazil	14275	0.73	0.441
China	11477	0.719	0.202
India	5150	0.586	0.563

Table 5:HDI & GII BRIC Countries

Source-Human Development Report 2014

With this backdrop it would be interesting to compare position of **enrolment, quality and public spending** as % of GDP globally vis-à-vis India and the position is as under.

Country	GER (Higher Education)	Education Quality*			Public Spending as % GDP
		R**	M**	S**	
Norway	73.8	503	498	500	9.7
USA	94.8	500	487	502	16.2
Korea	97.0	542	546	538	6.5
China	25.9	556	600	515	4.6
India	16.2	-	-	-	3.3
***Skills & Knowledge of 15 years Old Students** ****R,M,S refer to Reading, Maths & Science**					

Table 6: GER, Quality & Public Spending Globally

Source: Human Development Report-2013

It would be seen that EMDs like Korea, in particular, have very substantial gross enrolment ratio; almost at par with USA and spends close to 6.5% of its GDP on education. In case of USA the expenditure percentage is truly substantial and private sector driven; clearly demonstrating their strength as a premier global knowledge power.

Further it would be interesting to note that both China and Russia have been concentrating on elite institutions and making significant investments in a few universities since the global ranking of their universities is very low. Brazil has also been investing substantially in technical

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education. The percentage of Ph.D. after technical degree is as high as 52% for Brazil, 27% for China and only 1% in India. This is a very disturbing trend. Further bulk of the allocation in technical education is going to IITs, Indian Institute of Science and IIMs without making any significant allocation to state universities for improving their infrastructure and quality of education as would be seen from the following.

Institution	2012-13	2013-14 (BE) (RE)	% of Change	2014-15 (BE) Increase
IITs	2647	3670	3628	3896
IIMs	110	369	233	275
IIS & IISER	905	1092	1046	106

Table 7: Allocation to Elite Institutions
Source: India Budget 2014-2015

(c) Competitiveness in terms of Research, Patents & Publications

The share of services in India's GDP has increased for 33% in (1950-51) to 56.5% (2012-2013). Innovation and quality play are important role in ensuring significant global imprint. India ranks 64th in Global Innovation Index. India's capacity for innovation has been lower that of other BRICS countries as scores in the following table would show:

Country	Quality of Research Institutions	Industry Collaboration	PCT Patents Granted/(Million)
USA	5.8	5.6	137.9
Brazil	4.1	4.1	2.8
South Korea	4.9	4.7	161.1
China	4.2	4.4	6.5
India	4.4	3.8	1.2

Table 8: Trends of Research & Patents Globally

In particular, what's disconcerting is the number of patents granted per million (1.2) in India against around 140/161 in USA and South Korea. While in terms of availability of no. of engineers and scientists India is well placed, the lack of quality in higher education and low percolation of research for commercial usage remains a major challenge.

Year	India		China		USA	
	Public	Highly Cited Article	Public	Highly Cited Article	Public	Highly Cited Article
2001	15522	103	25730	174	150817	2894
2011	36456	191	122672	980	184253	3137

Table 9: Education Sector: Publication Trends
Source: YuXie Chunni Zhang et al at National Academy of Sciences, 2014

Rosenstein Rodan (1943) was a strong votary of "Big Push" model in which he had argued that countries with large surplus workforce in agriculture, in order to take advantage of economies of scale and to escape low equilibrium trap there is a need for 'large scale investment programmes'. Geoffrey Sachs also strongly advocates the Big Push model for achieving UN

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Millennium Goals into which India is a signatory. As the foregoing would reveal major programmes involving quality improvement in higher education are very poorly funded and have an elitist bias.

IDENTIFICATION OF MAJOR POLICY INITIATIVES FOR REORIENTED

(a) FDI in Higher Education

Suhag and Rani (2013) have brought out that FDI in higher education will bring in quality programmes from foreign universities of repute and will improve market orientation. Given the fact that only around Rs.2051 crores came of India since 2001 as FDI with 75% from Mauritius to Manipal University, there is a need to encourage inflow of FDI and setting up viable Joint Venture enterprises & MoU with these companies. Further to build infrastructure in universities there is a need to amend Section 25 of Companies Act and dispense with "Not for Profit Criteria". This has been strongly advocated in the 12th Plan vision document. The position of FDI inflow over the years is as under.

Figure 3: Trend of FDI Inflow into Education

Source: RTI reply obtained by The Telegraph from the department of industrial policy and promotion (DIPP), a wing of the Union Commerce Ministey-April-Aug-11

(b) Public Private Partnership (PPP)

Sectors like telecom, airports, national highways and power have witnessed significant progress through Public Private Partnership models and have brought in significant FDI inflow into the country. During the 12th plan an investment of one trillion dollar is proposed through a PPP route within the ratio of 50:50. While economic infrastructure is very high on government agenda the social infrastructure like education which is a vital complement to overall economic growth has been given a short shrift.

It would be worthwhile to draw experience of other countries like Sweden, Germany, Singapore & China where the PPP model has worked wonders. The key success factors have been agreement on shared objectives from the beginning of the partnership and political will for participation of the private sector, transparency and accountability within the PPP. Sweden has regarded higher education as a 'merit good' and has a long tradition of substantial public spending. It has substantive relationship with the private sector which includes sharing of roles, responsibility, risks and rewards. In Germany, public commitment to take most risks has

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encouraged many small private enterprises to participate in the PPP model. Such models have important lessons for India.

(c) Regulatory Mechanism

The Yashpal Committee and Knowledge Commission have strongly recommended for establishment of an autonomous overarching National Commission for Higher Education and Research for prescribing standards of academic quality and defining policies for advancement of knowledge in higher educational institutions.

There is a near unanimity in view that existing regulatory control by UGC, created under Act of 1956 is not lending itself to quality improvement flexibility in charging fees, offering reasonable remuneration to teachers & finalization of curriculum of either public or private universities. UGC's primordial concern is with central and elite universities like DU, JNU etc. This has to be abdicated in favour of a regulatory mechanism which is academically less asphyxiating. Arvind Panagariya (2012) makes a powerful plea against such frustrating control mechanism of UGC and recommends privatization to bring quality improvement. The system of accreditation and quality of programs under Open Distance Learning must be monitored by an independent regulatory authority

(d) Not for Profit:

This debate has gone to the Supreme Court which has constantly castigated any tendency to commercial education. The 12th Plan, however makes a strong pitch for this by amending Section 25 of Indian Company Act (1956). Sudhansu Bhusan (2013) in an article has brought out the dichotomy in Judicial thinking and need for pragmatism in terms of charging of fees in colleges/universities to improve infrastructure and academic content this issue needs to be revisited by a Committee of Experts.

CONCLUSION

To move up the ladder of quality India has to go beyond 3 R's viz. Reading, Writing and Arithmetic to 4 C's viz. Critical thinking, Communication, Collaboration and Creativity. Global economy has shifted from manufacturing centric to knowledge driven one prompting economist, Clark Kerr to observe that "on a global scale wealth and prosperity have become more dependent on access to higher knowledge than mere access to natural resources". The challenge before India is not merely to increase **gross enrolment to 25% by end of 12th Plan** but to achieve higher quality quotient through adequate resource allocation, abdicating not for profit policy, adopting pragmatic FDI policy, forging viable PPPs and ensuring fundamental transformation in the education sector. Effecting transformation involves five things: substantial resources, a progressive regulatory environment in which higher education regulators being to trust universities, a new governance model for creating opportunities and space for research and scholarship, an enabling environment within universities that will significantly incentivize research and publication, and an attitudinal change among all stakeholders in higher education sector. There is also a need to eschew the policy ambivalence presently prevalent in areas like FDI, Open Distance Learning (ODL), IGNOU and role of private sector and industry a collaborator to foster excellence. That alone would ensure that

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higher will be **"The swiftest elevator to pinnacles of modern Indian power" as suggested by Stanley Wolpert.**

AREAS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The role of Public Private Partnership is still receiving tepid response from the industry in case of higher education sector in India unlike economic infrastructure sector. There is a need for field survey to elicit the exact bottlenecks in this regard since countries like Germany have received enthusiastic response in this regard. Besides it needs to be carefully studied whether influx of foreign university curriculum would significantly affect India's native knowledge culture and sovereignty.

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