



ISSUES IN INDIAN HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM - GS II MAINS

Q. Indian higher education sector is at a crucial crossroads today, reflecting a landscape of opportunities and challenges. Critically examine (15 marks, 250 words)

News: *The rot in India's higher education system*

What's in the news?

- This is our 77th year of independence, still our education system has not been developed fully. We are not able to list a single university in the top 100 universities of the world. Various governments changed during these six decades.
- They tried to boost the education system and implemented various education policies but they were not sufficient to put an example for the universe.
- UGC is continuously working and focusing on quality education in the higher education sector. Still we are facing a lot of problems and challenges in our education system.

Challenges in Higher Education in India:

1. Lower Enrolment:

- The Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) of India in higher education is only 15% which is quite low as compared to the developed as well as, other developing countries.
- With the increase of enrolments at school level, the supply of higher education institutes is insufficient to meet the growing demand in the country.

2. Inequity:

- There is no equity in GER among different sects of the society. According to previous studies the GER in higher education in India among male and females varies to a greater extent.
- There are regional variations too; some states have high GER while some are quite behind the national GER which reflect significant imbalances within the higher education system.

3. Lack of Quality:

- Quality in higher education is a multi-dimensional, multilevel, and dynamic concept.
- Ensuring quality in higher education is amongst the foremost challenges being faced in India today.
- However, the government is continuously focusing on quality education. 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 its place among the top universities of the world.

4. Poor Infrastructure:

- 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.



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- There are a large number of colleges which are functioning on the second or third floor of the building. On the ground or first floor there exists readymade hosieries or photocopy shops.

5. Political Interference:

- Most of the educational Institutions are owned by the political leaders, who are playing key roles in governing bodies of the Universities.
- They are using innocent students for their selfish means.
- Students organise campaigns, forget their own objectives and begin to develop their careers in politics.

6. Shortage of Faculty:

- 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, these deserving candidates are then applying in other departments which is a big blow to the higher education system.

7. Lack of Accreditation:

- As per the data provided by the NAAC, as of June 2010, “not even 25% of the total higher education institutions in the country were accredited.
- And among those accredited, only 30% of the universities and 45% of the colleges were found to be of quality to be ranked at 'A' level”.

8. Inadequate Research and Innovation:

- There are very nominal scholars in our country whose writing is cited by famous western authors. 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 advice 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 centers. So, this is another area of challenge to higher education in India.

9. Structure of Higher Education:

- Management of Indian education faces challenges of over-centralisation, bureaucratic structures and lack of accountability, transparency, and professionalism.
- As a result of increase in 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



Measures to Improve Indian Higher Education System:

1. Filling-up Vacancies:

- Government must ensure filling up of vacancies through more autonomy to the institutions.

2. Creating Enabling Atmosphere:

- Research cannot be improved merely by regulating universities, instead they need efforts to create an enabling atmosphere for which it is imperative to grant more autonomy, better funding and new instruments to regulate work ethic.

3. Implementing Initiatives:

- New initiatives like Hackathon, curriculum reform, anytime, anywhere learning through SWAYAM, teacher training are all aimed at improving quality. These need to be effectively implemented.

4. Permanent Appointments:

- As India wants to transform its universities into world class institutions, it must safeguard the interests of young researchers and thousands of temporary faculty members by expediting the permanent appointments in a time-bound framework and transparent manner.

5. Incentive:

- One of the fundamental changes India must institutionalise is a radically new compensation and incentive structure for faculty members.
- A flexibility to pay differential salaries based on market forces and merit must be part of this transformation.

6. Investment:

- Adequate investment in the higher education sector is needed.
- Gap in investment to be filled by private sector.

7. Revamping Curriculum:

- It is important to make curriculum industry-oriented, updated and practical focusing on skill development.
- More focus is needed on critical thinking, analytical reasoning, problem-solving rather than memorizing and writing skills.

8. Autonomy:

- UGC should act as a facilitator rather than a regulator.
- More autonomy to universities to be provided.