

Structure and Organisation of Higher Education in India : A Macro-Perspective

*Dr. Naveen Ranjan Ravi**

ABSTRACT

Higher education in India is a public funded activity. In the present paper an attempt has been made, to give you an overall idea of the structure and organization of higher education in India. A lot of pressure has been exerted on the higher education system in India at two levels. First, to accommodate the increasing numbers of student population and, secondly, to maintain the quality of education imparted through the system. These two aspects are always linked with the effective and efficient management system. There are certain ministries and agencies which are concerned with higher education i.e., human resource development, agriculture, health, law, etc., and agencies like: UGC, CSIR, ICSSR, ICHR, ICAR and ICMR. The above mentioned organizational structure is closely associated with the financing pattern available in higher education. The sources of income for higher education are generally based on the grants by the federal and state governments, student fees, endowments, donations, etc. The Union and state governments are the major contributors to the funding of higher education

Key words: *Higher Education, Institutional structures, Management*

Introduction

The term “Higher Education”, in India, refers to post-secondary (post-plus two) or tertiary level education. All institutions imparting instruction leading to a university degree or an equivalent, may be termed as institutions of higher education. The expansion of the system normally refers to one, or a combination, of the following:

- (i) an increase in the number of institutions;
- (ii) a growth in student enrolment;
- (iii) an increase in the number of teaching and non-teaching staff;
- (iv) the diversified structure in terms of courses, institutional structures and management styles;
- (v) an enhancement of expenditure on the operation and development of the system.

Higher education in India is a gigantic enterprise, employing a large number of personnel, incurring an annual expenditure of millions of rupees and teaching a large body of students. The

* Principal, Millat Teachers' Training College, Madhubani (Bihar)

Indian higher education system though vast in absolute terms caters to only about 70 percent of the population in the age group of 18-23 years. The management of such a big system presents a major challenge to education administrators. The pattern and style of management are, in a major way, determined by the structure and organization of higher education in India.

Higher Education Structure and Institutions

Higher education in India is primarily a public funded activity. However, its structure and organization are complex and varied. There are different agencies and departments involved in its operation. The agencies are mainly the Ministries and the Federal and State levels, autonomous organizations set up by the Ministries and the private organizations or trusts. There are also Ministries, other than those responsible for education, which are involved in higher education in India. Simply put the Indian higher education system is both vast and complex.

1. Structure of higher education: In the Indian system, higher education includes the education imparted after the 10+2 stage – ten years of primary and secondary education followed by two years of higher secondary education. The first degree, the Bachelor's degree, is obtained after three years study in the case of liberal arts, and four years in the case of most professional degrees (four and half in case of two years duration.) The research degrees (M. Phil. and Ph.D.) take variable time depending upon the individual student. The post graduate degree programme involves two years of study after first degree. The minimum period of an M. Phil. degree is one and half year and Ph.D. a further two years. The highest degrees are D.Litt. and D.Sc. are awarded after the Ph.D. degree for original contributions of the highest order.

2. The Universities: The university-level institutions in the Indian higher education system are basically of three types:

- (i) **Conventional University** are tertiary-level institutions that are established through Act of Parliament or State Legislatures. They are almost entirely funded by Governments. The universities that are established by Acts of Parliament are funded by the Central Government and are commonly referred to as Central Universities. Examples of central universities are Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh; Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi; University of Delhi, Delhi and Jawaharlal Nehru University, Delhi.
 - (ii) **Deemed Universities** are institutions that are deemed-to-be-universities for the purposes of the University Grants Commission Act, 1956. The Deemed University status is conferred by the Central Government, on the advice of the University Grants Commission for work of high quality in specialized academic fields. Examples are the Manipal Academy of Higher Education, Manipal and Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai.
 - (iii) **Institutions of National Importance** are institutions established, or so designated, by Acts of Parliament that undertake teaching and research in areas that are critical to national development. Examples are the Seven Indian Institutes of Technology, and Sree Chitra Tirunal Institute for Medical Sciences and Technology, Trivandrum.
- 3. Colleges:** The bulk of undergraduate teaching is done in colleges. These are of two types – the **constituent** colleges and the **affiliated** colleges.
- (i) **Constituent Colleges**, also known as Conducted Colleges, are those that are established and managed by the University.

- (ii) Affiliated Colleges are those that are set-up and managed, outside the university campus, either by the government or by educational trusts.

Ministries and Agencies in Higher Education

It is worth mentioning that higher education in India is not the exclusive responsibility of the Ministry of Education. There are many other ministries and agencies directly involved in higher education.

(i) Ministry of Human Resource Development: The Department of Secondary and Higher Education of the Union Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) is the major agency concerned with higher education. The Ministry operates normally through the UGC. The UGC is a quasi-independent body set up to discharge the responsibility of coordinating and maintaining standards in the fields of higher education.

(ii) Ministry of Agriculture: The ministry of Agriculture has assumed responsibility of the agricultural education in India. All the Agricultural Universities function under this ministry. In agricultural education, the Ministry operates through the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR). The agricultural universities are established by the Ministry, in co-operation with the state governments.

(iii) Ministry of Health: The Ministry of Health looks after medical education. The Medical Council of India (MCI) and the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) assist the Ministry in the planning and development of medical education. The MCI determines the minimum standards of medical education necessary for granting medical degrees.

(iv) Ministry of Law: The legal education is under the Ministry of Law. The Bar Council of India (BCI) is concerned with legal studies in India. Generally BCI is concerned with the first degree in law, while the post-graduate and research studies are under universities, and hence these come under the purview of the UGC.

(v) Specialised agencies for promotion of research: A number of bodies have been set up outside the framework of the university system to direct and support research. The Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), under the Department of Science and Technology, is a planning and coordinating body operating through a chain of national laboratories and institutions. The Council undertakes and supports pure and applied research, provides junior and senior fellowships, funds research projects and maintains a record of scientific and technical personnel. Similar functions are performed by Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR) in the field of Social Science; Indian Council of Historical Research (ICHR) in the field of historical studies; Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) in the area of space research, etc. Among the above agencies, ICSSR has a few branches at the regional level also.

University Programmes and Schedule

1. Academic year: In India the academic year usually begins in June or July and ends in March or April. Institutions located in mountainous areas (about one or two per cent of the total) follow a different schedule, beginning in March and going on to December. In most universities, which follow an annual examination pattern, the academic year is divided into three terms.

2. Medium of instruction: In case of the professional courses, and subjects in Science, the medium of instruction is almost exclusively English. In the Arts, Humanities, Social Sciences and Commerce faculties it is both English and the regional language. At the postgraduate level instructions are usually in English and the regional language.

3. Educational programmes: The educational programmes generally involve study of a fixed number of course with little flexibility, at least at Bachelor's level. In the case of liberal education a student usually takes four subjects in the first year, three in the second, and one (Honours degree) or three (General or pass degree) in the third. Within the Science programme it is usually not permissible to take Mathematics and physics with Botany or Zoology. The professional courses (except Medicine) follow the semester pattern.

4. Admission: For securing admission to undergraduate programmes in universities a student needs to have passed a senior secondary school examination taken after twelve years of schooling. Adult learners who have not passed these examinations can obtain admission to programmes of open universities after passing an entrance examination. Admission to non-professional colleges is usually not difficult, except in the case of some selected colleges in metropolitan towns where there is strong competition. At the postgraduate level, admission is restricted and only the above-average students can hope to get admission. Admission to M. Phil. Courses, which were started in the 70s, as pre-Ph. D programme, is competitive. Students are admitted to Ph. D. courses on satisfying their supervisors as regards to their competence and genuine interest in research.

Financing Higher Education in India

The pattern of financing higher education closely follows its organizational structure elaborated in the previous sections. The financial support to a university is provided through different sources and channels.

1. Source of Funding: A general trend that seems to have emerged over the years is the decline of income of universities from all sources other than the Government. At present, more than three-fourths of the total income of the universities comes from the governmental sources. The income of a university in India, is derived from the following sources:

- (i) Grants from the Central Government;
- (ii) Grants from the State Governments;
- (iii) Contributions from students' fees;
- (iv) Endowments, donations, etc;
- (v) Financial support from different specialized agencies

2. Channels of funding: The development of university education in India is the joint responsibility of the Central Government and the State Governments. The central universities, deemed-to-be universities are largely funded by the federal government and the funds are channeled through the UGC. The responsibility for maintenance of State universities lies with the State governments. However, they get grants from the Central government channeled through specialized bodies like the UGC in the area of general higher education, The ICAR in the area of agricultural education, the ICMR in the area of medical education, and so on,

Functions of the Commission

The union government attempts to fulfill its constitutional obligation for higher education mainly through the UGC. The UGC takes care of the general higher education in Arts, Science, Commerce and professional education provided in the faculties of the universities. Its functions in general, are confined to promotion, coordination, determination and maintenance of the standards of higher education. The functions of the commission can be stated briefly as follows:

- (i) to assess the financial needs of the universities;
- (ii) to allocate various forms of funds through grants;
- (iii) to advise any authority on the establishment of a new university or the expansion of existing one. However, it may be noted in this context that there are instances where the Commission is not consulted while establishing the universities at the State level. A new Act has been framed in this regard. In such a case the UGC is prevented from providing assistance to the university for a specified period;
- (iv) to collect and disseminate information on all matters pertaining to university education in India;
- (v) to decide on standards and recommend measures necessary to improve university education in India.

Quality Assurance

The responsibility of quality assurance in higher education lies with the University Grants Commission and Statutory Councils like the All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE). The UGC established in 1994 the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) that undertakes institutional evaluation of universities and colleges. The Distance Education Council, Indira Gandhi National Open University (DEC-IGNOU) has the responsibility of monitoring quality in distance education programme.

Administration of Higher Education at the State Level

1. Administrative structure at the State Level: There is no uniform pattern of administration of higher education at the State level in India. The administrative structure also varies among States. Usually there are three different structures dealing with educational administration at the State level. They are:

- (i) The Secretariat;
- (ii) The Directorate;
- (iii) The Inspectorate

2. Administrative structure at the university level: Universities in India are autonomous institutions. They have their own administrative structures and management styles. The President of India is the Visitor of all Central Universities, except the Vishwa Bharati, where the Prime Minister is the Visitor. In case of State universities, the Governor of the respective State is the Chancellor. Both the Visitor and the Chancellor, normally do not have any administrative role in the day-to-day functioning of the University. The Vice-Chancellor is the most important functionary who is the chief executive and academic authority of a university.

Summary and Conclusion

A lot of pressure has been exerted on the higher education system in India at two levels. First, to accommodate the increasing numbers of student population and, secondly, to maintain the quality of education imparted through the system. These two aspects are always linked with effective and efficient management system. There are certain ministries and agencies which are concerned with higher education. These include ministries like human resource development, agriculture, health, law, etc., and agencies such as – UGC, CSIR, ICSSR, ICHR, ICAR and ICMR. The above mentioned organizational structure is closely associated with the financing

pattern available in higher education. The sources of income for higher education are generally based on the grants by the federal and state governments, student fees, endowments, donations, etc. Over the years, higher education, other than the government support for higher education has been declined. The Union and state governments are the major contributors to the funding of higher education. These funds are channelized to the institution of higher learning in the form of grants like maintenance/block grants, non-recurring grants, developmental grants etc. In this context, the UGC has an important role to play. Hence, we have highlighted certain aspects of the administrative structure of the higher education system at the state and university levels.

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