Policies of Higher Education in India Since Independence

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Abstract : India has excelled as a centre of learning from Ancient times. Ancient universities of repute, like the Nalanda, Takshashila attracted scholars from different corners of the world. The ancient system of education in the Vedic period was marked by the Brahmanical and the Buddhist systems of education. The Medieval era led to blending of cultures and to the advent of the Madrasa as an important centre of education. The British colonial rule in India grafted into the Indian society the system of education which was designed by the British for the maintenance of their imperial administration in India, called the Macaulay scheme of education This forced inheritance made India feel the need for reconstruction far before independence, but it took effect post-independence. Motivated by the able leadership of Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, the Indian system of higher education started expanding and was nourished time and again by various public policies and formation of different commissions and committees, like the University Education Commission (1948-49), foundation of the University Grants Commission (UGC) in 1956, Kothari Commission (1964-66), formulation of the first National Policy on Education (1968), and so on, till today, when an initiative of the Government of India is on to usher in and implement a New Education Policy. Sincerity has always reflected on part of the Government of India at all times to improve the higher education system through apt policies. However, despite the efforts, issues of access, equity, quality have frequently jaundiced the system, thereby raising the question of effectiveness of the policies. This paper intends to study the question of how conducive and effective the policy environment has been when promoting and improving higher education in India, by critically analyzing the different policies that have sometimes nourished, sometimes afflicted the system over time. Being on the brink of constructing a New Education Policy, it is essential to identify, isolate and hence rectify the erroneous policies, and by taking a critical and analytical journey through the higher education policies since independence, this paper fruitfully attempts to provide a clear picture of the advantages and disadvantages of the different policies that have been prevalent in India at different times since independence.

Keywords: New Education Policy, Higher education policies, Macaulay scheme of commission, government of India education, university education commission, UGC, Kothari

Introduction

Since ancient period, India has excelled as a centre of learning. Ancient universities of repute, like the Nalanda, Takshashila. Vikramshila and Vallabhi attracted scholars from different corners of the world. The ancient system of education in the Vedic period was marked by the Brahmanical and the Buddhist systems of education. The Medieval era led to blending of cultures and to the advent of the Madrasa as an important centre of education. “Till the 18th century, India had three distinct traditions of advanced scholarship in the Hindu gurukulas, the Buddhist viharas and the Quranic madarsas.” A major transformation came up in the Indian higher education through the initiatives of the British leaving both negative and positive impacts. The colonial system of education in India was developed in three stages: (a) the efforts of the East India Company (1765-1813), (b) the efforts of the British Parliament (1813-1853); and (c) the educational efforts under direct British rule (1854-1947). The first phase was marked by the foundation of the Calcutta Madrasha in 1781 by Warren Hastings, followed by the establishment of the Benaras Sanskrit College in 1791 by Jonathan Duncan. During this period, English education had been gaining popularity with the efforts of missionaries. Lord Wellesley established the Fort William College for the training of youth civilians in 1800, and ushered in western education by bringing English officials and Indian Pandits together. Shortly, Raja Ram Mohan Roy launched a movement in favour of western learning and liberal education and founded the Hindu College in 1817, which was renamed Presidency College in June, 1855. But the motive of the British was to graft into the Indian society the system of education which was designed by the British for the maintenance of their imperial administration in India. Consequently, Macaulay’s minute of February 1835 saw a rejection of the Orientalists and a bias in favour of spreading Western knowledge through the English language, thereby supporting the Anglicists. Both fortunately and unfortunately this decision has reverberated in Indian higher education through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and has its echoes even in the twenty-first century.

In 1857 the East India Company was dissolved and the British Crown had established its political power over India. The first three modern universities were now established in Calcutta, Bombay and Madras. University education in British India experienced very slow growth. Almost 30 years later the fourth university — that of Allahabad - came up and it took another 30 years for the fifth and the sixth universities, University of Mysore and Banaras Hindu University, to be founded. Apart from being slow in progress and geographically uneven, this western form of education totally wrecked the indigenous form of learning by infusing a new system and a new language. Sarcastically enough, neither London nor Cambridge could be replicated and thus the result was a heavily biased and elitist system.

This forced inheritance made India feel the need for reconstruction far before independence, but it took effect post-independence. Motivated by the able leadership of Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, the Indian system of higher education started expanding and was nourished time and again by various public policies and formation of different
commissions and committees, like the University Education Commission (1948-49), foundation of the University Grants Commission (UGC) in 1956, Kothari Commission (1964-66), formulation of the first National Policy on Education (1968), and so on, till today, when an initiative of the Government of India is on to usher in and implement a New Education Policy. Sincerity has always reflected on part of the Government of India at all times to improve the higher education system through apt policies. There has been unthinkable growth and expansion (as shown in Table 1) and today it has the status of being one of the largest educational systems in the world.

### Table 1: Expansion of Universities

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Universities Level Institutions</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>177</td>
<td>320</td>
<td>371</td>
<td>624</td>
<td>760</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colleges</td>
<td>700</td>
<td>7346</td>
<td>16885</td>
<td>18064</td>
<td>37204</td>
<td>38498</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers (in thousand)</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>272</td>
<td>457</td>
<td>488</td>
<td>951</td>
<td>1473</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students enrolled (in million)</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>9.95</td>
<td>11.20</td>
<td>21.50</td>
<td>34.20</td>
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**Source**: compiled from the various reports of the University Grants Commission & AISHE

However, despite the efforts, issues of access, equity, quality have frequently jaundiced the system, thereby raising the question of effectiveness of the policies. Researchers have often been haunted by questions like whether it is the need of the hour and pragmatism or whether it is populism, public pressure and selfish interests that have driven higher education policies of India. In this backdrop the paper intends to carry out a study on the higher education policies that have prevailed in India since independence.

### Research questions and objectives

Being on the brink of constructing a New Education Policy, it is essential to identify, isolate and hence rectify the erroneous policies, and by taking a critical and analytical journey through the higher education policies since independence, this paper attempts to provide a clear picture of the advantages and disadvantages of the different policies that have been prevalent in India at different times since independence. The research question is, How conducive has the policy environment been with respect to higher education in India since Independence. To seek the answer to this question, my objective is to compartmentalize the time since independence into two halves - one extending from independence and continuing till 1986 and another describing period since 1986 till 2015. The study will analyze the Government initiatives that have been undertaken in this regard and make inquiries into the scope of their application and assessment of their merit.

### Literature review

There is hardly any evidence of an extensive and comprehensive research focusing on the policies prevalent in the higher education sector of India since independence. However, there have been various papers and books which have, in their discussion, touched upon the policies prevalent in their times. Some of them have been presented below. Also, reports published by the UGC and the MHRD remain a prime source of the policies prevalent at the time the reports have been published.

Schenkman, A. S., as early as 1954, has made an enlightening study on the then prevailing higher education system of India. Mathur, A.B. (1992) describes the Indian University system as a functioning anarchy. Srivastava, M. (1994) argues that the nationalist education policy seeks to derive legitimacy from the British system of the Anglicist policymakers. Sharma, S. (2002) dwells on the history and development of higher education in India and throws light on some of the policies that have ruled the system time to time. Kumār, T.R. and Sharma, V. (2003) point out that the declining importance being assigned to the higher education sector, in stark contrast to developed countries, has created disparities that are increasing over time. Singh, A. (2004) comments that the UGC, when it was established in 1956, was not made as powerful as originally envisaged, as the power vested in the centre by the Constitution was not given concrete expression and that the Educational policy was last reviewed in India in 1986 but the failure to implement its recommendations may not have been an accident: the specific line of authority laid down by the Constitution to fulfill the given mandate was not followed. Sahni, R. and Kale, S. (2004) discuss the present system of higher education and attempt to find the possible implications for India in being a signatory to GATS and conclude that in the absence of a coherent education policy, the effects of opening up could lead to a distorted function of education in our society. M. Anandakrishnan (2007), Thomas Joseph (2007) and Tilak (2007) in three separate short pieces reflect on the recommendations of the National Knowledge Commission (NKC). Agarwal, P. (2009) in his informative, up-to-date and analytical book about Indian higher education, talks about the changing policies of the system over time. Tilak (2010) discusses that the Prohibition of Unfair Practices in Technical Educational Institutions, Medical Educational Institutions and Universities Bill 2010, is inadequate for tackling the host of corrupt and unfair practices. Hacket, N. (2009) says that success of the new central universities and the proposed national universities will come about at the cost of the state universities, which cater to the majority of students in the country and that the postgraduate teaching and research in state universities will have to be taken over by the central government to ensure the survival of this important part of the higher education system. Kolhatkar, M.R. (2012) considers the interrelationship between education and federalism as a political system and in the process sheds light on some of the higher education policies since independence. Tilak (2013) 1231 takes a look back at the development of higher education since the ancient age. Sharma, K.A. (2013) takes a stride back at the establishment, growth and evolution of the UGC ett its sixtieth year. Pathak, B.K. (2014) takes a critical look at the
An extensive research has been done on the policies prevalent and prevailing in the higher education sector in India and their impacts, by gathering data and information from various books, journals, websites, newspapers articles, reports. This research led to valuable insights, which have helped enriching the study. The entire information has been presented in the following discussion in a well-structured descriptive-cum-analytical manner that is easy to read and interesting to follow and that is supplemented with personal views and judgements. The sources of information and data have been suitably cited and properly referenced.

**Methodology**

The time period covering the years since independence till today has been subdivided into two major sections — one ranging from 1947 till 1986 and the other extending from 1986 till 2016. The reason for this categorization is that, 1986, as will be unfurled in the discussion that follows, proves to be a watershed year for the higher education system of India.

**The period from 1947 till 1986**

The 1947 draft constitution of independent India legally delegated all powers regarding education to the provincial governments which laid more stress on the objective of increasing access than quality. As per the recommendation of the Sarkar Committee (1945) higher technical institutes were formed based on the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in the four regions of India. This resulted in the setting up of the five Indian Institutes of Technology at Kharagpur (1950), Bombay (1958), Kanpur (1959), Madras (1960) and Delhi (1961). The All India Council for Technical Education was set up in 1945, to oversee all technical education (diploma, degree and post-graduate) in the country. Under the able leadership of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, the Government of India set up the University Education Commission (UEC) under the chairmanship of Dr. S. Radhakrishnan in 1948. The UEC discussed all aspects of university education, and based on its recommendation, the University Grants Commission (UGC) was set up in 1953 for the coordination of development and maintenance of standards in higher education. UGC became a statutory organization by the act of parliament in 1956. Since then, UGC has been effectively contributing to the Indian higher education system, framing appropriate policies needed to reform and revamp the higher education system. The Nehruvian Period (1947-1964) was more focused on large-scale industrialization which thereby gave impetus to growth of higher technical institutions, but with Indira Gandhi taking over in 1964, the focus shifted to poverty and rural issues and the same tone is seen to be reflected in education as well. Set up in 1964, under the chairmanship of D.S. Kothari, the Education Commission (Kothari Commission) submitted its report in 1966 which set in motion the National Policy on Education (NPE) in 1968, still considered to be a landmark event in the history of India. The NPE became the basis of reforms that helped strengthen higher education system in India. Another important development that followed was the 42 Amendment to the Constitution, (as a part of the Centralization Agenda of Indira Gandhi during internal Emergency) which made Education a concurrent subject in Indian Constitution, that is, now education became a joint responsibility of the central and the state governments, while earlier it was solely in the hands of the state governments.

As may be noticed above, the shift in focus from agriculture to manufacturing in the Second Plan led to a parallel shift in emphasis from elementary education to higher and higher technical education. This trend continued for quite some time, till the mid-1980s when the bias against school education was recognized. Thus came the watershed year 1986, when PM Rajiv Gandhi-led Government of India decided to launch long pending revision of the 1968 National Policy on Education in order to prepare India to face challenges of the 21st century.

**The period since 1986 till 2015**

The National Policy on Higher Education (1986) translated the vision of Radhakrishnan Commission and Kothari Commission in five main goals on higher education, which include Greater Access, Equal Access (or Equity), Quality and Excellence, Relevance and Value Based Education (Kuppusamy, S, 2009). The NPE of 1986 revamped the higher education system by its recommendations of expansion of Higher Educational Institutions (HEIs), development of...
自主大学，改革课程，提高研究质量，培训教师，改善协调工作，国家和州教育机构，加强机构间的流动性。1992年，政策由Janardhana Reddy委员会制定，指导国家高等教育发展，通过不同措施，确保公平性。

该政策包括了课程和计划，旨在扩大入学能力。在早期，印度高等教育机构数量很少，但到2011年，私立机构数量增加到90家，到2019年达到了261家。同时，私人机构在1980年代初期开始发展，而政府也开始大力发展高等教育，特别是在偏远地区。

最近的高等教育进展

在2014年的新政府上台后，政府采取了一些突破性的措施来提高高等教育质量。在制定政策时，新的政府与所有利益相关者进行了多层次咨询过程，从而形成政策初稿。

政府已着手实施新的HEIs，包括两个理工学院（一个在Jammu & Kashmir，另一个在Andhra Pradesh），两个IITs（一个在Karnataka，另一个由印度矿业学院，Dhanbad升级），两个新国立制药教育研究学院，以及两个新AIIMS。政府还强调了降低地区性不平等，以及提高教师素质。

Global Initiative of Academic Network (GIAN) 是由政府发起的一个项目，旨在邀请来自世界各地的知名学术机构参与，以提升印度高等教育水平。
by the Government of India and also the State governments to sustain this richness in higher education in the country. The period since 1947 to 1986 was a period of massive improvement in higher education. 1986 onwards, for quite a long period there was a slump in the progress in higher education, though this period experienced massive privatization in the field of higher education in India. But before the pendulum could swing too far, higher education has again become one of the most important agenda for the Government of India, which is now actively involved in bringing about colossal transformation of the system through effective reforms, and the New Education Policy would hopefully be successful in this attempt.

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