Indian Higher Education System: Hurdles Leading to the Downfall of the World's Oldest and Largest Higher Education Model

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The third largest education system in the world, in terms of enrolment, and the largest by total number of academic institutions, 733 as of the 5th of September 2015 (UGC, 2015b), the Indian higher education sector has experienced a revolutionary growth in the past two decades. A report released by Deloitte (2014), a UK based private company, in congruent with Ministry of Human Resources and Development, Government of India, and Confederation of Indian Industries, indicates that in the financial year of 2014 the size of this market was estimated to be about $62.34 billion USD. Though the statistics show a bright future, in reality, the Indian education system is silently fighting the sag. The Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) of India is 19% (AISE, 2014) which is way below than the global average of 26%. As released by Press Trust of India and CNN's iReport (SunainaRoy, 2014), Government has decided to take steps to increase the GER up to 30% by 2020 which requires about a $200 billion USD investment, but right now India only spends 0.5% of GDP in public education sector and 2% in the private sector (Clifford et al., 2013). In spite of India's recent move to encourage Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), the education sector attracted an insignificant amount of investments accounting to 0.42% of the total FDI (Deloitte, 2014). If the rate at which the capacity in higher education has been developed by the government is any indicator, we will fall short of the target by a very large measure.

The Critical Infrastructure of Indian Education System

Access to education in India is broken into different subgroups. India has approximately 60% Public and 40% Private academic institutions, they cluster into small groups and each cluster follows a different metric. *In priori* to joining higher education, students follow different K-12 education models affecting the equality in standards. Adding to this, India's diverse culture requires a state of imbalance in this equality through medium of Instruction and affirmative action policies based on *caste* reservation to target people from less advantaged background. But findings by a study report (Clifford et al., 2013) contradict the affirmative action against the common arguments like it is necessary to improve the lives of lower caste people. The report states that it is only relevant for richer lower-caste members, or that those who are admitted are too unprepared to benefit from the education. Such benefits, however, come at a cost. AISHE (2014) report states that, the pupil teacher ratio (PTR) is 25:1 in colleges and universities; however, in my personal experience, I have studied through an Indian education model for about 22 years which always had a PTR of 60:1. Privatization of universities has raised the cost to access education; as reported by The GII Index (Forbes, 2014) few universities demand up to $15,000 USD as a onetime donation (often without a receipt) even before the admission is confirmed. Reserve Bank of India sources report that the education loan has jumped from 29.87 billion INR in 2003 to 484.16 billion INR in 2012, yet only covering 3% of the students in India. Government subsidies up to 80% of the tuition fee to public universities such as Indian Institute of Technology's and Indian Institute of Management's, the top universities in India. A news report by British Broadcasting Corporation found out the fact that, students who aim to get into one of these universities have a backup university as one the Ivy League universities; however, on the contrary these top Indian universities seldom make into world's top 100 list. Adding to the poor infrastructure in education system, lack of competitive employment system in India has forced more than 40% of these IIT graduates to settle abroad, which questions the return on investments of education subsidies for these universities and the country.

Adding to the above, obsolete curriculum (British Council, 2014), stereotypes present in the society that forces students to opt for engineering education, reported corruption in educational institutions (Jain, Kusum, & Shelly, 2013), fake universities (UGC, 2015a), research and developments, brain drain, and other act as a string in pulling down the world's oldest and once powerful education model . In my opinion, Education reformation is the much need of the hour for India. Before revising the next five year plan in 2017, the Ministry of higher education of India should consider implementing an advisory committee to extensively research on necessary changes and also should pass the pending education bills.

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