UNIT 1 INDIAN HIGHER EDUCATION: RETROSPECT AND PROSPECT

Structure
1.0 Introduction
1.1 Objectives
1.2 National Policies and their impact
   1.2.1 Reviews and reforms
   1.2.2 Expansion and diversification
   1.2.3 Infrastructure
1.3 Issues in Higher Education
   1.3.1 Relevance and quality
   1.3.2 Access and equity
   1.3.3 Resources in higher education
1.4 The Future
   1.4.1 Globalization
   1.4.2 Private initiatives
   1.4.3 Open and distance education and new pedagogy
   1.4.4 Technology support
1.5 Let Us Sum Up
1.6 Check Your Progress : Possible Answers

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Indian higher education has a long history with its universities like Nalanda and Takshashila dating back to several centuries. However, the dawn of the modern era can be fixed at 1857 when three universities, after the pattern of the London University, were set up in Bombay (now Mumbai), Calcutta and Madras (now Chennai). The major objective of higher education then was to turn out people who can support the colonial administrations. After attaining independence in 1947, India had had a close look at the objectives and goals of higher education in the context of its own national development needs. New thrust areas were identified; new institutions were established; and the whole directions of development were redefined. Greater attention was given to scientific and technological education and research as well as professional education and training. It was no surprise that post-independent economic reconstruction and development in India did not have to rely heavily on non-Indian personnel. We shall explore the growth and expansion of Indian higher education since 1947, after India attained independence, in this unit.

There was a phenomenal expansion of higher education in India in the last fifty years; there were also several path breaking initiatives. The founding of the five Institutes of Technology (IITs) in the 50s - four of which in collaboration with major industrialised nations (USA, Germany, Russia and UK), establishment of several engineering colleges, setting up of the Institutes of Management (IIMs) in the 60s, and the establishment of several agricultural
universities also around the same time, are all important landmarks in the development of Indian higher education. During this period, there was significant expansion of medical education, besides the growth of a rapidly expanding technician education base. All these developments were the direct consequences of the initiatives taken by the national government and therefore in discussing these developments, the role of national policies and initiatives holds the key.

1.1 OBJECTIVES

On completion of this unit, you should be able to

- explain the developments in Indian higher education,
- analyse and explain various issues in higher education, and
- critically appraise the likely future developments in higher education.

1.2 NATIONAL POLICIES AND THEIR IMPACT

The Government of India appointed a commission on university education under the chairmanship of Dr. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan in 1948 to “report on Indian University Education and suggest improvements and extensions that may be desirable to suit present and future requirements of the country”. The Commission made several recommendations ranging from the need to redefine the aims of university education, standards of teaching and research, courses and curricula, the need to strengthen professional education, expansion of university education, its governance and funding, teachers and their conditions of work and several other related issues. The report of this commission was in fact a blueprint for reorganisation of university education in independent India.

The important point demanding attention here is that the government focused attention on higher education right from the beginning. Later, an Education Commission (1964-66), which was appointed to make a comprehensive review of all levels of education and in all areas, also dealt with higher education in great depth and made significant recommendations. While continuing the emphasis on quality and standards, the Education Commission of 1964-66 also recommended expansion of higher education to meet the manpower needs. The first National Policy on Education, 1968 was based on the recommendations of the Education Commission; naturally, it contained important policy formulations on higher education. Higher education again figured in the revised National Policy on Education, 1986 with an elaborate enunciation of the specific reform measures in a Programme of Action for the implementation of the policy. The diagnostic document, Challenge of Education (1986) expressed great concern about the conditions of the colleges and universities. The National Policy on Education, 1986 indicated a few major thrusts in higher education. These were: (a) the need for expansion of
higher education, (b) an improvement of quality of higher education, and (c) the relevance and job orientation of higher education.

1.2.1 Reviews and reforms

Higher education is the only sector that has subjected itself to frequent reviews. Even while the focus of the reviews was on specific issues, the various committees and groups could not possibly avoid reflecting on the total higher education system. Besides extensive coverages in the University Education Commission of 1948-49 and the Education Commission of 1964-66, specific issues in higher education were dealt with by several other committees from time to time. Some of these were:

- Mahajani Committee on Colleges 1964;
- Sidhanta Committee on Standards of Universities 1965;
- Gajendragadkar Committee on Governance of Universities;
- Gnanam Committee on New Educational Management 1990;
- UGC Expert Committee on Autonomous Colleges, 1991; and
- Rastogi Committee on Teachers and their conditions of service 1997.

Besides a number of state governments also set up committees on higher education, specially to look into various aspects of the functioning of the universities, their management, including reorganisation and expansion. It is noteworthy that higher education has not allowed itself to stagnate for want of ideas, but has continuously reviewed its perspectives and brought in new structures, approaches, courses, curriculum, etc. In other words, it is a system that makes a continuing effort at self-renewal.

These policies and reviews have led to a number of major reforms in higher education. To mention a few — the introduction of semester system, examination reforms, norms for staff recruitment (qualifying in national eligibility test as a pre-requisite for appointment of teachers in all universities and colleges) and development (in-service education of college and university teachers), university and college governance, structures and management processes, restructured curriculum for vocational courses, autonomous colleges, departments of special assistance and centres of advanced studies for quality improvement in research, etc. These efforts indicate the steps taken in higher education to make it buoyant in the face of socio-economic changes.

It does not follow that the growth of higher education in India has been a problem free development. For one, the rising social expectations brought the system under severe pressure to expand and open up to ever in increasing numbers. For another, the resources necessary to meet these social pressures were not always forthcoming. The inevitable consequence was the emergence of a large numbers of institutions with declining standards, inadequate teaching/learning facilities, and a large numbers of frustrated youth.
Management of Higher Education

who are not able to stand up to the pressures of a competitive employment market.

Check Your Progress 1

i) Do you agree that policy initiatives brought changes in higher education? Answer in about 50 words.

ii) List the major changes that followed the reviews and reforms?

iii) Identify (on your own) two major areas which require immediate attention of planners and policy makers, in Indian higher education. Answer in about 50 words.

Note: i) Space is given below for your answers.

ii) Compare your answer with the one given at the end of the unit.

1.2.2 Expansion and diversification

Higher education in India expanded phenomenally during the last 50 years. From 28 universities in 1950-51, the total number of university type institutions rose to 229 in 1996-97. The number of colleges increased from 695 in 1950-51 to 9686 by 1996-97 (UGC, 1996-97). The total enrolment of nearly 6.76 million students (1996-97) is an exponential growth over 0.26 million students.
in 1950-51 (Table 1). Similarly, the teachers' strength of about 2,000 at the
time of independence, is now as strong as about 0.4 million.

Table 1: Institutions and Enrolment in Higher Education (1996-97)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>States</th>
<th>No. of University Type Institution (1)*</th>
<th>No. of Colleges (2)**</th>
<th>Enrolment (3)***</th>
<th>Total in '000</th>
<th>% of Women</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Andhra Pradesh</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>1033</td>
<td></td>
<td>476</td>
<td>31.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Arunachal Pradesh</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>06</td>
<td></td>
<td>04</td>
<td>22.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assam</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>266</td>
<td></td>
<td>161</td>
<td>32.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bihar</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>748</td>
<td></td>
<td>525</td>
<td>18.6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Delhi</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>87</td>
<td></td>
<td>151</td>
<td>44.6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Goa</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>35</td>
<td></td>
<td>19</td>
<td>51.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gujarat</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>444</td>
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<td>456</td>
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<td>155</td>
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<tr>
<td>Himachal Pradesh</td>
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<td>73</td>
<td></td>
<td>40</td>
<td>38.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jammu &amp; Kashmir</td>
<td>03</td>
<td>56</td>
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<td>1119</td>
<td></td>
<td>546</td>
<td>34.4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kerala</td>
<td>08</td>
<td>235</td>
<td></td>
<td>196</td>
<td>52.4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Madhya Pradesh</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>652</td>
<td></td>
<td>412</td>
<td>30.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Maharashtra</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>1550</td>
<td></td>
<td>1042</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mizoram</td>
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<td>10</td>
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<td>22</td>
<td>39.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nagaland</td>
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<tr>
<td>Orissa</td>
<td>05</td>
<td>559</td>
<td></td>
<td>228</td>
<td>32.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pondicherry</td>
<td>01</td>
<td>18</td>
<td></td>
<td>11</td>
<td>45.2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Punjab</td>
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<td></td>
<td>209</td>
<td>51.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rajasthan</td>
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<td>305</td>
<td></td>
<td>231</td>
<td>32.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sikkim</td>
<td>01</td>
<td>04</td>
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<td>Tamil Nadu</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>470</td>
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<td>496</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tripura</td>
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<td>20</td>
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<tr>
<td>Uttar Pradesh</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>1047</td>
<td></td>
<td>940</td>
<td>26.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>West Bengal</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>408</td>
<td></td>
<td>385</td>
<td>35.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andaman &amp; Nicobar Islands</td>
<td>00</td>
<td>03</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Chandigarh</td>
<td>02</td>
<td>21</td>
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<tr>
<td>Daman and Diu</td>
<td>00</td>
<td>01</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>229</strong></td>
<td><strong>9686</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>6756</strong></td>
<td><strong>34.1</strong></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

* (Source: Universities Handbook by AIU)
** (Source: Annual Report of the UGC, 1996-97)
*** (Source: Annual Report of the UGC, 1996-97)
The level-wise analysis of enrolment indicates that on an average 88% students are enrolled in the undergraduate programmes, about 9.4% in the post-graduate programmes and about 1.10% in the research programmes every year. The subject wise analysis of the enrolment indicates that more than 40% students are enrolled for courses in Arts, 19.6% in Science and 21.9% in Commerce. Enrolment figures in engineering and medicine are 4.9% and 3.4%, respectively. This pattern also remained more or less stable during the past several years.

The important point in the enrolment trend is the preponderance of the liberal arts and science courses, on the one hand, and the very small percentage of students entering the professional courses, on the other. Within the general education sector, a large majority of students are enrolled in arts subjects.
There is a wide gender disparity in enrolment, with women accounting for only about 32.8% of total enrolment in higher education. We shall come back to this issue later.

The expansion was complemented by diversification which has taken different shapes in different universities. One of the major features of diversification was the introduction of courses at the undergraduate and post-graduate levels in a wide range of subjects. Starting with the conventional subjects in the early years of independence, many new disciplines have been introduced; for example, biochemistry, microbiology, regional planning, biotechnology, etc. The major innovative shift has been the introduction of vocational courses at the undergraduate level in the restructured curriculum (Sudha Rao, 1995). Another feature of diversification, at least in some universities, was the gradation of first degree courses into honours and pass courses.

The introduction of open and distance education in higher education was another major diversification. More than 60 conventional universities now offer programmes through distance education, in addition to the national and the state open universities. Together, the open and distance education system account for about 1.2 million students, about 20% of the total enrolment in higher education. The introduction of open and distance education has brought in two qualitatively different aspects of diversification. First, it has diversified the mode of delivery of education. Secondly, open and distance education has made it possible to introduce continuing education, outside the conventional undergraduate and post-graduate programs, in the form of certificate and diploma programs. This aspect will be dealt with in greater detail, in Unit-2 of Block-4 of this course.

Check Your Progress 2

Which are the major aspects of diversification that took place in Indian higher education, particularly during the last two decades? Answer in about 50 words.

Note: i) Space is given below for your answer.
   ii) Compare your answer with the one given at the end of the unit.
1.2.3 Infrastructure

Infrastructure, in the larger sense, refers to all those relatively permanent facilities that service the economy, and includes roads, railways, communication networks, power and water supply and, of course, education and training. Each of these larger components of the social and economic infrastructure has its own sub-components. Just as the railways have railway lines, rolling stock, railway stations, communication systems, workshops and personnel, education and training infrastructure also has several components. These include the educational institutions, their land and buildings, their laboratories and libraries, their plant and equipment, the academic and other personnel, their residences and other campus facilities, and so on.

We have mentioned the physical size of the higher education system in India in terms of the number of universities and colleges. These have been established at different points in time. Some are more than a century old; quite a few are relatively new. But the problem of infrastructure is a common concern for both categories of institutions. While the old ones need to modernise their infrastructure, the newer ones have to assemble them almost from scratch. And both these categories face the same problem of acute scarcity of resources. Some of the best institutions in the country are comparable with the best in the world in terms of their infrastructure, but a vast majority of them cannot claim to have the facilities adequate enough to maintain the highest level of quality in education and training.

The higher education system in India is totally dependent on the central and state governments for their survival. Private contributions to higher education is marginal in terms of the total investment in the system. In the first place, India does not have private universities so far; and private initiative is confined to establishment of colleges which require affiliation with a university. Even in the establishment of colleges, private contributions are limited to provision of some land, and in some cases, also some buildings. These are by no means adequate for the full growth of a higher education institution. Soon enough, they will turn to the governments for funding for their development. And with no governments, anywhere in the world, flush with funds to provide generous support to higher education, provision of adequate infrastructure remains a perennial problem for most higher education institutions in the developing world. India is no exception.

It does not follow that the gravity of this problem has not been addressed in India. To begin with, an attempt was made to discourage establishment of new institutions of higher education without ensuring adequate infrastructure. This approach was reflected in what was termed as the policy of "containment of unplanned expansion" adopted in the early 70s. To provide teeth to this policy, the UGC Act was amended to make a provision in 1972 under which no new university or college would qualify for assistance from any central government.
sources, unless such institutions created for themselves the infrastructural facilities on a scale prescribed by the UGC. The onus for ensuring the provision of these facilities fell largely on the state governments. It did not stop states from setting up new universities and colleges. All that it did was to delay the availability of central support till the infrastructural needs of the threshold level were provided. Generally, about 10% of the universities at a given time remained in the category of candidate members for assistance for periods ranging from five to ten years or more, while about 40 to 45% of the colleges always remained outside the scope of development support from central sources, especially the UGC. The result of course was the existence of a large number of higher education institutions with questionable credentials about their infrastructure.

It was not as though that the remedy lay only in this negative approach. A number of imaginative initiatives were taken simultaneously. The most important among them was the initiative taken in the 80s towards resource sharing and networking among institutions of higher education in India. The UGC was enabled, through a Parliamentary sanction, to set up common facilities that could be drawn upon by a number of institutions. Notable among these were:

- A Nuclear Science Centre as a common research facility
- An Inter-university centre for Advanced Studies and Research in Astronomy and Astrophysics
- An Inter-University Consortium for Atomic Energy facilities
- Consortium of Educational Communication for providing electronic media support to higher education
- An Information and Library Network (INFLIBNET).

Other similar initiatives included the establishment of Documentation Centres, Instrumentation Centres, and Centres for such sophisticated facilities as Crystal Growth and Radars.

Two more significant initiatives require to be noted in this context. These are the setting up of Curriculum Development Centres for continuous review and renewal of the contents of academic programmes in most disciplines. These centres make recommendations on the modernisation and updating of the curricula for courses in the disciplines assigned to them and these reports are then made available to all universities for their guidance in revising their course contents. The second major initiative was the establishment of several Academic Staff Colleges in well-established and developed departments of a number of universities in the country to offer on a continuing basis a large number of training and orientation programmes for teachers in universities and colleges. Some 48 Academic Staff Colleges offer in-service training to about eight to ten thousand teachers every year.
In more recent times, information technology has been inducted on an extensive scale in universities and colleges in India for modernising their administration. Most institutions have now computerised several operations relating to maintenance of student records, examination processes, financial accounting and so on.

Check Your Progress 3

Explain some of the innovative measures taken by India to meet the chronic problem of inadequacies in infrastructure for higher education. Answer in about 50 words.

Note: i) Space is given below for your answer.
   ii) Check your answer with the one given at the end of the unit.

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1.3 ISSUES IN HIGHER EDUCATION

You will notice from the presentation so far that there are certain areas of serious concern in the development of higher education in India. The most striking feature of the system in India is its uneven development. There are institutions of excellence; there are also very poorly equipped and even substandard institutions. In spite of the huge size of the enrolment, higher education caters only to about 6% of the relevant age group. Even so, there is large scale unemployment among graduates which implies the ever widening gap between education and employment. We shall briefly explore these concerns in this section.

1.3.1 Relevance and quality

It is obvious that higher education in India expanded rapidly without appropriate changes in the curriculum to respond to the changing needs of the times. The growth was simply linear, or to put it differently, more of the same. However, as we noticed in the previous section, it was the effort to diversify the system that paid rich dividends. The outcome of that effort was the emergence of centres of excellence within the system. The Indian Institutes of Technology
(IITs), Indian Institute of Science (IISc), Indian Institutes of Management (IIMs), are, as groups of institutions, of exceptionally high quality, comparable with the best in the world. These institutions, you will recall, have also had the advantage of collaboration with premier institutions in the world. It is not surprising therefore that their curriculum offerings, their teaching methods, and above all their teaching-learning environment were all considerably influenced, and informed, by the experiences and practices of some of the best institutions in the world. Admittedly, this exposure ensured that their programmes were relevant to the needs of the global economy, and their quality compared favourably with that of the very best at the international level.

But what about the general run of universities in the country? Especially those which are engaged in general education, and have multiplied in large numbers. The picture is one of lights and shades. There are quite a few among them which can be counted as Centres of Excellence in specific fields; there are also a significant number among them that have made substantial contributions to education and research in sciences, social sciences and the humanities. By and large, the major contribution of Indian universities have been to post-graduate education and research and in this area, most of them have also been able to maintain acceptable levels of quality and standards. But this segment constitutes only 12% of the higher education enrolment.

The picture, however, is dismal when it comes to the first degree courses that account for 88% of the total enrolment, with the possible exception of the professional programmes that constitute about 20% of the enrolment at this level. The general education programmes in Arts, Commerce and Science which claims 80% of the enrolment are marked by indifferent quality, unrevised curricular content, and overall lack of relevance. It is this segment that accounts for the worst erosion in the quality of Indian higher education.

As we have seen in the earlier sections of this unit, the state of higher education in India has been a subject of comprehensive review by several committees. There was no dearth of ideas, nor of intent. It was a case of good intentions not implemented, mainly because of a lack of will and commitment. Qualitative reforms eluded Indian higher education generally. As Altbach said: "the complexity of the social context in which higher education exists (in India) very likely makes systemic reforms impossible" (Powar, 1995). It will be worth while to look at some of the reasons for this unhappy state of affairs:

- The inadequacy of infrastructure in most institutions is a serious impediment to meaningful reforms. There are not just enough resources to make good these deficiencies.
- No reforms are possible unless the initiative comes from the academic community. By and large, the perception about academics is that they prefer status quo to taking any risks with experiments and innovations which require initiative and considerable efforts. This perception is
Management of Higher Education

strengthened by the fact that many universities have gone back on several reform measures as in examinations, etc.

- It was often claimed that reforms did not succeed because teachers did not have the initiative or freedom to design and develop courses of study and evolve methods of students assessment. A scheme of autonomous colleges was evolved precisely to provide teachers with this opportunity. However, the scheme was vehemently opposed by teachers on the ground that college managements would misuse autonomy and harass teachers! Not even 2% of the colleges in the country found this reform exciting enough.

In the more recent past, however, there have been several significant changes. The fact that programmes offered by universities and colleges should be relevant to the life and work of people is increasingly getting acknowledged. There is also an increasing awareness that higher education should develop in people the skills and competencies necessary to apply the knowledge they have acquired in solving the problems of social and economic development. These developments are reflected in the recent initiatives in providing a career-orientation to several first degree programmes by incorporating in them appropriate modules of relevant knowledge and skills in a wide variety of functional areas. Hopefully, these developments should lead to more meaningful changes in the programme profiles of the universities and colleges in India, and also in the ways in which they go about the processes of teaching and learning.

Check Your Progress 4

The Indian higher education system knew what it should do to improve its relevance and quality, but not much was done on the ground. Identify the major reasons for this failure.

Note: i) Space is given below for your answer.

ii) Compare your answer with the one given at the end of the unit.

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1.3.2 Access and equity

Access to education in India is an issue of major concern. In a large measure, this issue is a legacy of the past. The elementary and secondary levels of education in India have two streams of institutions. A small number of well-endowed, expensive private schools which provide education of a high quality, and the very large number of publicly financed schools run by the local
authorities most of which do not charge any fees and hence the education offered is of an indifferent quality. Looked at from another perspective, while the expensive private schools are the preferred choice of the urban elite, the publicly financed schools are the only option for the urban and the rural poor. This divide in the access to high quality education has several implications for social development. In the first place, economic power determines the nature and type of education that a child can access. Secondly, the notion of “merit” gets influenced by access that money can buy. In consequence, almost 80% of the seats in higher education go to the top 30% of the income brackets.

There are large segments of the population in India who are under-represented, or not represented at all, in the higher education system. There are disparities between regions within the country; there are disparities among different social groups; and there are disparities also between genders.

It is often agreed that the concepts of quality and excellence, on the one hand, and access and equity, on the other, are contradictory, if not mutually exclusive concerns. The pro-elitist argument runs on the lines that attaining peaks of excellence is the function of a selective process and that every one is not equally equipped to reach the top. Those who argue for wider access however point out that all human beings have the innate potential to blossom as top achievers and that the selection process is an artificial filter to keep many people out of the race. Throughout the 20th century, there are several examples of governments intervening to widen access to higher education for the socially and economically disadvantaged sections of the society all over the world. The emergence of democracy as a way of life demands that all people should have equal opportunities, and access to education is the surest guarantee for the process of equalisation of opportunities. It was inevitable therefore that higher education which was perceived, not so long ago, as an elitist pursuit should now become a vehicle for enhancing equity in society. Perhaps, because of this focus on equity, higher education systems are also being held guilty of compromising with quality and standards.

In more recent times, this conflict is being resolved by most societies by restructuring the educational processes and introducing extensive systemic reforms. The massive expansion of open and distance education, the rapidly growing involvement of communication and information technologies in education and, not the least the opening up of most of the traditional universities are all responses to the multiplicity of learner groups, and the ever increasing learning needs. All these developments have also had a deep impact on higher education in India.

Coming back to the current status of access to higher education in India, in spite of the impressive record of growth in absolute terms, the present level of 6% enrolment of the relevant age group is lower than that of many developing countries. UNESCO gives the average enrolment of the relevant age group of 18 to 23 as 14.1% for the year 1991 for the developing countries compared to
Management of Higher Education

40.2% for the developed countries (UNESCO, 1995). The major issue confronting higher education in India is therefore of providing equitable access to a large population entering the system in all the regions of the country and a high proportion of first generation learners from groups that can ill-afford even the present level of costs. It needs to be realised that the problem of equitable access has not been addressed squarely in the past to make any visible impact on the expansion of programmes or the development of infrastructure. The situation can only become worse if urgent steps are not taken to meet the twin needs of ensuring relevance for programmes and strengthening the infrastructure. The possible consequences of inaction are:

- entry into the higher education system will become more selective affecting the weaker sections and the principle of equity;
- higher education will become more expensive and therefore out of reach for large sections of the population, again to the detriment of the principle of equity.

Women in higher education

The participation of women in higher education has been a subject of extensive debate. Women's enrolment in higher education was 28% in 1982-83. After a decade, the enrolment was 32.8% indicating a marginal increase of 4.9% only (Indiresan 1995). A faculty wise analysis indicates that of the total enrolment in Education Faculty, more than 52.4% are women, and that in the Arts faculty, their enrolment percentage is 42.3. Of the total enrolment in engineering and technology related courses, only about 6.2% are women. In order to encourage women's education, a special effort has been made to set up women's colleges. There were 647 women's colleges in 1982-83; it rose to 925 by 1991-92. Despite about 50% growth in the number of women's colleges, women's enrolment grew only by about 5%. This raises a serious question in terms of the effect and viability of separate institutions for women in enhancing women's education. This also raises doubt about the contention that women's education is restricted because of the lack of available infrastructure. Women's participation as a percentage of the total and their participation in professional education, is a matter of serious concern, particularly since women students have not been found wanting in their academic performance.

Participation of women in decision making in higher education is another area of serious concern. Although UGC has been chaired by two women scholars, the proportion of women Vice-chancellors is estimated at about only 7%. The percentage of Women Deans, and even women teachers in higher education is relatively low compared to their male counterparts.
1.3.3 Resources in higher education

As in any other country, resources in education are perennially in short supply. There are problems of allocation to the education sector ignoring the claims of other sectors of development, besides considering the competing claims of various sub-sectors within the educational budget. Apart from resource allocation and mobilization, resource utilization is also a significant issue.

The budgetary allocation for higher education in the First Five Year Plan (1956-61) was 09% of the total education allocation which rose steadily to 25 per cent in the Fourth Five Year Plan (1971-76). By the Seventh Five Year Plan (1985-90) it came down to 14 per cent and to an all time low of 07 per cent in the Eighth Five Year Plan (1991-96). However, this allocation was separate from that made to technical education.

A major controversy in the last decade of last century is the financing of higher education. The prime issue is the priority given to higher education vis-à-vis basic education. The main criticism has been that the subsidization of higher education caters largely to the upper middle-class segment of the society. Because of increasing politicisation and growing militancy among students, the universities have not been able to raise fees. Even in the prestigious colleges under Delhi University, the monthly course fee is still Rs.18 as it was about 40 years ago, while the annual per capita expenditure was varied between Rs. 6000 and 9000 in 1992. The government cannot subsidize higher education to this extent; course fees have to be raised to recover a reasonable proportion of the cost. Higher education is under pressure.

More than 85% of the budget in higher education is spent on salary alone. Hence, unless the human resources are adequately utilized, not much improvement can be brought about. While the UGC has stipulated about 40 hours of stay and work per week in higher education, of which less than 50% is to be devoted to actual teaching (18 periods for lecturers, 12 periods for the readers and eight periods for the professors), and the rest of the time to research and preparation, the Commission on Teachers in Higher Education indicated that very few teachers, in fact, devote time to prepare for the classes, leave alone research work (NIEPA, 1985). Thus the teacher as a resource is grossly underutilized.

UGC initiated the “Country-Wide Classroom” program to enrich college education. Two hours a day of telecast, all round the year, and more than 15 specialized high-tech institutions to produce software for television, are maintained at an enormous cost to the country. The rate of utilization of the programs is just around ten per cent. Similar are the cases with laboratories, computers, etc. Thus, higher education suffers, on the one hand from the lack of resources, while on the other, it is unable to use the available resources effectively.
Higher and professional education has contributed tremendously to national development through the required manpower development in post-independent India. Had the government not taken those steps in the 1950s or 1960s, Indian education would not have been what it is today. If higher education is not subsidized, the country might risk its future development. If it is, the subsidy will benefit largely the upper middle class who can afford to pay and will, hence, be social injustice. The question is whether after 50 years of independence, Indian higher education has matured enough to fend for itself. It needs extensive investigation, particularly since a majority of the developed countries continue to subsidize higher education.

Check Your Progress 5

Do you agree that higher education is under pressure? What are the main reasons for this situation? Answer in about 50 words.

Note: i) Space is given below for your answer.
   ii) Compare your answer with the one given at the end of the unit?

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1.4 THE FUTURE

Higher education in India stands at the cross-roads. It is destined to take a course different from the one it has followed so far. This would, however, be a development over, and in continuation of, some of the existing experiences. This change will be both by design and by compulsion. Higher education as mentioned earlier, has been resilient as indicated by the frequent expert committee reviews. This spirit of reforms will continue. At the same time, changes will have to be made under the compulsion of globalization and global competitiveness in education, as well as the resource crunch. Private initiatives in higher education and the new technologies giving birth to the new learning systems and knowledge networks will add to this environment of change.

1.4.1 Globalization

Linked with the issue of quality, financing and privatization, is the issue of globalization of higher education. Indian students have for a long time been
going to the European and North American countries for higher and specialized education. This migration was largely at the initiative of Indian students. There has been a definite change in this trend after opening up of the Indian market in 1991. A large number of universities from Australia, Canada, UK and USA are directly offering courses in India with a face to face module in the respective countries and universities. Some of the foreign universities and institutions are twinning up with one or the other Indian institutions. The Indian middle-class, with its aspiration and spending capability, has enthusiastically responded to the international programs. In this process, many fake universities with addresses in the USA, UK etc. have also entered the scene. The Indian UGC has been concerned about this issue and has initiated steps to protect the Indian students. However, this trend of foreign universities enrolling Indian students, has resulted in one dimensionality in globalisation where the Indian market is being exploited by the western universities.

The Indian universities and the institutions have also been attracting students from the third world countries for the last three decades. While there is no authentic data, there are a good number of students from the African and South Asian countries in Delhi University, Pune University, MS University of Baroda and the like. IGNOU has provided manpower in distance education through its programmes PGDDE and MADE in 15 Commonwealth countries (Murthy, 1997).

The experience indicates that India is not doing enough marketing. Though there is no economic study, one can presume that there is no trade balance in the globalisation of education. The marketing by the foreign universities in India is strongly backed by the specific agencies of the respective country governments, the British Council for UK, the USIS for the US, the Aus Aid for Australia, for example. Compared to this, the Government of India has not developed any mechanism and policy to support Indian institutions marketing their programs abroad. This needs serious consideration if Indian higher education has to compete in the global education market.

1.4.2 Private initiatives

Privatization of higher education is another major issue. In the context of private agencies charging capitation fee for admission, the Supreme Court judgement of 1992 mentioned: "Such a treatment is patently unreasonable, unfair and unjust since merited poor cannot get admission where rich can purchase". The other important consideration with regard to the financing of higher education, is from the consideration of upfront national development.

The private initiative in education has taken two different forms. One form is that of the private colleges, usually professional colleges, which offer engineering, medical and teacher education courses. These courses are designed by the universities, and the concerned university also examines students and certifies results. Except a very small number, all universities are
Management of Higher Education

financed by the government. There is a serious debate about initiating private universities. A Private Universities Bill has already been proposed to the Parliament. Some of the major industrial houses, media corporations and private institutions are eagerly awaiting the clearance of the Bill which will usher in a new era in higher education. Also, the existing conventional system will not have the capability of matching the quality expectation of the employers and the society which the Indian middle-class will be prepared to buy. Hence, in the years to come, private university institutions will not only emerge but will dominate the Indian scenario.

This scenario will lead to the creation of more and more autonomous institutions. There will be a shift in the governance of higher education from administrative affiliation to assessment and quality-related accreditation. The National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC), in all probability, will get into the business of assessment of the emerging institutions and accredit institutions for a specific period. This time-bound accreditation will bring in a departure from the current practice of permanent affiliation to the universities.

The second form of private initiative is with the corporate sector offering job-related courses. During the last two decades, certain private institutions offering courses have been in major focus. This is particularly true in competitive examinations, information technology, and management education. For example NIIT, one of the private institutions on information technology, has set up the virtual university, called NIIT's NetVarsity; on the Internet, it offers both graduate and post-graduate programs on information technology. The APTECH, Brilliant, Intel are the others in the market. Similarly, ZED Career Academy, a media enterprise, is a major player outside the university system. There is yet a third type -- the professional societies offering another set of job-related courses. For example:

- All India Management Association which offers courses in Management;
- Institution of Engineers which offers courses in engineering which are equivalent to Bachelor's or Master's degree;
- Institute of Chartered Accountants which offers courses in Chartered Accountancy, etc.

Despite the fact that these institutes are not integral parts of the university system in India, their products are in demand not only in the private sector but also in the government sector. Such institutions will grow in number in the coming years and become a predominant phenomenon – a new reference point for relevance and quality education.
1.4.3 Open and distance education and new pedagogy

Open and distance education is emerging as another predominant feature of higher education. The number of conventional universities which offer distance education courses is more than 60. Gradually, other universities will join the new mode and offer courses, both through the conventional face-to-face and distance education mode. Along with the National Open University (IGNOU), more and more state open universities are coming up. There are already nine state open universities out of the targeted fifteen in the country. Open learning system at the university level accounts for about 20 per cent of the total enrolment. This is likely to go up substantially by the end of the next decade.

The open universities have brought in an open choice of courses and curriculum which the conventional universities have failed to offer. With greater democratization of education, the students will try to take courses they want which may not fall in line with the existing conventional combinations. In other words, in the coming decades, the universities will be challenged to offer individualized curriculum or "designer curriculum". The open universities have already branched off from the conventional correspondence courses to the multi-channel learning systems. The Indira Gandhi National Open University has enlisted the use of structured print material, television and radio, personal contact programs and interactive television. It has also started offering courses on the Internet. The proposal to set up a network of open universities will ensure that all open universities enter the multi-channel learning system by 2000 A.D (IGNOU, 1997). The lead taken by the open universities in using multi-channel learning will seriously influence the conventional universities. This will reduce the existing gap between the conventional universities and the open learning institutions in terms of quality of delivery of instruction.

With these imminent changes in higher education, coupled with the reduction in government subsidy, the teaching community will be challenged, in more than one respect in the future. They would have to become more accountable – both to the system as well as to the students; particularly, when the students pay for their education. The present permanent kind of jobs might be steadily replaced by contractual assignments which is already the practice in the private institutions in India and a majority of the institutions in the developed industrial nations. In other words, the future criteria for survival in the profession will be quality and continuous upgradation of professional skills.
Check Your Progress 6

How do you visualise open and distance education in the coming decade, and new teaching-learning strategies emerging from that?

Note: i) Space is given below for your answer
   ii) Compare your answer with the one given at the end of the unit

1.4.4 Technology support

Technology will be another driving force in effecting change in the educational process, particularly in the mode of educational delivery and the way students learn. National Council for Education Research and Training (NCERT) was responsible for the short-term in-service education of primary teachers. Because of the large number, it resorted to the cascade model. With the availability of interactive television, it has switched over to a satellite based interactive distance education mode. Many national and state training institutions have adopted this new mode. An interesting case is that of Goa University, which is a conventional university. It has provided all its colleges with-(DRS) facility thus creating a network. It is now equipped to offer lectures by university professors to all its colleges simultaneously. It can offer tutorial services, remedial instruction and other such facilities. An increasing number of colleges and universities are getting connected to the Internet. An Indian company has also been supported by the government on Internet as part of Information Technology Policy. In the coming years, more and more students will take courses on the Internet. This is likely to lead to the development of an Indian knowledge network involving computer communication and satellite based interactive television and radio. The future mode of educational delivery will hence change substantially.

1.5 LET US SUM UP

Higher education is, by far, the most sensitive segment of Indian education. It has been criticized for subsidizing the upper middle class, but, it is this segment which gave India a head-start immediately after independence. It is not without such futuristio-consideration that a visionary like Nehru invested on
higher education and called upon no less than Dr. Radhakrishnan to look into the issue right at the beginning of the country's independence.

Higher education has experienced tremendous expansion. Yet, not more than 6% of the relevant age-group is in the fold of higher education. In order to compete in the global market, India has to substantially expand its higher education facilities. Without the government subsidy and without legislative sanction for private universities, this is a major challenge. Higher education is one sector which is poised for major changes in the next few decades; and such changes will determine India's future in the era of globalization. We have covered in this unit, Indian higher education—origin, growth, expansion, major issues/challenges and it's future scenario in the competitive global context.

### 1.6 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS: POSSIBLE ANSWERS

1. 
   i) Yes

   ii) The major changes resulted from the reviews and reforms are: examination reforms, adoption of semester system by many universities, norms for staff recruitment and development, restructured curriculum for vocational courses, autonomous colleges, centres of advanced studies, etc.

   iii) In my opinion two major areas to be addressed by policy makers of higher education are: (a) declining standards at all levels of higher education (including research); (b) lack of relevance of programmes and courses offered by these institutions to changing societal needs.

2. The major diversification was; (a) introducing new subjects like biochemistry, microbiology, regional planning, biotechnology, etc. at undergraduate and post-graduate levels; (b) introduction of vocational courses at the graduate level; and (c) gradation of UG courses into honours and pass in some of the universities.

3. In the context of steadily declining resource support, an innovative initiative taken by India was the creation of common, facilities and services that could be shared by a number of universities. Establishment of highly specialised and sophisticated research facilities in Nuclear Science, Astronomy and Astrophysics, Information and Library Network, etc. are the major examples in this direction.

4. Several commissions and committees have diagnosed the higher education system in India, and made valuable recommendations to
remedy its weaknesses. But these recommendations were never implemented earnestly. Shortage of resources, lack of commitment on the part of the academic community, and an overall scepticism about all reform initiatives were the main reasons for the failure of reforms in Indian higher education.

5. Yes, I agree with the view that higher education is under pressure. The main reasons for this situation are – i) decreasing government funding for higher education; ii) government’s reluctance to continue the subsidy in the light of the criticism that higher education caters only to the upper middle class of society; iii) politicisation and student militancy in universities, scuttling reform efforts especially in economic recovery of costs, etc.

6. With emerging communication and information technologies, open and distance education would further dominate higher education sector in the coming decade –open universities have already brought open choice of courses and curriculum, as well as multi-channel learning systems to their students. With increasing competition from private institutions, universities will be forced to offer individualized curriculum or (‘designer curriculum’) and customised services.