



Modernization of Indian Higher Education System: An evaluation in the twenty first century

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Abstract

Education is the most important service for the progress of human being in every country. It is necessary for the formation of character of the people. Due to education, we realize the significance and purpose of society and are capable to achieve more opportunities, resources and off course power. If education is promoted it enhances the value string of a nation. When we talk about higher education it mainly includes teaching, research, and rigorous practical work as in medical colleges and the activities of universities in the arena of social service. In the sphere of teaching, it involves both the graduate as well as postgraduate-levels. In India it has been expanded speedily over the last two decades just because of the involvement of the private individual or agencies. It is also noted that higher education also faces different systemic deficiencies such as high fees, low quality of education etc. At present time, the issues like institutions quantity, areas of education, pattern of enrollment, and teacher accessibility, constitutional provisions on higher education, practice of government, discrepancy in acquiring higher education, contemporary trends like privatization and globalization and trend in finance are the burning questions in higher education. In this paper the chief emphasis is to discuss the notion of higher education, to explore the historical background and the present condition of Indian higher education and the recent trends prevailing in higher education system of India.

Keywords: Quality, Higher education, privatization, globalization, issues.

Introduction

For the development of any country the foremost thing is to endorse the economic and industrial development and for that purpose the indispensable necessity is to develop a better quality of skilled manpower in sufficient number. To acquire formal learning Higher education or post-secondary education starts after secondary education. This secondary education is generally delivered through colleges, universities and technological institutes. In this regard higher education is also offered by some vocational schools at college- level, trade schools, and other certain career oriented colleges which also provide academic degrees and professional certificates. The importance of higher education can be considered through various conventions on human rights at international level.

The U.N. 'International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights of 1966' declares in article 13, that "higher education shall be made equally accessible to all, on the basis of capacity, by every appropriate means, and in particular by the progressive introduction of free education". According to the First Protocol of the European Convention on Human Rights, 1950, article 2 says that "all signatory parties oblige to guarantee the right to education"¹. Through higher education not only innovative and critical thinkers but also fervent and well-versed citizens can be formed.

A good quality higher education develops society and keep tries the centre on the path of development and progress². It contributes to raise the living standard of people and social mobility. Higher education has a massive potential to prop up opulence in the developing nations³. Hence we can understand the importance of higher education.

Higher Education: Concept and Meaning

The term higher education is defined by many authors in diverse ways at a different point of time. All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) defines it as "the education, which is obtained after completing twelve years of schooling or equivalent and is of the duration of at least nine months (full time) or after completing 10 years of schooling and is of the duration at least three years. The education may be of the nature of General, Vocational, Professional, or Technical education"⁴. Other educationist says that after getting school education the next step in education is called higher education. This type of education further divided into higher education and tertiary education. To complete higher education minimum time period is 3 and the maximum period is 4 years for instance honors degrees and diplomas fall in this category while tertiary education involves Post Graduate and Doctorate degrees which are provided by universities⁵.

The higher education framework of India institutionally consists of Universities, Colleges and Stand Alone Institutions which may be affiliated from central government, state government and deemed universities (formed in collaboration with public and private individual or agencies). According to the AISHE report there are 993 Universities and 39931 Colleges. The numbers of Stand Alone Institutions are 10725. The number of universities which are managed by private authorities is 385 and 394 Universities are to be found in rural areas. There are sixteen Universities which are solely for women, three in Rajasthan, two in Tamil Nadu & one each in Assam, Andhra Pradesh, Delhi, Himachal Pradesh, Haryana, Karnataka, Odisha, Maharashtra, Uttarakhand and West Bengal. Over all enrolment in higher education has been recorded to be 37.4 million with 19.2 million boys and 18.2 million girls. Girls comprise 48.6% of the total enrolment⁶. There are some other institutes like IITs, IIMs, NITs, IISc, etc. which provide technical education.

To accomplish the goal of education to all, the Indian government has also established some Open Universities to promote distance learning which means that if an individual wants to study but does not have a time (because of his/her work) to attend the classes regularly then he/she have an opportunity to study through distance learning mode. At present, India have about 14 open universities in which Indira Gandhi National Open University considers as the pioneer among them⁷. The number of General universities is 548 whereas Technical universities are 142, Agriculture & Allied universities are 63, Medical universities are 58, and Law universities are 23 in numbers. Sanskrit and Language Universities are 13 and 09 in numbers respectively. Around 106 are other category Universities there. The top 8 States where the maximum numbers of colleges founded in India are Uttar Pradesh, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu along with Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat. Almost 10.62% out of the overall enrolment in higher education is constituted by Distance mode of education in which 44.15% enrollment of female students are recorded in such type of learning institutes. At the Undergraduate level of programme, there is about 79.8% of the students are enrolled. In Ph. D. course the number of students' enrollment is 1, 69, 170 which is less than 0.5% of the total student enrollment. We find maximum enrollment of students in B.A. (Bachelor's of arts) programme, secondly in B.Sc. (Bachelor's of science) and thirdly in B.Com. (Bachelor's of commerce) programmes. Reasons for their choices may vary at different places and times.

Table-1: Numbers of Registered Institutions in Higher Education⁶.

Types of Institutions	Numbers
Universities	993
Colleges	39931
Stand Alone Institutions	10725

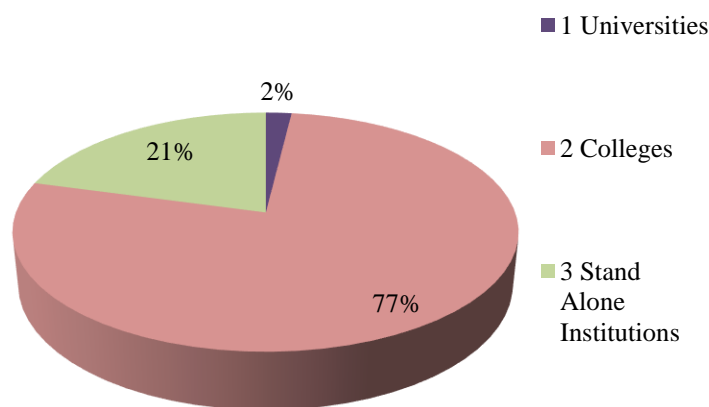


Figure-1: Numbers of Registered Institutions in Higher Education⁶.

Objectives of the study: The objectives of the present study are as follows: i. To discuss the concept of higher education. ii. To investigate the historical background of higher education in India. iii. Explore the present status of higher education. iv. Identify recent issues and trends in Indian higher education system. v. To give suggestions to overcome these issues.

Methodology

The entire paper is conceptual land mainly based on the information retrieved from secondary resources which includes journals, books, governmental reports and surveys.

Historical Background of Indian Higher Education System:

In India, the emergence of Higher education system can be traced back from the ancient Vedic period. The whole journey of higher education can be largely divided into four periods: - (1) Ancient Period (2) Medieval Period (3) British Period or Pre-Independence and (4) Post-Independence Period.

Ancient Period: It has been unanimously accepted that in ancient times learning seats were existed at Takshashila in 5th-6th century B.C., Nalanda (Kumargupta I), Kanchipura in 5th-6th century A.D, Odantapuri (Gopala I), Sri Dharryakataka, Kashmira and Vikramashila in 800A.D. (Dharampala in Bihar) The subjects which were studied here included logic, grammar, metaphysics, astronomy etc⁸. The nature of Indian higher education was quite religious in ancient time. And the main religions at that time were Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism. To create, transform and broaden people's knowledge in society religion-based education system has performed a crucial role to meet the purpose in ancient India. In this period, attainment of knowledge and make preparations for this worldly life was not a final goal of education, but for complete self realization.

In this connection we may say that the 'Gurukul system' has played an important role to promote a rigid discipline among pupils under which they were subjected to obligations towards his/her Guru. In this way it encouraged the Guru-Shishya bond and established a teacher centric system. In Gurukuls the knowledge of Philosophy, Literature, Religion, Astrology, History, Statecraft, Medicine and Warfare was delivered by teachers⁹. The education system of Brahmins and Buddhists were two core education systems at that time. The education system of Brahmins which was developed in the Vedic period was considered through religious values and was also regulated by them while the Buddhist system of education seemed religious as well as secular in nature. It was developed through the teachings of Lord Buddha. This type of education was centered in monasteries and was controlled by the monks.

Medieval Period: The Medieval period was started with the beginning of the 8th century A.D. when a large number of Mohammedan invasions occurred. It was continued until the British period was started. When Mahmud Ghaznavi invaded the country he founded a lot of schools and libraries in the country. Afterward, the advent of Muslim rulers in the country marked the introduction of a new education system¹⁰. As a result, the ancient system of education was significantly changed. Among Muslim rulers Akbar did admirable works and highly contributed in the field of education. In this period education was dominated by religion. According to S.N. MUKERJI, The whole educational system was saturated with the religious ideals which influenced the aim, the contents of study, and even the daily life of the pupils¹¹. The knowledge was received by pupils as a religious duty during this period. During this period, three channels of education namely, Maktab, Madrasah and Khangah (birth place of spiritualism in Islam) through which knowledge was acquired. Elementary education was delivered by Maktab while Madrasah imparted higher learning and religious education was obtained in Khangah. The teachers were also respected as respected during the Brahmanic and Buddhist period. A close relationship was founded between them, although the practice of living together was not prevalent there as in the period of Brahmanic and Buddhist period. The striking feature of this period was that the rulers had no authority over the educational institutions and they were not interfered in their management.¹¹ Peoples were free to acquire education.

British or pre-Independence Period: It has been unanimously accepted that the British were responsible for the present university system. The origin of Indian Higher Education in its present form can be traced back with the restoration of the Charter Act of 1813 by British parliament for educational development in India. With the foundation of the Hindu College in Calcutta in the year of 1817 which was also considered as the foremost Europeanized higher learning institution, English higher education was started in India. Later on, in the Macaulay's minute of 1835 it was emphasized that the aim of the then British government should be "the promotion of

European literature and science amongst the natives of India. Macaulay viewed that for the betterment of the Indian higher education system English education was indispensable. After some time, Charles Woods' Dispatch released on 19 July 1854 called Magna Charta of Indian Education, was an important educational document which did a commendable work to lay down the foundation of Calcutta, Bombay, and Madras universities in 1857 and the beginning of grants-in-aid for the universities had included in the foremost achievements of this period. In order to develop higher education in India the recommendations of the Hunter Commission (1882-83) to give financial assistance to University Education play a very crucial role in this context. To grant autonomy for universities Calcutta University Commission (1917) also known as Saddler Commission has also made recommendations. It reviewed the entire education from school to university level. In 1929, the report of the Hartog Committee recommended for the enhancement of standard and quality at the University level education. Similarly the Abbot-Wood Report's (1937) recommendations encourage the foundations of Polytechnics Colleges, Central Technical Board and Vocational Colleges of Teacher's Training and also recommended that English language must be the standard of education. Finally the recommendations of Sargent Report (1944) about the establishment of U.G.C. were the major landmark which contributed in formulating the blue print of higher education system in India.

Post Independence Period: After Independence, the Government of India was much busy in handling the issues and problems of Post-partition. However, the Government was very concerned on the matter that to become self reliant it is necessary to bring socio-economic development in the country and that can be achieved only through the development of human resources. Therefore, to tackle the problem, a need was felt by the then National leaders to give a face-lift to the whole education system and as a result of this the Radha Krishnan Education commission was established in the year 1948-49 to review the entire education system of the country. It was the first education commission in free India. U.G.C. was established on its recommendations. Later on the union government was also appointed the Kothari Commission 1964-1966 and the reports of both the commissions put up the foundation stone of the New Education Policy, 1986¹². The 3 years system of secondary and 4 years system of higher education in India was recommended by the Secondary Education Commission in 1952. Indian Education Commission of 1964 also recommended 3 years Degree and 4 years Honors Degree courses. The National Policy on Education of 1968 and 1986 recommended for the enhancement of higher education quality and 10+2+3 pattern in education system respectively. At the end we can say that the efforts of such commissions and sound effects of their recommendations can be analyzed by the present position of Indian higher education.

Presently, the Indian higher education system stands at the first position in terms of the institutional numbers throughout the world. The numbers of Indian institutions are 4 times more than U.S.A. and Europe. But in terms of enrolment China has the world's largest higher education system. In this context U.S.A. secures second position and India acquire third position. In spite of having a lot of institutions in India there is a need for expansion of colleges and universities. The Knowledge commission has estimated that to target the increasing demand for higher learning there is an urgent need to establish around 3,000 more universities having the potential to enroll more than 10,000 students. Therefore to achieve the said purpose it should be done.

The Table-2 shows last five years data of major Universities. Through these years the growth was increased from 726 in

2014-15 to 962 in 2018-19. All these years the state private universities have increased in great numbers in comparison to other universities. These were 181 in 2014-15, 197 in 2015-16, 233 in 2016-17, 262 in 2017-18 and 304 in 2018-19. While deemed universities (private) fluctuate only in one number. These Universities were increased from 79 to 80 in all these years. And central universities were increased from the number of 43 in 2014-15 to 46 in 2018-19.

If we talk about the foreign students' enrollment in Indian higher education institutions, there are 47,427 students which are enrolled in India. Around 164 countries from across the world the foreign students have come in our country to acquire education.

Table-2: Number of Major Universities in Last Five Years⁶.

Types of Major Universities	Number of Universities after polling data from AISHE 2018				
	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19
State Private University	181	197	233	262	304
State Public University	316	329	345	351	371
Deemed University (Private)	79	79	79	80	80
Institute of National Importance	75	75	100	101	127
Deemed University Government	32	32	33	33	34
Central University	43	43	44	45	46
Total	726	755	834	872	962

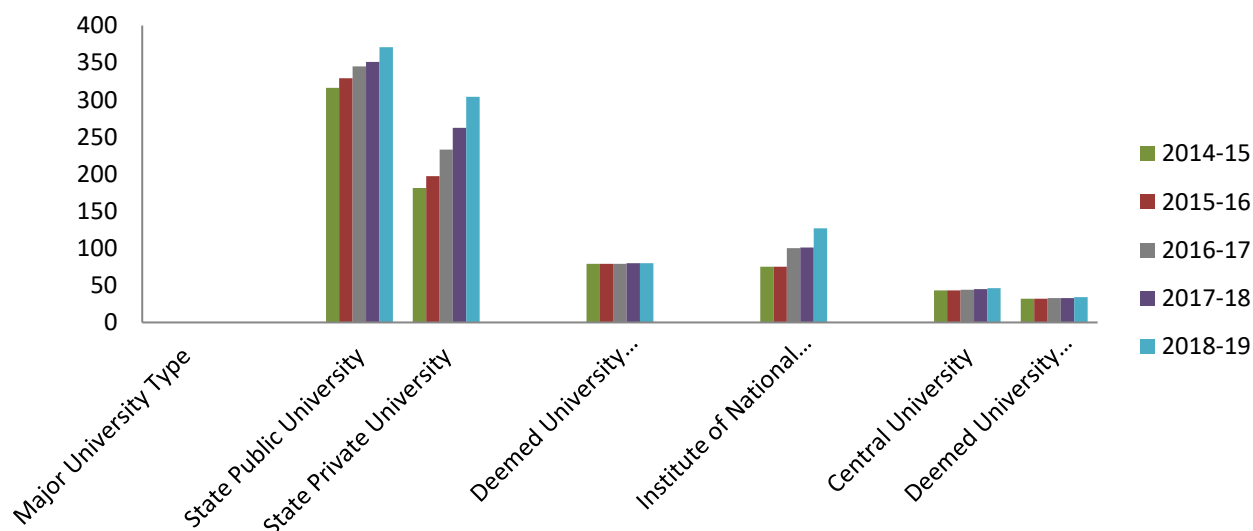


Figure-2: Universities in Last Five years.

The top 10 countries formulate 63.7% of the total enrolment by foreign students. The highest share of foreign students comes from the top 10 countries. In neighboring countries, there are Nepal which constitutes 26.88% of the total, followed by Afghanistan 9.8%, Bangladesh 4.38%, Bhutan 3.82% and Sri Lanka 2.64%. Apart from these countries the Sudan comprises 4.02%, Nigeria 3.04%, United States of America 3.02%, Yemen 3.02%, and Iran 2.38%. Table-3 is clearly indicating that Nepal has contributed largely with the 12747 number of students followed by Afghanistan with 4657 and so on. The lowest number of students comes from Iran which is 1127 in numbers.

Issues in Higher Education

As everybody knows that the education performs very crucial task in the development of socio-economic spheres of a country. The point may be noted here that in front of Indian higher education system there are a lot of basic problems and issues such as traditional methods of teaching, lower level of teaching quality, insufficient facilities and poor infrastructure, financing in higher education, privatization, much emphasis on theories instead of practical education and Quota (reservation) system¹³. These problems put barriers on the path of quality education.

Table-3: Representation of Foreign students from Top 10 countries in India⁶.

Country	Numbers	%
Nepal	12747	26.88%
Afghanistan	4657	9.8%
Bangladesh	2075	4.38%
Sudan	1905	4.02%
Bhutan	1811	3.82%
Nigeria	1614	3.4%
United States of America	1518	3.2%
Yemen	1498	3.2%
Sri Lanka	1252	2.64%
Iran	1127	2.38%

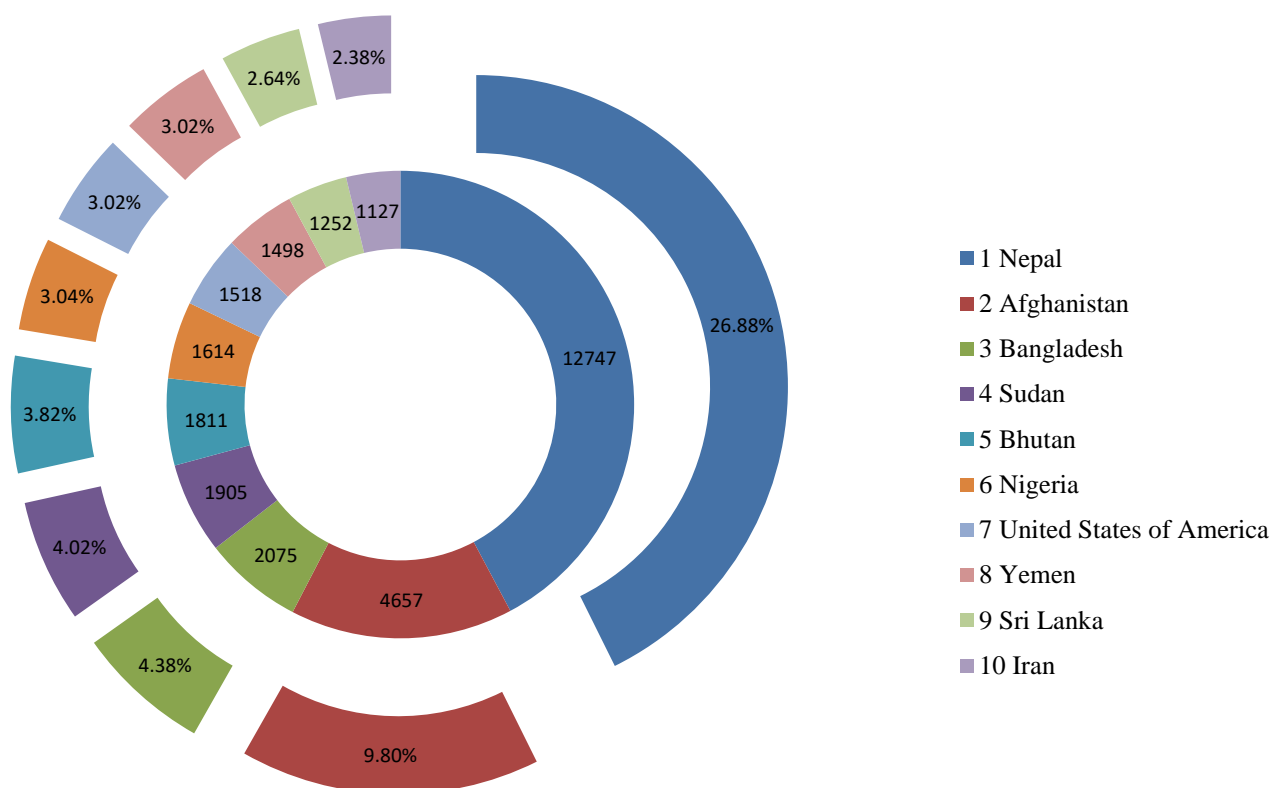


Figure-3: Foreign students from Top 10 countries in India⁶.

Quality of Teaching: In India the education system is suffered by the issue of teaching quality. Lower level of teaching quality can be seen in many institutions and universities. Now a days the Indian education system is being questioned by many issues such as poor teaching quality, lack of faculty and accountability, obsolete and rigid curricula etc.

Traditional Methods of Teaching: In spite of advanced technology, many professors are still adhere to the conventional methods of teaching like use of black and white board, marker. Audio visual aids in teaching are not used by them. They do not like to make use of these things.

Inadequate Facilities and poor Infrastructure: In Many institutions lack of adequate facilities and the issue of infrastructure can be seen easily. There are a number of Universities which don't have a good infrastructure. Even most of the private universities are offering various courses lacking any classroom. Most of the students are far away from the access of internet and Broadband Services.

Quota System: Reservation and quota system are also responsible for lost of quality in education. Candidates of different categories who have reservation in education get admission easily due to their quota even they are not suitable and on the other hand worthy candidates from general category are neglected because they don't have any reservation in education.

Emphasis on Theories rather than Practical Knowledge: Our education system has more focus on theories rather than practical knowledge. The trend of percentage is still prevalent in many jobs. In most of the posts the percentage requirement remains high which is a major issue of present time.

Financing in Higher Education: The issue of financing in higher education in front of the government is one of the most important thing that has to be discussed here. The issue is settled through in the domain of education policy and planning. To measure the quality of education in all over country, the parameter may be expenditure on education by the government.

Inequality in access to Higher Education: Inequality in our education system can be seen in four categories namely, gender inequality, geographical inequality, minority-majority based and economic class based inequality. Although the Indian constitution guarantees the equal rights and opportunities to women through the fundamental rights, Article 14, 15(3), 39(e) and 51A(e) and directive principles yet the gender discrimination in education has been a burning question since Independence.

Apart from these issues, lack of ethics and moral principles in higher education institutions is also a major part of concern. In both universities and private institutions of tertiary education, issues regarding ethics are emerging due to rapid expand of

higher education with competition. Due to marketisation of higher education a new competition has emerged, complete online mode delivered education, partnership with public and private institutions. To enhance the sources of income they allow admission of low standards to increase market share and it resulted losing morality by institutions¹⁴. So these are the issues which we are facing in our education system.

Trends in Higher Education

Privatization: The word privatization of education refers to a process in which the activities and responsibilities of government, public institutions and organizations in education are transferred to private individual and agencies. As we already know that education is a significant tool for the socio-economic development of mankind. So the importance and demand of higher education has been increased by everyone. To cope up the increasing demand of higher education, private colleges, universities, private institutions and autonomous colleges are established in India. Therefore, to fill the gap between demand and supply of higher education, privatization of higher education has been growing by leaps and bounds¹⁵. In India almost 50% of higher education is delivered through means of private institutions, involving high cost and unaided mostly¹¹. Within government higher education institutions, privatization takes place through providing self-financing courses. There are some purposes to privatize education such as – i. To enhance the competition among public sectors. ii. To fulfill the increasing demand of higher education. iii. To reduce the burden of government. iv. To provide a better quality of education and also design the syllabus according to global, national and local requirements. v. To fulfill the demand of skilled manpower. vi. To smooth the progress of information based economic development and technological development.

Globalization: Presently, the terms globalization and internationalization are used interchangeably. However, a difference is existed between them. Globalization denotes the involvement of a lot of countries while internationalization refers the involvement of two or more countries. The barriers of national boundaries have been broken through the advancement of information and communication technology. Due to this an extensive development has been occurred in the spheres of social, economic and education at the international level⁵. This development is called as internationalization and globalization by us.

The result of the development in education can be seen in the following events: i. Enlarged tendency of comparison of educational development internationally. ii. Interchange of students from one country to another. iii. Interchange of scholars from one country to another. iv. Establishment of educational institutions from one country to another. v. Advertising of education worldwide.

Suggestions for Improving the Higher Education System: To improve the Indian higher education system some suggestions are below. i. For making the education system more pertinent at global level, it is necessitate to implement the inventive approaches from the level of primary education to higher education because latest technologies put forward immense opportunities for the development of the entire spheres of life. ii. In order to improve the syllabus, higher education institutes should organize expert lectures, internships, live projects, career counseling, etc. After receiving classroom management training programs, the lecturers can be able to perform in a better way in problem solving, applying discipline, classroom management and checking misbehaviors¹⁶. This will be more beneficial for present scenario. iii. Students centered education along with dynamic methods should be promoted. Methods of higher education should be in accordance with the need of learners. iv. Government should encourage collaboration among Indian education institutions and top international institutes. v. At graduate level, there is an urgent need to provide job oriented courses through these courses students can attain excellence as well as immense knowledge of the subject in a result they will find job easily which will be helpful in eliminating rush in higher education. vi. Students of general category who belongs to financially backward families must be given opportunities in education. vii. Universities should promote quality in higher education with ethical and moral values also. viii. Teaching awards in higher education should be promoted in quite effective manners. Through the introduction of awards in teaching we can raise the profile of teaching and recognize teaching practice of individuals¹⁷. Awards recipients can feel encouragement by this method.

Conclusion

The study reveals the position of higher education from ancient to contemporary era. The issues like quality of teaching, poor infrastructure, inadequate facilities, traditional teaching methods, quota system and inequality in access to higher education etc. denote that the current position of higher education system is not admirable in India. Government should take positive steps to eliminate these issues. Though the introduction of privatization in education has played a crucial role in expanding qualitative as well as quantitative education yet at the same time it increases a vast number of degree holders in the queue of unemployment. Therefore, it is the need of the hour to revise and execute different governmental policies and programs in more effective manners through which the destination can be achieved. Therefore, the recommendations given in the investigation can be executed to enhance the standard of training given all the way through privatization and evacuates its negative effects on the society.

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