

General Studies-1; Topic: Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources.

Higher Education in India

1) Introduction

- Education is the basis of social and economic change in any country.
- India's higher education system is the third largest in the world, next to the United States and China.
- There is still a lot of potential for further development in the education system specially its role in economic development of nation.

2) Reasons for Lack of enrolment for Higher Education

- On account of financial hardship
- Social compulsions for early marriage for girls
- Majority of young people from poor families drop out of school at or before completing secondary education.
- For socially disadvantaged groups discrimination at workplace and occupational segregation lower the rate of return from higher education
- Intensive entry examination
- Coaching classes (or private tuition) with high fees is often out of reach for poor students.

3) Dismal State of Higher Education

- Universities are still characterized by impractical learning, out-of-touch faculty, exorbitant fees (in private universities) and diminishing employment.
- Universities suffer from slow processes, non-digital pedagogues, and theoretical rather than experiential learning.
- Rote learning and standardised examinations
- Uninspiring classrooms with extremely low engagement
- Most Indian graduates are unemployable. NASSCOM, estimates that only 20% of graduates of engineering colleges in India are employable in IT companies.
- Research in both the sciences and the humanities is generally below par.
- Even elite Indian universities do not make it to the very top of global listings.
- Extreme faculty shortage. 30 to 50% of faculty positions are vacant in many institutions.
- Deficiencies in the matters of library books, laboratory facilities, computer and broadband internet, classrooms and buildings, etc.
- Politicians have entered into the business of higher education in a big way, turning colleges into lucrative degree-giving factories.
- The rise of IT sector and engineering education in India has led students into linear path without giving them a chance to explore and discover their passions.

4) India's Advantage

- India's strength in English is a natural advantage today.
- India took major steps in nurturing higher education and scientific temperament, setting up the IITs, the IIMs, and promoting some fine universities.
- India today is the 14th most popular destination in preference for higher education.

- If we can build on these strengths and create private universities to flourish, India can become a destination for students from around the world.

5) New 'institutions of eminence'

- The government is seeking to establish 20 world-class "institutions of eminence" around the country.
- These institutions will be governed by new regulations which will ensure their complete academic, administrative and financial autonomy.
- If these institutions develop and deliver on these lines, it marks the beginning of a new chapter in India's nation-building exercise.
- For knowledge to translate into a wealthy society, we need to create a conducive knowledge ecosystem. Institutions of higher education help in creating such an ecosystem.

6) Way Forward

- The most crucial change is required in the governance of our institutions.
- Universities must be open, questioning, trusting, experimenting, inspirational, direction setting, and enabling people to believe that nothing is impossible.
- Universities are always places of the future –the future is shaped in its crucibles, classrooms and conversations.
- The government should back universities to allow short-term diplomas and Nano-Degrees so that Digital India, Skill India and Make in India, get a boost.
- Governments and their bureaucracies will have to free up institutions to allow them to make their own decisions.
- For any development in higher education to bear fruit, it will have to be supported by the strengthening of primary education. China succeeded in this.
- Every three years a public college or university should have an independent audit and be accountable to the legislature.
- The new technology of distance learning should be fully utilized in upgrading the teaching and knowledge standards.
- The 4th Industrial Revolution technologies are blurring lines between the physical and digital. Big Data and digital technology will be game changers
- Funding can be sourced from Special cess, CSR, alumina fund, easy loans from banks, progressive fee structure etc.
- Link major R&D centres of country with government colleges in all states, to encourage inclusion of students in research initiatives in the country
- Setting up Higher Education Commission (HEC) as recommended by Yashpal Committee to promote interaction across different departments and universities
- Ensure ease in movement of personnel between universities and industry.