

## Roll of Mass Media in Higher Education & its Economic Viability -

### Part – 1 Higher Education - a Top down Approach

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**Abstract-** 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. It is therefore a crucial factor for survival. Thus with the focus on higher education, India has transformed from an elite system nurtured by colonial route to a mass system attempting to meet the demands of the vibrant democracy during the last five decades since independence. The process of massification is marked by an increase in the number of university level institutions from 18 to 240, of colleges from 590 to about 9000, and of students from 0.2 million to 5.5 million. The transform system is grappling with problem of access, equity and quality. The central and the state governments are struggling to provide support to the fast growing needs of aspirants of higher education. It seems that governments may not be in a position to have much of resources to create and sustain the present system. It is likely that some options have to be adopted to meet the future need of higher education. In this context, the increased reluctance of central and state governments to support higher education is posing a serious problem and indirectly encouraging the privatization of higher education. Hence we have to evolve and strengthen the system like distance education through open universities where the great potential of mass media could play a vital role with cost-effectiveness. Also the conventional system could make use of mass media to be in tune with the global change. Keeping in mind the importance of higher education as an essential factor for the development of knowledge based Indian society, an attempt has been made to trace the development and role of higher education in India since independence, analyze its problems and look at the options for the present millennium.

**Keywords-**Need, Role, Development & Importance of Higher Education, State of Higher Education, Constraints, Growth in state.

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#### 1.1 Need of Higher Education

The need for higher education had continuously being realized from time to time and opinions have been expressed for more funding and development of higher education. The Punnayya Committee report (University Grant Commission, 1993)<sup>2</sup> has stated that the government cannot give up its responsibility to the higher education sector. It states, “The State must continue to accept the major responsibility for funding the essential maintenance and development requirements of the Universities” and “Although primary education is fundamental to the nation, higher education determines its entire development including academic and technological progress. While it is mandatory that the nation achieves universal elementary education and total literacy, at the same time, we cannot afford to neglect and relegate our quest to achieve global standards of higher education”.

The argument of the finance ministry are in a many ways similar to those presented in the World Bank Document<sup>2</sup> ‘Higher Education - The lessons of experience’, which states “Indeed it is arguable that higher education should not have the highest priority claim on incremental public resources available for education in many developing countries, especially those that have not yet achieved adequate access, equity and quality at the primary and secondary levels. This

is because the social rates of return on investment in the primary and secondary education usually exceed the returns on higher education”.

Tunnermann<sup>2</sup> summarized some of the points of criticism as follows:

“A core problem is that, conventional estimates on the return rate, they don’t equate the social benefits of the education at any of the level. This opens the debate of the existence of those benefits in higher education, in function covering not only teaching activities but also research and the strengthening of the national identity (nation building). The social return rates don’t take into consideration, the non-private benefit of education emerging from ‘positive external factor’. The later are higher in the case of higher education than for other educational levels, which might put in doubt the legitimacy of a redistribution of the public expenditure allocation in education to the detriment of higher education. The aspect relating to the strengthening of cultural identity developed at the universities, are not easily quantifiable. These are public goods.”

Now, there is a need to analyze whether the views of World Bank formulated in the context of the smaller developing countries, are relevant to India, a country with a population nearing a billion, having a large industrial infrastructure, the second largest science and technology manpower and the second largest higher education system in

the world. Further, it is imperative that we take cognizance of the fact that the neglect of the higher education system will make the country vulnerable to inroads from universities of western countries, leading to a stage where we may become dependent upon them for the fulfillment of our manpower requirements in key sectors.

### 1.2 Role of Higher Education

Higher education plays a vital role in the progress and the development of the nation. National Policy on Education 1986 clearly mentioned “Higher education provides people with an opportunity to reflect on the critical, social, economic, cultural, moral and spiritual issues facing humanity. It contributes to the national development through dissemination of specialized knowledge and skill. It is therefore a crucial factor for survival”. Being at the apex of the education pyramid, it has also a key role in producing teachers for the subordinate education system.

The role of higher education in socio-economic development has been universally acknowledged. It is also a well-established fact that higher education constitutes towards the development of competencies required by the nation in different aspects of a life. It is higher education, which prepares the human resource for the profession, for administration, and defense services, for business and industries, for teaching and health services, and for leadership in all walks of life. It develops and transmits knowledge at the highest level and fosters the pursuit of learning. It helps in acquisition and generation of knowledge through academic inquiry and thus proves to be a dynamic force in revolutionizing all developmental activities and social changes. The revolutions in Information Technology have made the world a global village, the distances are bridged and there is an explosion in knowledge. Ours is thus a post industrial and knowledge based society where education and specially, the higher education plays greater role than it had played in the past centuries. Knowledge is the only dominating force now and higher education system is the only alternate which could make the Indian society and the Indian democracy more powerful than it had ever been.

### 1.3 Higher Education And National Development

There is a universal appreciation of the fact that higher education provides the competencies that are required in different spheres of human activities ranging from administration to agriculture, business, industry, health, communication and extending to arts and culture. Higher education is of paramount importance for economic and social development. Institutions for higher education have the main responsibility for equipping individuals with the advanced knowledge and skills required for position of responsibilities in government, business and professions. Higher education investments are important for economic growth. They increase individual’s productivity and incomes and they also produce significant external benefits like as –

long-term return to basic research and to technology development and transfer. Higher education also contributes to self-sustaining growth through the impact of graduates on the spread of knowledge.

The primary secondary and higher education plays complementary roles in national development. In today’s world, we cannot accept the serializing or phasing the development of the education sector. Unlike the East Asian countries, India has already heavily invested in the higher education sector and it provides opportunity for students from Africa and East Asia- especially, Malaysia and some Middle Eastern countries to study in India. Developing countries cannot wait; they have leapfrog into today’s competitive world or stay marginalized. Moreover, to believe that higher education has greater rate of individual returns than social rate of returns, is to forget that the country has not only many achievements to its credit due to a critical number of educated mass, but its technological, professional, business, industry, civil and defense services, are drawn from it. To classify higher education as a non-merit service, while excluding general administration as a public service from merit/non merit services, when it has both inefficiency and leakage built into it, is amazing, not to speak of the lack of quality in service delivery, all the factors which feels as necessary to performance.

### 1.4 Higher Education and Social Development

The National Policy on Education 1986 visualizes education to be a process of empowerment through the development of knowledge, skills and values. Primary and secondary education can fulfill this objective through the creation of awareness and the generation of employment at the lower levels. However, for meaningful contributions that would lead to economic development it is tertiary education that holds promise of substantial contribution. Internationally, in the years between the two World Wars, the concept of elite universities for the privileged was slowly replaced by the concept of egalitarian universities responsible to society and committed to its needs. Dailland (1990)<sup>2</sup> believes that the vigorous growth of socially committed universities, reflect a confidence in higher education as a major instrument of social and economic progress.

In the years following independence, and especially in the late sixties and the seventies, Indian higher education underwent rapid growth with the conversion of the elite system of pre-independence days to a mass system. In the consonance with this change the UGC, in 1977, adopted ‘Extension’ as the third dimension of higher education. The policy statement issued at that time stated<sup>2</sup>: “The university system also has a great responsibility to the society as a whole. All universities and colleges should develop close relationships of mutual services and support with their local communities and all students and teachers must be involved in such programs as an integral part of their education.

Social programs like adult literacy, population control, village uplift, prohibition, environmental awareness and a number of other subjects have been undertaken by the universities through the National Service Scheme (NSS)<sup>2</sup>. Though the government has been utilizing this scheme to push through a number of their socially relevant programs, the colleges and universities have not been given due credit. Planners and economists must appreciate the fact that the universities have been contributing to community development by acting as critic, advisor and helper<sup>3</sup>.

### 1.5 Importance of Higher Education

The higher education institutions produce new knowledge through research; serve as conduits for the transfer, adaptation and dissemination of knowledge generated elsewhere in the World, and support government and business with advice and consultancy services. It is well known, that the development of higher education is correlated with the economic development. It is interesting to see these statistics ‘enrolled ratio in higher education average 51% in countries that belongs to the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)<sup>2</sup>, compared with 21% in middle income countries and 6% in low income countries. Estimated social rates of return of 10% or more in many developing countries also indicate that investments in higher education contributed to increase in labour productivity and to higher long term economic growth, which are essential for poverty alleviation. With only 6% of enrolment in higher education of the relevant age group, the government of India discussion paper suggests raising fee so as to lower these enrolments further, which could have the likely effect of excluding India from all the acknowledged benefits of the higher education described by the World Bank (1994) above. Moreover the gap between the OECD countries, with 51% enrolment and 6% in India is already huge. While in India, sheer number may be large; the issue is not a numerical one but of the proportion of the educated in the population. Hence any further curtailment will further limit our ability to hold our own in the global competition, which requires skills of an order, much beyond school education.

The subsequent document<sup>2</sup> on ‘perspectives and strategies for education’ states, “Higher education also contributed to self-sustaining growth through the impact of graduates on the spread of knowledge. Not all of the external effect of higher education – such as the benefit from basic research and from technology development and transfer, are fully reflected in the earning used in calculating these rates of return. The returns to higher education, as to basic education, are thus greater than those measured using earnings, and it is very possible that the contribution of higher education to the growth may increase with levels of technology and as country achieves universal primary and secondary education<sup>3</sup>”.

Our present system of higher education has indeed made significant contribution to the development of our country

since independence. The most spectacular element of the system has been the building up of a large and highly trained pool of scientific and technical manpower which has helped the country to modernize and strengthen its industrial base, achieve self-sufficiency in agricultural production, improve health care, enhance irrigation and power potential and take great strides in the field of nuclear science, satellite communication and oil exploration. Higher education has also spread reasonably among women in rural areas and also amongst the weaker section of the society. It has thus provided vertical mobility for several suppressed and oppressed groups and has created a new kind of workers and intelligentsia, and a new type of leadership, which did not exist before. It has also made significant contribution to strengthening the democracy and to the more efficient administration of this vast and complex society. It has promoted Indian languages and helped the growth of several social, political and economic forces, which have enriched the quality of our national life.

### 1.6 Beneficiaries of Higher Education

The beneficiaries<sup>2</sup> of higher education are predominantly students from the middle and upper classes. This may be true for the professional courses, like those of Medical, Engineering and Management etc. but not for higher education as a whole. And it must be emphasized that 88% of the students are in the liberal arts programs, namely in the arts, social sciences, science and commerce faculties. Moreover it is a fact that a very large number of students in our universities are first generation learners. They would never get an opportunity to enter the portals of a university. For e.g. Powar Committee report<sup>2</sup> points out that during 1987-88, in the Marathwara University, 95% of undergraduate students in the arts faculty, 72% in the science faculty and 91% in the commerce faculty had their fees reimbursed. The corresponding figures of Bombay University (relatively spread over a rich area) were 33% for arts faculty, 33% for science faculty and 14% for commerce faculty. Overall about 60% of undergraduate students in Maharastra University avail fee concession. At the post-graduation level the number was larger, i.e. 71%. The data relating to students receiving financial assistance clearly show that an appreciable number of students from the less privileged classes are availing of higher education facilities.

In this context, it may be pointed out that the national policy on education 1986 envisages education to be:

- A process of empowerment through the development of knowledge, skills and values.
- An instrument of social change which is to be promoted by providing opportunity for upward economic and social mobility.

In keeping with this policy efforts have to be made to provide special opportunity to the traditionally under-privileged sections of society, including women, scheduled castes, scheduled tribes, other backward classes and people from the socially backward areas. The result has been

encouraging. Fifty years after independence, the ratio between male and female students has dropped from 8.29:1 to 1.69:1. Since 1957, the ratio between general and SC/ST students in professional education has dropped from 11.61:1 to 8.71:1. In the same period the ratio between general and SC/ST students in general higher education has however increased marginally from 6.27:1 to 7.16:1. In absolute terms the increase, since 1957, in the number of SC/ST students in both general and professional education has been considerable. In the former category it has increased from about 91,000 to about 6,10,000 and in the later from nearly 16000 to over 56,000. It has again to be stressed that this progress has been possible because of government support. Lowering of financial support can only result in slowing of the movement towards equality.

### 1.7 Growth of Higher Education

#### Pre Independence Scenario

The Higher Education in India is almost 150 years old. Prior to first three universities were established in 1857, there were nearly two dozens of colleges. The colleges were then affiliated to the University of London and after 1857 to these 3 universities at Calcutta, Bombay and Madras. The courses of studies were designed by the universities and transacted by the colleges. Examinations were conducted and degrees awarded by these universities. By 1947 only 1-lakh students were reading in 500 colleges under 22 universities Higher education was, thus, very much limited with negligible percentage of the Indian Population.

#### Post Independence Scenario

During first three decades after Independence the enrolment in higher education grew at the rate of 10-14 per cent. The percentage of growth in higher education declined to 4.4 per cent during the late seventies and till 1990 it was between 4-5 percent. The number of colleges increased from about 500 in 1947 to 4170 in 1974-75 and this further increased to 4721 in 1981 and to nearly 6912 in 1989 as per the theme document (UGC, New Delhi 1991). But the enrolment of women students accounted for only 31.7 per cent and the SC/ST students accounted for nearly 9.14 per cent in 1977-78.

After Independence the Government of India and the States gave increasing attention to the growth and development of Higher Education, which was regarded as a factor of vital importance to the national progress and prosperity. The problems of great concern and crucial significance in the field of Higher Education were reviewed and considered by several committees and commissions. The University Education Commission 1948-49 exclusively for Higher Education and the Education Commission 1964-66 for the Educational System of the country, being the most important of the commissions, and various committees appointed from time to time went through the problems and prospects of Higher Education. Govt. took steps at various levels for implementation of the

recommendations of these committees and commissions on a priority basis and also in a phased manner, which brought about changes in the structure and process of Higher Education in the country.

#### Radhakrishnan Commission

After Independence the most significant action of Government of India in the field of education was the appointment of a university commission in 1948 under the chairmanship of Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, a renowned educationist and a famous Vice-Chancellor of Benaras Hindu University. This document in fact guided the development of higher education in the country since independence.

#### University Grants Commission

As per the recommendations of the University Education Commission, 1949, the University Grants Commission was set up in 1953. It was however, given an autonomous statutory status by an act of parliament; 1956. It consists of a full time chairman, a secretary and nine members, generally selected from among eminent educators and administrators of the country. The main function of the University Grants Commission or UGC as it is popularly called, is to ensure the promotion and co-ordination of university education and the determination and maintenance of standards of teaching, examination and research in universities. In pursuance of this, the UGC continues to give full grants to central universities and also the development grants approved by the commission. Grants are also given to State Universities for their various development projects.

#### Education Commission (1964-66)

The education commission, 1964-66 in giving a very comprehensive report on various stages of education has devoted adequate time and space to its discussion and deliberation on higher education. It laid down the functions and objectives of colleges and universities.

#### National Policy on Education, 1968

On the basis of the report of the education commission 1964-66, the government of India issued a National Policy on Education (NPE) in 1968 which observed in the context of higher education "the number of whole time students to be admitted to a college or university department should be determined with reference to the laboratory, library and other facilities and the strength of the staff". The NPE-1968 also suggested that in establishing new universities, considerable care should be taken and these should be started only after an adequate provision of funds was made for the purpose and due care be taken for maintenance of proper standards.

#### Review of Higher Education in Seventies

The process of providing further impetus and importance to higher education through various committees and commissions had been according to changing needs of society, thus resulted into forming of National Policy on Education. After over two decades of independence the

situation of higher education was reviewed. When at the end of the long period of congress government in the center, the Janta Government come to power in 1978 the education system was reviewed and the UGC was requested to prepare a statement on the development of higher education in India. This statement outlined the basic policy, philosophy and strategies for development of universities and colleges with the view to fulfilling the statutory obligations for improvement of standards of higher education and research.

The university system has important responsibilities to the society as a whole and besides its traditional roles of acquisition, preservation, dissemination and extension of knowledge, the balanced education of individual and training of high-level personnel for all walks of life was emphasized.

### Review of Higher Education in Eighties

Just after a decade in 1980 a need was felt to review again the educational scenario in the country. The government of India in its document “Challenge of Education, A Policy Perspective”, made a review of the entire educational system. In the context of higher education, it reported that there are conflicting views amongst the educationists about the relative importance of school versus higher education. Despite the key role assigned to higher education, the development in this field has been extremely uneven. Certain colleges in this field have played a crucial role in supporting the process of development and modernization of research work for young men and women of great excellence. The general condition of universities and colleges was found as matter of great concern.

### National Policy on Education (NPE), 1986

Based on the experience of over three decades and after a comprehensive review and nationwide deliberation, the NPE 1986 was adopted which laid adequate stress on higher education, highlighting the objectives and importance of higher education. NPE 1986 aims at not only developing manpower for serving the economy but also developing crucial values. The policy envisages education to be a process of empowerment through the development of knowledge skills and values (education for development) and an instrument of social change which is to be promoted by providing opportunities for upward economic and social mobility (education of equality). In the area of higher education the NPE places emphasis on the consolidation and expansion of facilities in existing institutions.

In view of the unprecedented explosion of knowledge higher education has to assume dynamic dimensions and to proceed constantly into uncharted areas of development. There were nearly 150 universities and about 5000 colleges in India while the NPE 1986 was on anvil

The NPE 1986 emphasized Open University and Distance Learning as effective alternative of higher education. The Open University system had already been initiated in order to augment opportunities for higher education and as an instrument to democratizing education.

It was also planned that the Indira Gandhi National Open University, established in 1985, for the fulfillment of these objectives, would be strengthened, and this powerful instrument would have to be developed with care and extended with caution. Rural universities would be consolidated and developed on Gandhi's revolutionary ideas on education, so that micro planning at grass root level would bring about transformation of rural areas.

Consequent upward the spectacular expansion of Higher Education in India, the issues of quality, relevance and efficiency has assumed special significance. The Psychological, social and political forces have been influencing the development of this tertiary education. India has built a reasonably good base of higher education with 4 per cent of population in the age group of 17-23 years being enrolled in the system.

Powar (1998)<sup>3</sup> says that in the fifty years since India gained independence its higher education system has shown remarkable growth. It may be noted that since independence:

1. The number of university level institutions has increased from 18 to 240; and of colleges from 591 to about 9000.
2. The percentage of liberal arts colleges has increased from 77.66% in 1947 to 82.91% in 1996; and the percentage of colleges in professional discipline has correspondingly decreased from 22.34% in 1947 to 17.09% in 1996.
3. The number of students has increased from a little less than 0.2 million to about 5.5 million. The annual growth rate, which averaged as much as 27.7% during the first decade after independence, fell to 5.9% in the second decade. It increased slightly to 7% in the third decade and then again fell to 6% in the fourth decade. It has slowed down to 3.5% in the last ten years.
4. The number of students in professional education has increased from about 46000 in 1947 to nearly 550000 in 1996. Though there is a substantial increase in absolute terms the percentage of students in professional education has actually decreased by 19.94% in 1947 to 9.93% in 1996.
5. Approximately 88% of the students in Indian higher education are in under graduate programmes in the liberal arts. Enrolment in commerce faculty is about 23%. Enrolments in engineering and medical programmes are 4.9% and 3.4% respectively. The number in agriculture and veterinary science is low about 1.5%.

Today we have 240 universities and equivalent institutions. Of these 140 are general universities, 18 are of science and technology, 5 are of women universities, 8 are open universities, 30 are of agricultural universities and 17 are medical universities. Their profile also varies. There are teachings and affiliating universities with a single or a multiple faculties, housed in a single or multiple campuses.

We even now have 18 language universities be it of Hindi, Urdu, Sanskrit, Telegu, Tamil, Kannada, and others. As on today we have 16 central universities, 169 state universities, 40 deemed universities and 11 institutions of national importance. There are 10,600 colleges, of these 1260 are for women and 119 are autonomous colleges. Today we have 7000 teacher education / training colleges, 1100 polytechnics, 600 management institutions, 550 engineering institutions and 655 medical colleges. Enrolled strength of students in higher education is around 7.5 million and the teachers are 3.21 lack. Around 74,000 have been enrolled for research and nearly 10,000 are awarded with Ph.D. every year.

### 1.8 Higher Education in Developed And Developing Countries

India has the second largest higher education system comprising of 240 universities and 9700 colleges and about 5.5 million students. On absolute terms five and half millions students appears to be a very high number. However, it is necessary to keep in view the fact that the number (5.5 million) represents only 6% of Indian people in the age group of 18-23 years. The percentage is extremely low compared to 51% in the countries that belong to the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)<sup>2</sup>, and 21% in the middle-income group countries, and the same as that for the low-income group countries (For details there is table 1 given in fig 1...)

### GROSS ENROLMENT NATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION IN SELECTED DEVELOPED AND DEVELOPING COUNTRIES (%)

Enrolment ratio of about 6% is shameful if we look at many other developing countries (Indonesia 10%, Brazil 12%, Mexico 14%, Thailand 19%, Argentina 41%), not to speak of the developed countries (UK 37%, France 50%, USA 81%, Canada 103%). Today it is the developed nations that attach the greatest importance to all levels of education, including higher education. Dhanarajan<sup>2</sup> (1998) quotes two examples to illustrate this- In the United Kingdom, the country that gave birth to Thatcherism<sup>2</sup>, the British Prime Minister Tony Blair stated in a lecture delivered at Ruskin College that "... Three priorities for (his) government (should his party come to power) would be education, education and education". Likewise, American President Bill Clinton, in one of his Inaugural Addresses, called for "a new land (in which) education will be every citizen's most prized possession.... And the doors of higher education will be open for all".

FIG.-1

Source – K B Powar, 19982

These are sentiments echoed by our leaders, politicians, administrators, social workers, and educationists, when they make impassioned pleas for ensuring access and equity in higher education.

It calls for rapid expansion of the system as well as consolidation and up-gradation of the existing infrastructure. What we require is an increase in the number of students in higher education so that our requirements of manpower are met. Any curtailment can only have disastrous consequences. As the UNESCO document points out "Access to higher education and the broad range of services it can render to society, is part and parcel of any sustainable development program in which high level human expertise and professional skills are required".

### 1.9 State Of Higher Education in Rajasthan

Rajasthan<sup>7</sup>, the second biggest in size of all the States of Indian union is situated between 23°3' and 30°12'N latitude and 69°30' and 78°17'E longitude. The state has an area of 3,42,7309 sq. Km. with a population of 4.4 crores as per 1991 census and an estimated population of 4.966 crores, 5.593 crore and 6.878 crore in the year 1996, 2001 and 2011 respectively. By the year 2011 the population of the state would become more than 1.5 times the population in the year 1991.

### Pre Independence Era

The first college in the state was established in 1968

COUNTRY	YEAR	RATIO
<b>A. DEVELOPED COUNTRIES:</b>		
CANADA	1992	98.8
USA	1991	76.2
FRANCE	1992	45.6
AUSTRALIA	1992	39.6
SPAIN	1991	39.5
GERMANY	1990	37.6
ITALY	1992	33.7
JAPAN	1991	31.5
SWITZERLAND	1992	30.7
UK	1990	27.8
<b>B. DEVELOPING COUNTRIES:</b>		
SOUTH KOREA	1993	46.4
THAILAND	1992	19.0
INDONESIA	1992	10.1
MALAYSIA	1990	7.3
<b>INDIA</b>	<b>1989</b>	<b>6.0</b>
SRI LANKA	1991	5.5
BANGLA DESH	1990	3.8
PAKISTAN	1989	2.8
CHINA	1991	1.6
MEXICO	1992	14.0
BRAZIL	1991	11.7

By upgrading Ajmer school to the level of first Arts College, which is known as Govt. College, Ajmer. In 1873 Maharaja's college came into existence at Jaipur. In 1893 the Jaswant College was established at Jodhpur and was affiliated to Allahabad University for Intermediate Arts in English, Logic, Mathematics and Science, Physics and Chemistry. The Maharaja's college was raised to Postgraduate College in 1896. The first Engineering College in the state was established by Birla's in Pilani in the year 1946. In 1947 S.M.S. Medical College and S.K.N. Agriculture College were established at Jaipur and Jobner respectively. On 8th January 1947 the University of Rajputana came into existence. On 15th August 1947, this state had only one University, 24 Colleges for liberal education, 1-Engineering college, 1-Medical college and 3 Teachers' training colleges.

### Post Independence Era

Today in the state, there are six Universities and four deemed to be Universities. There are 249 colleges for liberal education, 18 Engineering colleges, 6 Medical colleges, about 11 Pharmaceutical colleges, 12 colleges of oriental Medicine, 6 Nursing colleges, 42 Teachers training colleges and about 12 Management colleges.

The enrolment in higher education system has increased steeply after independence – it was around 2,17,528 in the year 1995-96 as compared to 12,440 in the year 1949, 18,000 in the year 1951 and 1,72,466 in the year 1985-86.

### 1.10 Constraints of Higher Education

#### a) Financial Crisis

Today the measure constraints in sustaining the system of higher education is availability of adequate financial resources on one hand and maintenance of quality and excellence on the other. Financial support to education in general and graduate and post-graduate study in particular from State as well as Central government, have been steadily decreasing over the years in spite of the promise that it would be around 6% of the GDP. To add to this anomaly, the Ministry of Finance Government of India<sup>5</sup> has treated the grant sanction to higher education as "non merit subsidy" implying that any investment on higher education is unlikely to yield quick return. Of course, this perception is an unfortunate one. The other side of the story is that to modernize various facilities both for curricular and co-curricular activities by removal of obsolescence and redundancy, considerable financial strength is required in the colleges and universities. In spite of these constraints, any attempt to increase tuition and other fees is sternly resisted by students, the public and their elected representatives. Therefore the dilemma under these difficult circumstances is how to improve the financial resources so as to maintain Quality and Excellency in university education in order to properly train students to accept the professional challenges of the 21st century. Keeping in view the need of other crucial

sectors of the nation, it has to be seen as to how the essential requirements of the education sector can be met. Hard decision will have to be taken on the question of ill-conceived proliferation of colleges and growing trends of commercialization. There is always the problem of consolidation and quality, vis a vis expansion and dilution of standards. Equally, it is mandatory that the government on their part meets the essential requirement of the educational institutions that are well established and ensure regular flow of requisite funds.

Financial resources are the major constraints for our universities. In the backdrop of financial dependence of the university, their so-called functional autonomy is in peril. The time has come when the universities need to overcome their dependence on State finances and have to generate and augment their own financial resources by "industry-university interaction" and "by collaboration with the potential employers of the university graduates".

#### b) Regional Disparity

Regional disparities<sup>5</sup> are also manifested in the growth of higher education in the country. The state wise estimated rate of participation of students in higher education to the total population of the respective states in 1991 revealed that 8 states namely Punjab, Maharashtra, Manipur, Karnataka, Gujarat, Kerala, Tamilnadu and Haryana had the higher rate of participation, 79 per ten thousand of population against the national average of 50 students per 10,000 of population. The participation level in higher education in the state like Assam, Bihar, Orissa, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Uttar Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir, West Bengal, Tripura, Rajasthan, and Andhra Pradesh were below the national level.

#### c) Accessibility

Our universities and institutes of higher learning have lagged behind and are still far off from the desired goals, the objectives, and in contribution of their resources. What an Indian university should have been is reflected in the convocation address delivered by Dr. Shyama Prasad Mookerjee<sup>3</sup> at Nagpur University in the year 1936 which is quoted as - "An Indian university must be regarded as one of the living organs It must discover the best means of blending together both the spiritual and material aspects of the life. It must equip its alumni, irrespective of cast, creed or sex, with individual fitness, not for its own shape, not merely for adorning various occupations and profession, but in order to teach them how to merge their individuality in the common cause of advancing the progress and prosperity of their motherland and upholding the highest tradition of human civilization. That constitutes the perennial ideal of a university rooted in the Indian soil and expresses one of the greatest needs of the hour". Students belonging to the low and medium income groups have been finding it difficult to gain entry into private professional colleges because of high fees. Access has been facilitated, to some extent, for merited students. It is mandatory to admit 50% of the students against free seats (that require nominal fee).

There is clearly a need to ensure that a much larger proportion of young people and especially those from weaker sections of society are provided with an opportunity to enroll in higher education programs and get the benefits of higher education. Because of financial constraints a noticeable increase in the number of colleges is not feasible, and from past experience not desirable from the point of view of maintaining quality. Distance education appears to be the most practical way of ensuring the spread of education. Throughout the world higher education is undergoing a paradigm shift from an instruction-centered, college/university model to a learner-centered integrated network model that is based on student initiative and access to learning resources.

#### **d) Unplanned Growth**

The existence of the body like UGC should have been of great significance for the development of higher education in India, but it fails to check the declining standards and unplanned growth. On the contrary, the historically inherited functioning continues, to perpetuate even after five decades of the establishment of UGC. There has been no significant change in the model of planning for Higher Education.

### **1.11 The Way Out**

With a view to democratizing higher education and making it available to the deprived and backward sections of the society, distance education and Open University facilities have been provided in the country. These innovative systems and modalities bank heavily upon various electronic and other media in the teaching learning process. The NPE 1986 has aptly enunciated that modern education must reach out to the most distance areas and the most deprived sections of beneficiaries simultaneously with the area of comparative affluence and ready availability. The modern media have the potential to bypass several stages and sequences in the process of development enunciated in earlier decades. The media have a profound influence on the minds of the early adult learners of higher education.

The new information technologies available in the world are being used effectively in some countries. However, they cannot be blindly used in all countries without relevance to the needs and development of the country. Let us take the case of India. It is a vast country, which has probably the highest rate of illiteracy in the world. It is multi-lingual and multi-cultural. More than 70% of the people live in rural and remote areas and there are disparities between the urban and rural areas. The percentage of people who have access to higher education is less than 5. Being a democracy, the country is witnessing new pressures and demands for education of all types including higher education. In response to these demands, educational opportunities have been expended but they are still insufficient; in particular there is heavy pressure on good institutions. It is, therefore, doubtful whether good formal education can be provided to

all sections, which are demanding it. "The institutional costs are very high for the coverage of the sub-continent in various languages. To setup universities and colleges everywhere, we would be bankrupt before we know it". There are also compulsions to continuing education. Given the resource constraint, there is no alternative but to think of alternative strategies. In addition to these, there is a dearth of high quality expertise; such expertise is confined to only a few places. In the alternative strategy the new technologies have an important role to play in formal universities, distance teaching institutions and open universities.

In addition to the technology being useful for teaching purposes, it can be effectively used to improve management and administration in the universities and colleges. It is fairly well known how useful the computer is to efficient and effective management in large business organizations. Universities are large and in such matters like personnel, finance and the management of facilities, maintenance of extensive library systems, monitoring of student progress, it can be of great help.

### **1.12 Conclusion**

Looking back, during the last 50 years the Indian higher education system has undergone many important changes; the most significant being its unprecedented growth and its consequent transformation from an elite system to a mass system. The fact that higher education is available to the masses including the under privileged and weaker sections of society, is an achievement. It is also creditable that we have been able to create some undoubted centers of excellence. However, the system has not been able to change its organizational structure and form. Nor has been possible to maintain uniform standards of education or to ensure that education imparted is relevant to our present needs. Under the circumstances it is necessary that we make systematic changes that will enable the implementation of academic reforms.

The different commissions and committees that have examined the Indian higher education system, after independence, have identified the maladies that affect it and have also suggested remedies. However, we have failed to follow-up on the recommendations. The maladies identified by the Kothari commission over three decades ago still exist. The latest example of over indifferent approach is the half-hearted manner in which the program of action, 1992 is being implemented. As Valiathan (1993)<sup>3</sup> points out "Knowing what to do and not caring to do it has cast the shadow on (our) national endeavors". Above all resources must be found for the colleges and universities. Whether these resources are to come from the government or industry, or other sections of the society, is a matter that has to be decided quickly. In case, it is not possible to create resources for meeting the rising demand of increasing number of aspirants, we have to look for the mass media, which has tremendous scope and could play a vital role in helping the

open system of education with cost effective manner and with a greater access to masses

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