

GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN INDIA: AN OVERVIEW

Dr. Niladri Pradhan

Department of Education, Malda Women's College, Malda-732101, West Bengal.

Email: pradhanniladri.mwc@gmail.com

Abstract

India has one of the largest higher education systems in the world, and in terms of number of students enrolled, it is the second highest after China. In its size and diversity, India has the third largest higher education system in the world, next only to China and the United States. Before Independence, access to higher education was very limited and elitist, with enrolment of less than 0.2 million students in 500 colleges and 20 universities. Today, Indian higher education is comprised of 819 universities, 40,026 colleges, 91 institute of national importance and 11, 669 stand-alone institutes with enrolment of about 35.7 million students including 19 million boys & 16.07 million girls (AISHE, 2016-17). The structure, nature, features of degree and non-degree granting higher education institutes in India have been discussed in the first part of this paper. On the other hand the author has also highlighted the present scenario of Indian higher education in terms of multi-layered regulatory councils, plan and policy making bodies. Moreover the author has identified some of the strategic strides and pragmatic steps to overcome the above mentioned problems in higher education and make policy recommendations for implementations.

Keywords: Higher Education, management, governance

HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM IN INDIA

Undoubtedly higher education in India plays a matter of great significant role in the process of helping and nurturing an individual to become a critical thinker so that he/she will be able to find the logic behind the phenomena and explain it in a systematic, scientific and meaningful manner. Creating new knowledge and epistemology, acquiring new capabilities and competencies, producing innovative, critical and analytical thinkers will ultimately help in making a pool of intelligent human resources. Also for giving solution to global challenges higher education system has to make a bridge between theory, research and industry as per the need.

Higher education of today must teach more about how to learn rather than what to learn. It would be better if education to the student is given in such a way that the student is without fear and with a free mind vis-à-vis it helps the student to know about his/ her self-capabilities and self-potentialities.

Moreover higher education imparts in-depth knowledge and understanding so as to advance the students to new frontiers of knowledge in different walks of life (subject domains). It is about knowing more and more about less and less. It develops the student's ability to question and seek truth and makes him/her competent to critique on contemporary issues.

Based on the facts the Kothari Commission (1966) listed the following roles of the universities (higher education institutions in the modern society):

- To seek and cultivate new knowledge, to engage vigorously and fearlessly in the pursuit of truth, and to interpret old knowledge and beliefs in the light of new needs and discoveries;
- To provide the right kind of leadership in all walks of life, to identify gifted youth and help them develop their potential to the full by cultivating physical fitness, developing the powers of the mind and cultivating right interests, attitudes and moral and intellectual values;
- To provide the society with competent men and women trained in agriculture, arts, medicine, science and technology and various other professions, who will also be cultivated individuals, imbued with a sense of social purpose;
- To strive to promote quality and social justice, and to reduce social and cultural differences through diffusion of education; and
- To foster in the teachers and students and through them in the society generally, the attitudes and values needed for developing the 'good life' in individuals and society (GOI, 1966, p. 497-8).

Let us probe a little more. The report of the UNESCO International Commission on Education in the 21st Century titled "Learning: The Treasure Within" (popularly known as Delors Commission) emphasized four pillars of education: learning to know, learning to do, learning to live together and learning to be. While, higher education intends to inculcate all these four in individuals and the society, the report highlighted the following specific functions of higher education:

- To prepare students for research and teaching;
- To provide highly specialized training courses adapted to the needs of economic and social life;
- To be open to all, so as to cater to the many aspects of lifelong education in the widest sense; and
- To promote international cooperation through internationalization of research, technology, networking, and free movement of persons and scientific ideas (UNESCO, 1996)

According to the Millennium Development Goals of the United Nations (MDG, 2002), knowledge is the prime mover of development in the new millennium. Given that today's world is turning out to be global village, where boundaries between countries are turning out to be invisible or inconspicuous, it is important that this higher knowledge is transferred and traded between countries in uniform across the world.

All this is possible if the higher education offered is of global standard.

Generally higher education in India starts after the higher secondary or 12th standard. While it takes three years for completing a B.A., B.Sc., or B.Com pass or honors degree in India, pursuing professional course like engineering would take four years (with six months of additional compulsory internship). Postgraduate courses generally are of two years duration. But there are some courses like Master of Computer Application that are of three years. The nature of education can be General, Vocational, Professional or Technical (MHRD, 2008 – 2009).

The Institutions like Universities, National Institute of Importance, Stand-Alone Institutes and Colleges are imparting higher education and providing First Degree, Master's Degree, M.Phil/Ph.D/ D.Litt Certificates in India. Universities can be classified in various categories like Central Universities, State Universities, Deemed Universities and Private Universities. In terms of evolution of the modern university system, a university could fall under any of the following categories: affiliating university,

residential university, unitary university, teaching and affiliating university, women's university, open university, professional university, language university, tribal university, research university etc.

There are two types of higher education institutions in India: degree granting and non-degree granting institutions. The degree granting institutions are Central University, State University, Private University, Institutions-deemed-to-be-a-University and Institute of National Importance. The non-degree granting institutions are different types college.

Structure of Indian higher education institutes are briefly discussed here.

- **Central University**

Central universities are established through an Act in Parliament and are funded by the Union Government.

- **State University**

State universities are established through an Act in the State Legislature and receive funding from the respective State Government, and sometimes from the Central Government, usually via UGC.

- **Deemed-To-Be-A- University**

UGC accords a deemed-to-be-a-university status to an institution. Upon receiving an application, the UGC committee forwards its recommendation to the Department of Higher Education, MHRD, which declares a university as deemed-to-be-a-university. Both government and private universities can be deemed universities. Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics and Symbiosis International University are examples of government and private deemed universities respectively. Deemed university status allows greater autonomy in operations, syllabus, admission, and fees, than allowed by the above types of universities. Deemed universities are also eligible for funding from the UGC. Jurisdiction of deemed universities is pan-India and worldwide. For example, Birla Institute of Technology and Science, Pilani has an offshore campus in Dubai.

- **Private University**

Private universities are established through an Act in State Legislatures. Private universities also have to obtain recognition from the UGC. They do not have the power to affiliate colleges that are run by a different trust.

- **Institute of National Importance (INI)**

It is a status that may be conferred to a premier public higher education institution in India by an act of parliament. These institutions receive special recognition and funding and have been established at both Central and State level. These institutions include Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Indian Institute of Information Technology (IIIT), Indian Institute of Management (IIM), National Institute of Technology (NIT), National Institute Pharmaceutical Education and Research (NIPER), Indian Institute of Science Education and Research (IISER), National Institute of Design (NID), School of Planning and Architecture (SPA), All India Institute of Medical Science (AIIMS), Indian Institute of Engineering Science and Technology (IIEST) etc.

- **Stand-Alone Institutes**

There are some institutes which are not affiliated to any Universities but are recognised by various Councils or Ministries, these institutes are referred as Stand-Alone institutes. Stand-Alone Institutes have been categorised into 05 types as follows:

						es	
1947	India	330	20	500			0.2 million
2017	India	1,342	832	40,026	91	11,669	25.2 (35.7Million) including 19 million boys & 16.07 million girls

Source: ASHE, 2016-17 Report, Released on 5 Jan, 2018

Table-2: The Degree Granting Higher Education Institutes in India

Name of Institutions	Number	%
Central University	46	4.98
State Public University	367	39.76
State Private University	282	30.55
Deemed University	123	13.32
Central Open University	01	0.10
State Open University	13	1.40
Institution of National Importance	91	9.85
Total	923	100

Source: ASHE, 2016-17 Report, Released on 5 Jan, 2018

MULTI-LAYERED REGULATORY STRUCTURE OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN INDIA:

The main governing body at the tertiary sector is the University Grants Commission (UGC, 1956). It has a dual function of providing grants as well as coordinating and maintaining the standards of higher education institutes. All public universities are governed by the UGC, as well as funded by it. The UGC Act of 1956 specifies the entire step-by-step administration of the University it governs, ranging from the number of working days, to number of lecture hours per subject, as well as the minimum qualification required for students to enroll and for teachers to teach a course. Powers and functions of UGC include allocation as well as disbursement of funds from the Central/State Government for development, maintenance as well as for research purposes, inspection of universities, conferring of degrees, etc.

Supporting the UGC, accreditation for higher learning over Universities is overseen by the following fifteen autonomous regulatory and statutory councils:

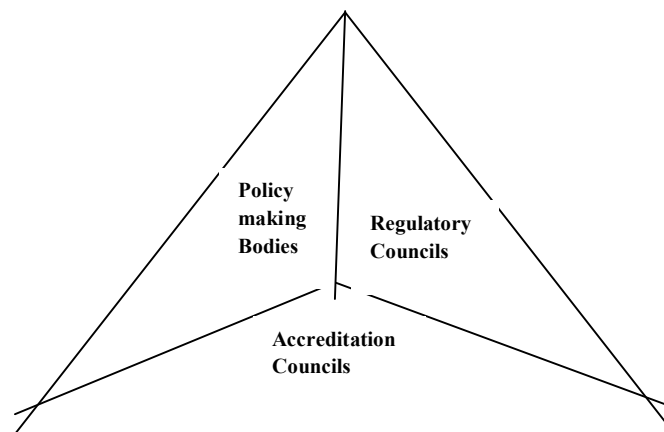
1. All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE, 1945)
2. Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR, 1973)

3. Central Council of Homoeopathy (CCH, 1973)
4. Distance Education Council (DEC, 1985)
5. Medical Council of India (MCI, 1956)
6. Central Council of Indian Medicine (CCIM, 1970)
7. Rehabilitation Council of India (RCI, 1992)
8. Pharmacy Council of India (PCI, 1948)
9. National Council for Rural Institutes (NCRI, 1995)
10. Bar Council of India (BCI, 1961)
11. Indian Nursing Council (INC, 1947)
12. Council of Architecture (CA, 1972)
13. National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE, 1993)
14. Dental Council of India (DCI, 1948)
15. State Councils of Higher Education (SCHE)

To summarize, these above councils are responsible for the recognition of courses, promotion of professional institutions, regulating the course syllabus, providing grants and other awards to various fields of education. These bodies play an important role in the setting up of an institution imparting a degree or diploma course in higher education. Each council has its own set of rules and mandates for the concerned institutions. On closer analysis of these councils, one views a major predicament in their working. There is a large overlap of their functions with the functions of UGC as well as other regulatory bodies from the list.

The clear and distinct features of regulatory framework of higher education in India are below in table-3 for better and meaningful understanding the landscape of higher education.

Table-3: Regulatory Framework of Higher Education in India



In the last six decades higher education in India has undergone major structural, regulatory bodies and policy level changes. There is no proper coordination among the apex Plan and Policy Making Bodies (Department of Higher Education, MHRD, RUSA, NITI-Aayog (National Institute for Transforming India) Association of Indian Universities, Central Advisory Board of Education, NIUPA and Sate Council for Higher Education etc) in one hand and on the other hand the Statutory Regulatory Bodies and

Professional Councils (UGC, AICTE, ICAR, CCH, DEC, MCI, CCIM, RCI, PCI, NCRI, BCI, INC, CA, NCTE, DCI, SCHE) and Accreditation Councils (NAAC 1994, NBA 1987) in the real ground. Besides these other research institutes like ICSSR, ICHR, ICPR, and NCAER etc are linked the developmental process and research activities of higher education. Moreover supply chain of higher education is quite complex and diversities with regard to governance, management, administration, supervision, inspection, collaboration, teaching-learning process, support system, curriculum construction and its implementation, innovation and research, ranking and accreditation, employability, quality education, evaluation procedures and system, social connection and many other issues. Supply chain of higher education is given table-4.

Table-4: Supply Chain of Higher Education

University
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Five types of universities. b) deemed universities can have either government or private management. c) Jurisdiction of deemed university is pan-India or worldwide. d) Private universities can be set up at state level & its jurisdiction state-wide only. e) Private universities cannot affiliate colleges
Colleges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Colleges can affiliate to either central or state government universities b) Private colleges usually affiliate to only state government universities
Course
15 statutory professional councils regulate recognition of courses, institutions and provision of grants to undergraduate programs and various awards

At the last chain of delivery—the classroom, three sets of regulations operate—University, College, and Council (as per the course). Universities awarding their own degrees are classified into five types based on their management—Central University; State University, Private University, Institutions-deemed-to-be-a-University and Institute of National Importance. Colleges award degrees in the name of the university to which they are affiliated. In addition, 15 professional councils (like MCI and AICTE) regulate the courses run by the colleges and universities. The University Grants Commission (UGC) acts as the over-arching regulatory body.

There are two accrediting institutions— namely National Board of Accreditation (NBA) established by AICTE and National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) established by UGC.

Higher education is the responsibility of both the Central and State governments. Because education falls under the Concurrent List of the Constitution (According to 76 Amendment, 1972). This means that both the centre and states can enact laws related to education. While the major responsibility of establishing, funding and managing the universities and colleges lie with the respective State governments, the Central government provides overall guidance and policy direction. There is a wide gap between respective state government and central government in the field of governance in Indian higher education.

Considering the gravity of this situation, a National Commission for Higher Education and Research or new policies and system are to be developed in the field of higher education particularly with regards to governance spectrum. As a result Indian higher education system will sustain an unprecedented transformation in the coming decade, driven by global, economic and demographic changes. If India

wants to emerge as the academic leader at the global level there is a great need for positive administrative reforms in order to elevate the level of higher education in the society.

Moreover there should be a uniform pattern of higher education in terms of admission, medium of instruction, curriculum, teaching learning process, support system, teachers' appointment, evaluation process, governance patterns, so on and so forth. Quality and standard should be maintained irrespective of all regular modes of Indian higher education system. Then question will be raised that how it is possible across all segments of society because India is a heterogeneous and pluralistic country in terms of its languages, ethnicity, culture, religions etc. The ultimate response is very simple as far as my cognitive knowledge and understanding is concerned. They will go to the field of open and distance learning system to fulfill their hope and aspiration of higher education to a large extent. The open and distance learning system is open to all irrespective to their age, qualification, social conditions, requirements, socio-cultural difference etc.

It can be said that India has come a long way after independence. There had been phenomenal growth in terms of enrolment of male and female in the higher education sector. Inequality still exist which is not a good sign for sustainable development and enlightened human society. Concerted efforts have to be made for bridging these wide gaps. There has been a huge increase in number of universities and colleges, enrolment of students but emphasis needs to be given on education quality. This in long run may help tremendously to the Indian higher education institutes.

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