

## Higher Education System in India: Autonomy and Analysis in Terms of Quality

by

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### Abstract

*Higher Education in India is one of the largest and oldest systems of higher education found anywhere in the world. India's Higher Education system offers a wide range of degree and diploma programs across the length and breadth of the country. The present article analyze critically in terms of autonomy in higher education and the process of qualitative higher education system in India in comparison with western countries education system. Further it is to discuss the reviews on autonomy of higher education system in India on par with international standards. It is generally held that the educational programmes of any higher educational institution, i.e. what is taught and how it is taught, are determined by those in the educational institutions. Since the article propose the autonomy in higher education system in India the paper will highlight the draw backs of the policies made by the government and the demands by the market forces in particular by the educational institutions and research and development agencies. Finally the paper will discuss the subjective and objective notion of academic freedom in the wake of globalization of education system in India.*

*Key Words: Higher Education, Autonomy, Quality & Quantity, Policies, Critics, Review*

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## 1. Introduction

### India and Globalization

India has pre-dominantly an agrarian economy. Over 56% of the population depends on agriculture and related occupations for their livelihood. Nearly three-fourth of the population belongs to the weaker sections, some of whom are marginal and small farmers whereas others belong to the working class. They suffer from various forms of social stigma. Thus, they are the most deprived sections in India. Several development and welfare programmes were launched since India became a 'Sovereign Republic' to ameliorate their conditions, as mandated by the Constitution. But, the beneficial impact of this is only marginal. With the introduction of economic reforms since 1980s, the plight of the weaker sections became worse as most of them were small and poor farmers. Faced with many structural constraints, they are dangerously getting pushed out of the system, as the entry of machines and highly skilled workforce has resulted in less number of man-days, wages and irregularity in employment for the semiskilled and unskilled. The cumulative effect of all these led to miserable conditions for the people in India, in general and for farmers in particular. An analysis of the impact of globalisation on the crucial agricultural sector is being taken up.

## 2. Higher Education and Knowledge Society

In the last decade India has seen a revolution in knowledge and information sectors. It has gained a special position in the comity of information communication technology oriented nations. It would thus be advisable to give some space here to the term “knowledge society”. The term ‘Knowledge society’, ‘Information Society’ and ‘Learning Society’ have now become familiar expressions in the educational parlance communicating emerging global trends with far-reaching implications for growth and development of any society. These are not to be seen as mere cliché or fads but words that are pregnant with unimaginable potentialities. Information revolution, information technologies and knowledge industries, constitute important dimensions of an information society and contribute effectively to the growth of a knowledge society. The term “Knowledge Industry” was coined by Princeton Economist Fritz Machlup in his book, ‘Production and distribution of Knowledge’ in 1962. The term ‘knowledge society’ has been used by Peter F. Drucker (1971) in his book ‘The Age of Discontinuity’. The term ‘Learning Society’ was used by Torsten Husen in 1974 and Hutchins (1970), the genesis of which lies in the concept of life long or continuous learning which was later on stressed in UNESCO reports of 1972 and 1996. The concept of global village has its genesis in the concept information society, “information revolution” and communication technologies. The world has shrunk into a small village due to the emergence of information and communication technologies. Alvin Toffler (1980) has advanced the idea that power at the dawn of civilization resided in the ‘muscle’. Power then got associated with money and in 20th century it shifted its focus to ‘mind’. Thus the shift from physical power to wealth power to mind power is an evolution in the shifting foundations of economy. This shift supports the observation of Francis Bacon who said ‘knowledge itself is power’, stressing the same point and upholding the supremacy of mind power, in his characteristic expression, Winston Churchill said, “the Empires of the future shall be empires of the mind”. Thus he corroborated Bacon and professed the emergence of the knowledge society.

In a global scenario powered by global markets, higher education institutions must transform to meet the multi-faceted needs of the changing context professionals who require in-service training and upgrading, unemployed persons who want to attain job specific skills, industries and institutes that wish to collaborate to provide training, etc. At the same time, it is evident that higher education cannot be left at the mercy of ‘market forces’ alone; doing so would compromise access for those without the means to pay at the point of delivery. The biggest challenge faced in higher education, therefore, is the provision of quality higher education to the greatest number, at the lowest possible cost to the learner.

The Table No. 1 reveals the State wise ranking on composite education development index at primary and upper primary level in India state wise ranking has been shown in the table and union territories of the India. It is observed from the table that since from 2007-08 to 2009-10 academic years the Educational Development at Primary and Upper Primary level ranking has been increased as the government policies and five year plans has made the education as an important aspect in the development of the country. The Table No. 2 reveals the percentage of SCs, STs and OBCs Students in Central Universities in all the states and Union territories of India. The table shows the percentage of the students from 2009-10 to 2011-12 academic years. It can be said that the percentage of students strength in central universities in been increased and SCs and OBCs percentage has been increased tremendously.

Table No. 1. State-wise Ranking on Composite Educational Development														
Index (Primary and Upper Primary) in India														
(2007-2008 to 2009-2010)														
States/UTs	2007-08		2008-09						2009-10					
	Index	Rank Composite	Primary Level		Upper Primary Level		Composite Primary and Upper Primary		Primary Level		Upper Primary Level		Composite Primary and Upper Primary	
Andaman and Nicobar Islands	0.707	15	0.664	12	0.809	4	0.736	7	0.663	5	0.829	4	0.746	4
Andhra Pradesh	0.74	11	0.657	15	0.746	11	0.702	14	0.561	17	0.762	12	0.662	14
Arunachal Pradesh	0.485	34	0.512	29	0.519	31	0.516	30	0.328	35	0.62	25	0.474	31
Assam	0.515	31	0.446	35	0.519	32	0.483	33	0.386	31	0.503	32	0.445	32
Bihar	0.406	35	0.48	32	0.447	35	0.463	34	0.375	32	0.466	35	0.421	35
Chandigarh	0.763	6	0.688	10	0.756	9	0.722	10	0.665	7	0.814	5	0.735	6
Chhattisgarh	0.57	29	0.554	26	0.6	25	0.577	26	0.439	26	0.558	27	0.498	27
Dadra and Nagar Haveli	0.656	20	0.594	22	0.64	22	0.617	22	0.493	22	0.71	19	0.602	20
Daman and Diu	0.75	8	0.654	17	0.801	5	0.728	9	0.612	9	0.782	10	0.697	9
Delhi	0.78	4	0.701	6	0.762	7	0.732	8	0.651	8	0.79	8	0.72	8
Goa	0.716	14	0.658	14	0.697	17	0.678	17	0.602	11	0.783	9	0.692	10
Gujarat	0.748	9	0.698	7	0.706	16	0.702	13	0.584	13	0.73	18	0.657	15
Haryana	0.755	7	0.714	4	0.789	6	0.752	4	0.59	12	0.77	11	0.68	11
Himachal Pradesh	0.695	17	0.611	21	0.746	12	0.679	16	0.567	16	0.741	16	0.654	17
Jammu and Kashmir	0.678	18	0.586	24	0.661	21	0.623	21	0.404	30	0.621	24	0.512	25
Jharkhand	0.491	32	0.449	34	0.464	33	0.456	35	0.363	34	0.5	34	0.431	34
Karnataka	0.743	10	0.693	8	0.723	15	0.708	12	0.569	15	0.743	15	0.656	16
Kerala	0.791	2	0.689	9	0.822	3	0.756	3	0.7	3	0.844	3	0.772	3
Lakshadweep	0.788	3	0.773	2	0.851	2	0.812	2	0.704	2	0.887	2	0.795	2
Madhya Pradesh	0.59	26	0.571	25	0.585	26	0.578	25	0.433	27	0.54	28	0.486	30
Maharashtra	0.727	13	0.66	13	0.74	14	0.7	15	0.576	14	0.75	13	0.663	13
Manipur	0.611	24	0.464	33	0.63	24	0.547	27	0.411	29	0.627	23	0.519	24
Meghalaya	0.556	30	0.498	31	0.522	30	0.51	31	0.365	33	0.501	33	0.433	33
Mizoram	0.705	16	0.686	11	0.741	13	0.714	11	0.544	19	0.738	17	0.641	18
Nagaland	0.653	23	0.633	20	0.675	20	0.654	20	0.549	18	0.699	20	0.624	19
Orissa	0.572	28	0.553	27	0.537	29	0.545	28	0.468	23	0.524	30	0.496	28
Puducherry	0.808	1	0.797	1	0.884	1	0.841	1	0.736	1	0.891	1	0.813	1
Punjab	0.732	12	0.714	5	0.76	8	0.737	6	0.656	6	0.803	7	0.73	7
Rajasthan	0.653	22	0.587	23	0.636	23	0.612	24	0.458	25	0.629	22	0.544	22
Sikkim	0.656	21	0.657	16	0.683	18	0.67	18	0.608	10	0.748	14	0.678	12
Tamil Nadu	0.771	5	0.747	3	0.753	10	0.75	5	0.677	4	0.811	6	0.744	5
Tripura	0.609	25	0.501	30	0.577	27	0.539	29	0.415	28	0.567	26	0.491	29
Uttar Pradesh	0.586	27	0.654	18	0.573	28	0.614	23	0.534	21	0.511	31	0.523	23
Uttarakhand	0.66	19	0.643	19	0.679	19	0.661	19	0.538	20	0.636	21	0.587	21
West Bengal	0.488	33	0.528	28	0.459	34	0.494	32	0.467	24	0.54	29	0.503	26

Source: Lok Sabha, Unstarred Question No. 2213, Dated on 10.03.2010. & Ministry of Human Resource Development, GOI. (12602).

<b>Table No. 2. Percentage of Scheduled Caste/Scheduled Tribe (SC/ST) and Other Backward Class (OBC) Students in Central Universities in India</b>									
<b>(2009-2010 to 2011-2012)</b>									
<b>Universities</b>	<b>2009-10</b>			<b>2010-11</b>			<b>2011-12</b>		
	<b>SC</b>	<b>ST</b>	<b>OBC</b>	<b>SC</b>	<b>ST</b>	<b>OBC</b>	<b>SC</b>	<b>ST</b>	<b>OBC</b>
Aligarh Muslim University\$	3.44%	0.22%	11.22%	2.64%	0.17%	8.62%	1.58%	0.24%	14.10%
Banaras Hindu University	12.78%	4.06%	16.87%	13.17%	4.51%	22.84%	13.34%	4.77%	26.26%
Delhi University	9.15%	3.40%	3.95%	12.14%	5.02%	8.36%	12.95%	4.75%	13.10%
Hyderabad University	19.42%	10.75%	21.66%	20.12%	10.19%	26.58%	19.25%	10.45%	28.73%
JamiaMilliaIslamia\$	11.74%	4.60%	0.00%	12.07%	4.99%	0.00%	11.21%	4.37%	5.11%
Jawaharlal Nehru University	13.54%	8.04%	16.63%	13.70%	8.37%	18.21%	13.53%	8.19%	20.35%
North Eastern Hill University	3.30%	74.05%	2.82%	3.69%	72.65%	2.70%	3.69%	72.65%	2.70%
Pondicherry University	17.38%	3.29%	36.53%	17.38%	4.28%	34.64%	16.64%	5.32%	31.96%
VisvaBharati	15.65%	5.95%	8.20%	16.92%	6.14%	13.37%	17.01%	6.38%	14.95%
Assam University#	14.04%	8.17%	24.10%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	12.75%	9.16%	24.49%
Tezpur University	12.69%	8.09%	26.69%	12.67%	7.65%	24.89%	12.57%	7.07%	25.91%
Nagaland University	2.86%	75.37%	0.63%	6.65%	84.48%	3.51%	2.70%	88.66%	3.00%
Mizoram University	2.88%	86.53%	2.71%	1.48%	91.45%	1.55%	1.69%	91.97%	1.72%
BabasahebBhimraoAmbedkar University	51.09%	4.55%	0.00%	51.86%	5.01%	13.11%	48.87%	4.80%	0.00%
M.G.A. Hindi Vishwavidyalay	37.32%	2.90%	23.55%	37.32%	2.90%	23.55%	34.24%	1.95%	23.93%
Maulana Azad National Urdu University	2.75%	0.94%	20.67%	7.79%	3.73%	21.96%	3.95%	0.87%	15.71%
Allahabad University	19.21%	1.13%	32.38%	18.33%	0.62%	36.75%	17.95%	0.88%	28.78%
Manipur University	7.59%	22.62%	36.11%	7.65%	21.52%	39.99%	8.03%	22.22%	47.40%
Rajiv Gandhi University	0.90%	81.46%	5.38%	1.18%	78.87%	5.46%	0.88%	75.70%	6.71%
The English & Foreign Languages University	9.09%	4.23%	17.70%	21.23%	6.60%	20.00%	19.55%	9.02%	19.29%
Tripura University	16.32%	13.76%	22.55%	17.25%	12.03%	28.41%	15.79%	19.53%	24.85%
H.N.B. Garhwal University	13.66%	1.96%	4.23%	13.92%	1.64%	6.06%	13.34%	1.88%	7.36%
Guru Ghasidas University	17.55%	9.87%	39.30%	15.07%	8.80%	34.24%	14.53%	9.39%	31.28%

Dr. Harisingh Gour Vishwavidyalaya	14.87%	2.22%	25.80%	17.14%	3.32%	25.75%	20.81%	3.98%	39.93%
Central University of Bihar*	3.00%	0.00%	31.80%	9.60%	2.10%	37.60%	6.29%	1.26%	35.22%
Central University of Gujarat*	30.43%	4.35%	17.39%	21.30%	7.41%	26.45%	21.80%	9.59%	26.74%
Central University of Haryana*	12.50%	3.20%	31.25%	18.57%	1.43%	44.28%	22.58%	0.00%	46.24%
Central University of Himachal Pradesh *	-	-	-	12.14%	6.43%	15.00%	12.59%	6.65%	19.00%
Central University of Jammu*	-	-	-	-	-	-	24.64%	13.04%	15.94%
Central University of Kashmir *	-	-	-	-	-	-	1.74%	3.91%	4.78%
Central University of Jharkhand*	5.76%	5.76%	27.88%	5.68%	7.95%	26.13%	6.27%	8.63%	35.29%
Central University of Karnataka*	39.47%	5.26%	42.10%	22.55%	4.51%	51.87%	22.64%	6.02%	39.26%
Central University of Kerala*	-	-	-	-	-	-	7.61%	1.09%	57.07%
Indira Gandhi National Tribal University	11.98%	53.00%	18.43%	9.71%	53.88%	20.15%	10.18%	51.75%	22.95%
Central University of Odisha*	17.00%	8.50%	6.00%	15.00%	7.50%	27.00%	27.57%	14.05%	20.00%
Central University of Punjab*	33.30%	0.00%	33.30%	7.40%	3.70%	14.81%	8.96%	1.49%	13.43%
Central University of Rajasthan*	13.00%	0.00%	28.00%	13.00%	3.00%	36.00%	13.23%	4.99%	36.88%
Sikkim University	0.00%	12.50%	6.25%	3.64%	19.09%	26.36%	6.28%	11.11%	8.70%
Central University of Tamil Nadu*	25.00%	0.00%	75.00%	26.90%	0.00%	65.40%	0.80%	1.20%	47.20%
Indira Gandhi National Open University	11.54%	4.72%	29.13%	15.46%	6.40%	39.56%	14.01%	5.67%	40.76%

Note: \$ : Minority Institutions.

\*: New Central Universities were established vide Central Universities' Act 2009 in 2009-10. Among these, Central University of Himachal Pradesh started its programme in 2010-11, Central University of Jammu started in 2011-12. No information has been received from Central University of Kashmir and Central University of Kerala for 2009-10 and 2010-11.

# : No information is available regarding Assam University for 2010-11.

Source: Rajya Sabha Starred Question No. 191, dated on 24.08.2012.

### **3. Knowledge Commission on Open and Distance Education**

The open and distance education system is a crucial vehicle in the sustained development of a knowledge society. Its potential for flexible education delivery, scope for self and life-long learning and cost effectiveness make it instrumental in meeting the needs of individual and communities at this juncture - in the rapid transition being made from the industrial to the information age. However, as India prepares to face the knowledge challenges of the 21st century, higher education presents a rather dismal picture. NKC (2008) according to the Ministry of Human Resource Development, India, only about 10% of the population in the relevant age-group is enrolled in higher education, and a mere 5% graduate with degrees. With the rapid growth of the service, knowledge and associated sectors in the economy, it is imperative that the populace is equipped to contribute to and benefit from these developments. This requires a radical overhaul of the higher education system, with regard to access, enrolment and most importantly, quality. Failure to address this need and foster more inclusive growth will adversely affect India's future economic prospects and the welfare of its citizens. We believe that this crisis in higher education gives us the necessary impetus for radical change.

Existing 'brick and mortar' campuses alone cannot cope with the current and future demand for higher education, given the limited resources for their construction and management. Even so, it is imperative that the state provides and commits to universal access to higher education. Open and distance education (ODE), enabled and delivered through information and communication technology (ICT), holds the promise to address questions of access and provide new, alternative forms of capacity building. ICT enabled linkages - propelled by broadband and satellite networks - are of a new, unprecedented kind, with special implications in a globalised world. They give rise to the 'A-3' scenario, where Anyone, Anytime, Anywhere can be connected to others through networks and access devices in a virtual space. This facilitates new forms of organisations and communities, often constituted by the users themselves, and manifested in myriad ways – for example through wiki, blogs, social networks, open resource movements, virtual institutes etc. In working together, these groups and organisations create new resources and ways of empowerment in virtual and real spaces.

### **4. Higher Education Institutions in India**

The institutions of higher learning in India fall into the following broad categories:

- 1) Universities: These are established by an Act of Parliament or State Legislature and are of unitary or affiliating type. They are called Central Universities and State Universities respectively.
- 2) Deemed to be Universities: These institutions are given deemed to be university status by the Central Government on the recommendation of the UGC in terms of Section 3 of the UGC Act.
- 3) Some of these institutions offer advanced level courses in a particular field or specialization while others award general degrees.
- 4) Private Universities: These are established by various State governments through their own legislation.
- 5) Institutes of National Importance: These Institutes are declared as such by the Government of India by an Act of Parliament and are empowered to award degrees. In some cases, such Institutes are also set up by the Government through an Act of State Legislation.
- 6) Premier Institutes of Management: These are the Institutes that have been set up by the Central Government and are outside the formal university system. They offer Post-Graduate Diploma Programmes which are equivalent to Master's Degree Programmes in area of management.

The State/UT-wise list of all the Central Universities, Deemed to be Universities, recognized State Universities, UGC recognized Private universities, Institutes of National importance and Institutions established under State Legislation Acts respectively. There has been an upsurge in the demand for higher education after independence of the country in 1947, and a virtual explosion in the number of universities and colleges. India has now a system of higher education with 343 degree awarding institutions (CABE; 2005). The universities are of various kinds; with a single faculty or multi-faculties; teaching or affiliating or teaching-cum-affiliating; one campus or multi-campus; Sanskrit Universities; Technological Universities; Agricultural Universities; Medical Universities; Women's Universities; Special Institutes of Medicine, Science, Law, Engineering and Technology, Management and Social Work, etc.

Lindsay et. al. (2013) against a backdrop of rapid enrollment growth, declining education quality, and increasing financial pressure, India's key policy document for economic development through 2017 the 12th Five-Year Plan has recommended that the country's higher education institutions be granted more autonomy over curriculum, staffing, and programs offered. R&D researchers developed a course of action to help India implement policies and reform that link education quality to funding in a way that will hold the country's newly autonomous institutions accountable for their performance, encourage greater innovation, and contribute to national goals. Reinforcing these concerns are poor infrastructure, underprepared faculty, unwieldy institutional governance, and other obstacles to innovation and improvement. Funding has been a continuing challenge, with public investment unable to keep up with expanding enrollment numbers and an inefficient process for allocating funds across the system. India's key policy document for economic development through 2017, the 12th Five Year Plan, suggests that the country's higher education institutions should be granted more autonomy over curriculum, staffing, and programs offered. In return, these institutions would be more accountable for their performance and subsequent funding levels. The 12th Five-Year Plan proposes a "steer and evaluate" role for the government that allows a greater degree of self-regulation and enforces higher levels of accountability across the system's institutions. Furthermore, improvement measures should be applied to both public and private institutions, and they should be transparent and accessible to all stakeholders to encourage quality-based decision-making. Consequently, additional resources will be needed to support these stakeholders as they transition to their new governance roles.

## **5. Analysis of Higher Education System in India**

Powar (2012) argues that the co-relation between higher education and employment is complex in the Indian context as a number of socio-economic and technological variables are involved; having said that, the Indian economy boasts unprecedented growth as well as one of the highest growth rates in the world. Gupta & Gupta (2012) uphold Dukkupati's contention about the Government's desertion of research. The authors record that the Government expenditure on research and development in science and technology as percentage of GDP was 0.8% during 2005-06 in India. By way of comparison, the equivalent figure for Israel was 5%, Sweden (4%), Japan (3%), US (2.77) and China (1.5%). Prakash (2007) draws attention to the direct correlation between "gross enrolment rate" (GER) in higher education and the per capita GDP of a nation. He cites comparative GER figures to drive home the point about the long way ahead for India. "Considering the demand for higher education, the GER in India relative to many of the developed countries is quite low (around 12 per cent) compared to the average of the developing countries (13 per cent), the world (26.7 per cent) and the developed nations (57.7 per cent)".

Whitaker (2004) discusses the symbiotic relationship between cities or "cluster regions" and internationalization of universities and colleges. She argues that the agglomeration of services and businesses go to play an important role in attracting international students. The strength of

international students, in turn encourages more businesses and services. She describes these economies as “knowledge-based economies”. The concentration of educated and skilled individuals leads to not only greater entrepreneurship, but also research and development. Another outcome is that enterprises resulting from these “knowledge-based economies” are more competitive in the global economy and more likely to result in consumer satisfaction.

During these past fifty years, not only the literacy rate has shown a remarkable upward trend, even the figures for higher education have almost tripled – from 28.2 million in 1970 to over 60 million today. It must, however, be noted that in the developed industrial countries the rate of growth in higher education has sharply declined, while in the developing countries it is still around 6 to 8 per cent. Countries that have registered a higher rate of enrolment are those which has a lower base, or which were late in instituting centres of tertiary education. But, the pattern has not been similar in all the regions. Higher education in Asia and in Latin America, for example, has exhibited a promising upward trend, but the same cannot be said of the Pacific island countries, or the Caribbean sub-region. Moreover, the situation of higher education in Africa is particularly distressing. Three decades back, when countries of sub-Saharan Africa began gaining their independence, there were only six universities in that region, with the sole exception of South Africa. Quite understandably, the number of university graduates in those countries was infinitesimally small fewer than 100 graduates in any country; Zaire having only 16; and Burundi none at all. While in the 1980s the number of universities in Africa has crossed a century, and a 61 per cent increase in enrolment has brought the number of students to half a million, it is still minuscule compared to other continents. A UNESCO survey suggests that even today there are only 100 students for each 100,000 people in Uganda; 63 in Malawi; 60 in Burkina Faso; 21 Tanzania; and 16 in Mozambique.

Yogesh Atal (2007) on the research front also, there is now a major difference: former colonies of the West, which has been subject matter of study by the anthropologists, are now being studied by the natives. The scope of these studies is much larger and of contemporary relevance, contributing to the understanding of the problems of the development process. Thus, higher education is beginning to contribute to national development: by training the graduates to take on responsibilities in government and in the corporate sector; by producing scientists and technologists, to do research and assist the process of industrialization and modernization; and by carrying out social science research on topics of national relevance. The present-day world profile to higher education is very diverse. It is in this newer context that one will have to re-examine the question of transfer of knowledge in order to come up with realistic strategies.

Thus, while on the one hand there is raising frustration amongst the student community, and simultaneously growth of extra-academic activities in the university campuses, leading to the decline in quality and erosion of academic culture, there is also emergence of surrogate institutions outside the campuses that are attempting to meet new demands for learning. The fact that such surrogate institutions are flourishing not only suggests their *raison d'être* but hints at the incapacity of the formal system to respond to newer sets of demands. A survey recently carried out by a prominent magazine in India<sup>1</sup> unravelled the growing disenchantment with the university education. Of the 1,365 students interviewed, an emphatic 60 per cent said that the “college taught them nothing of practical value”. The survey found that “those who have reconciled to a three-year prison term keep filling in the hours with part-time job, computer courses, and MBA preparations”. Furthermore, an increasing number are avoiding the hassles of going to a regular college. They are opting for distance education instead. Since 1981, enrolment in correspondence courses has risen by 50 per cent from four lakh to six lakh. The survey showed that “40 per cent of the students in both small and metropolitan cities were taking jobs-related courses. Among the well-off, computers were the rage. The poorer ones contented themselves with learning typing and shorthand. But they all agreed on one point: a simple degree is just not enough”.



In India, the incapacity of the formal system of higher education to accommodate all aspirants has resulted into imposition of stringent conditions for admission at the first degree level. Already a significant percentage is kept out because of not making a good grade at the higher secondary examination. In almost all of the leading institutions, only the ones securing more than 80 per cent marks in the aggregate are eligible for admission in the first instance (India Today; 1994). This implies that a significant percentage of higher secondary graduates is denied admission to colleges. The fortunate among these rejecters, who come from well-to-do families, gain entry into medical and engineering colleges through the payment of huge capitation fees, at times amounting to half a million Indian rupees. Thus, only those with very high percentage of marks, or those from the moneyed class, are allowed access to higher education. Those who are declared successful at the High School or Higher Secondary level are thus denied access to higher education.

## **6. Conclusion**

India's higher education system is one of world's largest, enrolling nearly 22 million students in more than 46,000 institutions. The system's rapid and recent expansion has increased concerns about declining quality. India's higher education system is in transition. Instituting policies that explicitly link funding to quality will help guide and incentivize the country's newly autonomous institutions as they collectively pursue national objectives and improve overall education quality. But it will be important for India to approach these reforms carefully to ensure their success over the long term. Higher education cannot, however, be seen as a panacea for all the ills of society poverty, unemployment or social disintegration; for, it may contribute to, and even aggravate these crises. But, in the absence of qualified manpower, no society will be able to diagnose the malaise and come up with its possible cure. Investment in higher education cannot be regarded as an unaffordable luxury. While not neglecting primary and secondary education, ways should be found to fund tertiary education so that endogenous capacities in different area can be built to reduce external dependence.

It is quoted on the point from the "African Common Position Paper on Human and Social Development" adopted by the Conference of African Ministers in January 1004 to be presented to the World Summit. The paper acknowledges the fact that only two out of every three men, and one out of every three women, are literate, that the gross enrolment rate is declining, and that there are wide disparities in the provision of educational facilities and access to education in the African continent. And yet the paper rejects the view of giving less emphasis to higher education, especially university education, on the ground that "its comparative social rate of return is much lower than secondary and primary education." The present century focused on eradication of illiteracy and universalization of primary education to pave way for secondary and vocational education. The coming century takes on from these foundations to diversify higher education and to make the transition from a "learning" society to a "learned" society.

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