

HIGHER EDUCATION AND THE PANDEMIC IN INDIA

22 September 2020

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The Indian Higher Education

- Third largest in the world
- GER/GTER: 27-28% approx.
- Arguably, poor employability of the graduates.
- Limited presence of Indian Universities in the in global ranking. Only a few within 200-300 range as per one ranking agency.
- Enrolment in private HEIs is around two-third of the total enrolment in HE.
- Public funding for HE exceeds 1.25 % of GDP. For Education: 4.4% of GDP (NEP).
- Students' mobility (approx): Outbound 265,000; Inbound 30,000
- Second most important sending country after China
- Indian students studying abroad was 753,000 as on 31 July 2018.

National Education Policy 2020

- The HEIs to evolve as autonomous multi-disciplinary research institutions over time.
- Rejuvenation by giving autonomy to the teachers
- Freedom to students to choose courses (setting up of Academic Bank of Credit (ABC)).
- GER/GTER: 50% to be achieved by 2035.
- However, 50% of enrolment should be from vocational education by 2025.
- Phasing out of affiliated colleges.
- Setting up of new regulatory institutions and reconfiguring the old ones.

Major policy recommendations (contd.)

- Setting up of National Research Foundation (NRF) for funding research.
- Focus on **leadership**, strong and assertive.
- Public **funding** for education Centre and the states together, has to be raised to 6% of GDP.
- **Philanthropic** Private participation. Commercialisation to be curbed.
- The HEIs to seek public funds based on their future plan called Institutional Development Plan (IDP) from the Higher Education Grants Commission (to be set up).
- New legislation to allow top 100 foreign universities to come and operate in India.

Nudge for online courses (MOOCs) from the e-platforms

- *‘The recent rise in epidemics and pandemics necessitates that we are ready with alternative modes of quality education whenever and wherever traditional and in-person modes of education are not possible....’* the NEP *‘recognizes the importance of leveraging the advantages of technology while acknowledging its potential risks and dangers’*. (NEP 2020; 24.1).
- *Several steps have been mooted by the NEP 2020. Like World class digital infrastructure and content.*
- Credits earned from Online courses offered in SWAYAM e-learning platform expanded to 40% per semester from 20% earlier (Public notice dated 31 July published by UGC). ‘Expression of interest’ for 171 UG level MOOCs in humanities and social sciences.
- ‘Popularisation of courses’ (UGC dated 27 Aug): “..need to sustain the momentum generated for online courses during the pandemic” even in rural areas as envisioned by the Hon’ble PM.

Survey findings: National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration (NIEPA), New Delhi and QS Survey

- **NIEPA, July 2020 (led by Prof. S. Bhushan). (Sample: 543 HEIs)**
- 63% of the HEIs said that less than 50% of the online classes could be held till end June.
- 76%-80% of HEIs: Exams could not be held before end June.
- 27% of government HEIs did not have wi-fi.
- **QS Survey of prospective students (Sample: 11,300+)**
- 61% plan to defer their course of study till 2021.
- 8% intend to study in a different country. 7% cancelled plan to study abroad. 48% not keen on studying their programme online.
- 82% students want a tuition fee discount if online. (The Indian Express, 21 Aug 2020).

A. Delhi University (DU), Delhi High Court (DHC) and the conduct of examination

- Final year exam (open book) was conducted in two phases in DU. First phase was entirely online in August. In the second, poor attendance in offline.
- Conduct of two mock tests on July 27, Aug 4 and data had to be shared with the Court.
- In the first (second) phase: 50% (40%) logged in out of those registered, 35.6% (39%) uploaded answer scripts out of those logged in.
- DHC instructed DU to facilitate declaration of results of those students who are willing to study abroad. DU assured DHC that they would share their results confidentially with the foreign universities.

A. Steps taken: Monitoring by the DHC (contd.)

- Setting up of a Grievance Redressal Committee (GRC) to listen to the students for the smooth conduct of OBE (The Indian Express, 7 Aug 2020).
- Common Service Centres (CSCs) were made available to the students remotely located. Could not be made fully available (ibid.).
- DU has launched 'OneDU flagship programme' integrating and unifying all teaching activities in one platform (The Indian Express, 10 Aug 2020).
- Additional expenditure incurred to help Differently abled and Visually Challenged.

A. contd.

- Judges remarked, “*Don’t take it amiss. There is no ego battle here. How can you have any interest which is contrary to students?*”.. “*your readiness has been questioned thrice, you are not able to satisfy..*” (The Indian Express, 15 Aug 2020).
- DU Teachers’ Association (DUTA) argued that any form of online/blended would be discriminatory.
- Visually challenged (VC) students and differently abled (DA) students protested because of no availability of materials, poor access to internet, technical glitches.

B. Centre, Supreme Court (SC) and holding of Engineering & Medical

- JEE (and NEET) were supposed to be held April 7-11 (May 3), July 18-23 (July 26) and finally held on Sept 1-6 (Sept 13).
- Became a national issue between the Government and the states opposing the conduct of the exams.
- Several petitions were filed by some students and 6 states ruled by the opposition parties challenging the conduct of JEE and NEET who had sought a review of the Supreme Court's August order. All were dismissed including the last one which was not entertained by the SC.
- SC rejected plea on Aug 16, saying "*Life cannot be stopped...career of students cannot be put in jeopardy*". (The Indian Express 17 Aug 2020).
- Attendance in JEE was 74% compared to last year 94% (for JEE, 0.95 million registered) For Medical, it was much better at 85-90% out of 1.6 million applied.

C. UGC, SC and the states

- UGC earlier gave freedom to the Universities to decide whether to conduct exam. Many universities could not. However, results were declared by some.
- UGC reversed its earlier order and insisted that degrees cannot be given without holding exam.
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- States approached the SC to contest the UGC's directions to the HEIs to hold exam by end of September. (The Indian Express 19 Aug 2020).
- SC allowed extension till end of October subject to UGC approval.
- UGC: Academic calendar for 2020-21 rescheduled. Classes to start from 1 Nov. Vacations are likely to be cancelled till 2022. 6 days a week. If cancelled, full refund.

What happens to the *publicness* of HE?

- **Problems with Access:** Possibility of a fall in enrolment rate. Students from disadvantaged backgrounds remain the worst sufferers with delayed beginning of the semester, fall in family income, limited or poor access to online education.
- **Shrinkage of Public sphere:** Socialisation in the campus suffers and would remain restricted as the purview of online education expands.
- **Accentuation of Differentiation:** Spread of online and blended mode may facilitate expansion at the expense further differentiation in the system and contributing to HE more as a 'positional good' as the market may become bi-polar.
- Depends on the **socio-economic** condition, **polity** and **policy response** and the **structure** of HE system.

- Thank you

Add

- Study Webs of Active Learning for Young Aspiring Minds (SWAYAM)
- 6 states who opposed: Maharashtra, Punjab, West Bengal, Jharkhand, Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh
- Enrolment more than 65% in private. Public to private institutions 1:3 ratio.
- USA: 112,714 and 13% of foreign students in USA
- UK: 18,535 in 2010-11 to 10,235 in 2012-13.
- Inbound 60% south Asian countries