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Challenges in Higher Education in India in the 21st Century: A Detailed Analysis

Kalpana Singh

Senior Research Fellow, Department of Sociology, D.B.S. P.G. College, Kanpur, Uttar Pradesh (India) E-mail:<kalpana.sengar10@gmail.com>

Abstract

Higher education is essential for research, education, and career opportunities, contributing to the development of the nation by providing significant hours into policy, research, scientific discoveries, inventions, etc. However, there are many challenges in its implementation, including the gap between developed and developing nations, limitations in infrastructure, and a lack of upgraded skills required for the new digital era of education. NEP 2020 aims to address some of these issues, but it must be implemented cautiously to benefit all sections of society. This paper analyses the problems in higher education and proposes possible ways forward towards its solution.

Keywords

NEP 2020, Distance learning, ICT, Research, Challenges, Colleges.

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Ph. : 0121-2763765, +91-9997771669, +91-9219658788

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1. Introduction

In the present society and upcoming years, power will be defined by the knowledge possessed by the citizens. Knowledge is power and this is the current reality. We are living in the information age, where it is not just important to have access to information, but it is also crucial to know how to use it for better opportunities, research, employment, etc. India holds the third position in terms of the number of students after China and the United States of America. However, there is a vast gap between the first and third positions when it comes to higher education. The gross enrolment ratio (GER) is 88.2 for the USA, 70.3 for Germany, 51.3 for Brazil, 49.1 for China, and for India, it is low at 26.3, whereas the global average is 29.0. The goal of NEP 2020 is to attain a GER of 50.0 by 2030. Quality of education and the kind of employment opportunities it creates are also crucial factors to consider, and not just enrolment numbers. In the last 75 years of independence, India has covered many milestones in education. The literacy rate, which was just 16 per cent, has risen to 74.04 per cent in the 2011 census, which is a remarkable achievement, given the situation and limitations India has with the largest population in the world and scanty resources. Pedestal towards higher education is the preceding primary, secondary, and higher secondary education, but collectively, they are good in quantity but not quality. The GER in higher secondary is 57.6 per cent in 2021-22, which shows that half of the students coming out of school get enrolled in higher education institutes. With the facility of online education and distance learning, it has been democratized at the very last strata of society. According to UGC, the total number of universities is 1074, and those under 12(B) are 398. Also, the total number of colleges is nearly 51,649. So, the problem is not about expanding more educational institutes but accommodating more students who can complete their higher secondary level of education. Major challenges facing higher education are access and equity to

different strata of society, quality of education being imparted at different institutes, finances to improve infrastructure for successful implementation of NEP 2020, lack of regular faculty and a slow and irregular recruitment process, poor employability among the mass of students with graduate degrees, and lack of good quality research and the problem of plagiarism in India.

2. Methodology

In writing this research paper data is collected from both primary and secondary sources. For primary sources, 104 students were contacted from five degree colleges located in the Kanpur Urban district and 45 students were contacted from three degree colleges located in the Kanpur Dehat district of Uttar Pradesh. The focus group discussion (FGD) method was used to collect data. Also, twelve faculty members were contacted to throw light upon the given issue, and their viewpoints were recorded. For secondary data various government reports, international organization reports, magazines, websites, journals, newspapers etc were used to collect data. The research design was descriptive and exploratory.

3. Challenges for Students in Higher Education

3·1 Socio-Economic Background and Culture of Excellence

The background of students that also including their parents plays a vital role in their academic performances and future achievements. Students from poor cultural capital face challenges in every sphere of their lives, and education is the top area. French Sociologist Pierre Bourdieu has given three forms of capital namely, Economic, Social and Cultural capital. Together they combine to differentiate between the life chances and opportunities coming for students in life. After completing higher secondary education students decide their branch of study. Earlier it was like water-tight compartments, the absolute division between different streams, one has to choose. But NEP 2020 has made education very flexible and fluid in that one can choose subjects of his or her interest. But while choosing one has to decide which subject will give him the best employment opportunity in future. Here comes the deciding role of all the three capitals mentioned above. For an individual, their primary group have a lifetime impact on them. And primary group as given by Charles Horton Cooley, comprises family, friends and neighbours. Though in

today's digital era, one can think of huge social networking sites as a way of connection, but is it neutral in its formation or stratified as already seen in society?

The education system in our country tends to favour students from well-off families, rather than those who are first-generation learners. This is because the system is geared towards elite groups, which is similar to the concept of 'circulation of elites' as described by Vilfredo Pareto. People often oppose the privatization of education, citing the inability of underprivileged students to afford it. However, the government schools that cater to such students should be held accountable for the quality of education they provide. Parents of students from lower-income backgrounds are often unable to participate in school-related activities due to their work schedules. Interestingly, even though government teachers' salaries are higher and associated perks, than their private counterparts, their children still tend to opt for private schools. This is because the education system reinforces social segregation.

Table-1 : Characteristics of the Respondents

S. No.	Social Variables	Male	Female
	Education (Student Enrolled)		
1.	M.A.	11	24
2.	M.Sc.	1	-
3.	M.Com.	-	-
4.	B.A.	30	35
5.	B.Sc.	17	20
6.	B.Com.	7	4
	Total	**66**	**83**
		(149)	
	Education (Parents)	**No. of Respondents**	
1.	10th pass	12	
2.	12th pass	73	
3.	Graduation	22	
4.	Post-Graduation	35	
5.	Doctorate	7	
	Total	**149**	

	Financial Status (Family)	**No. of Respondents**
1.	Below Poverty Line	35
2.	Lower Middle Class	31
3.	Middle Class	78
4.	Upper Middle Class	5
5.	Wealthy	-
	Total	149
	Caste Category	**No. of Respondents**
1.	General	73
2.	OBC	35
3.	SC/ST	24
4.	Others	17
	Total	**149**

3·2 Dilemma of Admission

The majority of the students responded that what is being taught in college lectures is not the same as what they are preparing in any tuition or coaching classes outside the premises of colleges. Recently many colleges and universities and colleges have opened competitive exam preparation classes within the premises of higher education institutes, but the question is then what one student will gain from class lectures. 95 per cent of the respondents (141 - 142) go out and take private coaching classes to prepare for competition. With a huge amount of fees being charged, questions the relevancy of curriculum towards making students ready for the dreams they have chosen for themselves. Among the respondents, 98 per cent (146) admitted that admission to graduation is mainly due to the reason that many of the competitive exams demand it as the minimum eligibility to sit in the exam. Because respondents were not selected from students from STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Medical) backgrounds, it is a general perception that students taking admission to regular undergraduate and postgraduate courses merely do this to obtain a valid certificate of eligibility. This 98 per cent was not exclusive, it included those preparing for exams taking even higher secondary and even high school as the minimum eligibility. But they choose to continue higher education, in the absence of employment, other working opportunities or just in case, among the respondents, not a

single answer I found about the purpose of higher research or subjects were chosen very purposively. NEP 2020 wish to develop research aptitude from the very first year of the undergraduate course. Promoting them to write research papers and articles, and making them understand research methodology in the earlier phase seems very challenging for students from comparatively poor academics and average institutions. In the absence of proper infrastructure, tasks become more challenging. This is a major concern and well addressed in NEP 2020. But the question is again the same whether the concern of students from less accredited colleges and universities was resolved or not.

3·3 Multiple Gates for Exit and Discontinuation

GER of India is significantly low, and policy has given them multiple exits and entrances, greater fear is about going out of higher education, especially in the case of female students. Among the respondents, 75 per cent (27) of respondents in postgraduates and 36 per cent of female respondents in undergraduate (22) were married. Among them, female experiences of continuing education were significantly different from their male counterparts. Female's multiple responsibilities left them with little or no time for self-study, and the question of going for private tuition was completely out of the question. Cent per cent of students was preparing for some kind of government exam. For females's role of the student should well align with other roles of the family to continue education. 78 per cent of respondents (116) joined offline private tuitions for competitive preparation and the rest (33) have joined online classes (readily available after the pandemic and associated lockdown period). For female respondents and working students distance learning from reputed open universities was the secondary choice after college. Among them, IGNOU (Indira Gandhi National Open University) and UPRTOU (Uttar Pradesh Rajashri Tandon Open University) were well known. Due to some technical glitches and a lack of interpersonal communication and connections, students generally opt for physical colleges. Giving gates of exit as choices is good for resourceful students. For students, from comparatively less privileged backgrounds, once they leave the system it's worrisome whether they will come back to the system to continue their education or leave it forever. All respondents were today in the transition phase of NEP 2020.

3·4 Government Job vs Private Job and Skill Development

All the respondents in the sample (149) have given their first preference for a government job. In India the charm of government jobs is unquestionable. The private sector even after 75 years of independence, is not able to attract a large number of youths coming out of colleges. There could be several reasons, like a lack of required skills for the private sector for which the government of India runs several skill development programs and a dedicated department for this specific purpose only. Also, much of the private job is unorganized and depends largely on the will of the employer without stability and other social benefits. With the shrinking size of government jobs and increasing private market, students need more vocational courses suitable to their capacities and local requirements. 89 per per cent of female respondents (74) wanted to job near to their residence, same city. With this, they can manage both spheres of life, private and public smoothly. Similarly, 95 per cent of the male respondents (63) wanted a job in place of their residence, though they agreed to go to another place for work.

Skill development is the major issue, the Indian higher education system is facing today. Around 13 million students enter the workforce each year after completing their graduation. But unfortunately, employability is hardly above fifty per cent. Many leading companies today employ people based on their skills not just academic degrees. For example : Google, Starbucks, IBM etc. Most importantly this data is about students coming from mostly central universities, IITs, IIMs etc which are governed and funded by Governments. There are some serious concerns regarding educational institutions that have low grades or have not yet been assessed by NAAC. This includes self-financed colleges that are facing issues like low admissions, and student absenteeism, and are still relying on traditional methods of teaching. Such colleges have now become mere degree or marksheet distributing centres. Hence, it might be more prudent to consider either closing or privatizing such institutes. We need to put strict parameters on outcomes of many educational institutes based on student performance, employability percentage, skill development, minimum administration and maximum student involvement in day-to-day activities of colleges. This is the observation based on colleges of urban district. Now turning to three colleges present in rural areas, remote areas'

condition is even worse. Except for National festivals, hardly any students are present on campuses unless made mandatory due to projects, assignments, semester exams etc.

3·5 Access to Digital tools and Online Education

Among the respondents, cent per cent (149) own personal mobile, and 89 per cent of respondents (133) have internet data plans. 8 per cent of respondents (12) own personal laptops or tablets, and 13 per cent of respondents (19) have access to a desktop regularly. Poor internet connectivity was a major issue with students living in remote areas or rural areas (45). There exists a clear digital divide among students coming from different strata of society. Along with it 45 students combined both from urban and rural locations enrolled in some online courses provided by MOOCs, SWAYAM, and the COURSERA platform and earned certificates after taking exams.

After the lockdown with the advent of mass online education students has great access to online content, pdf of books by foreign writers, and online programs offered by leading universities declared by THE (Times Higher Education) ranking. Then what will be the requirement of expenses made on universities/colleges with zero outcomes in terms of the universal standard parameters and what is the alternative to make them more efficient?

United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) declared July 15, 2014, as World Youth Skills Day. The day marked "the strategic importance of equipping young people with skills for employment, decent work and entrepreneurship".

"Young people are drivers of change and must be fully engaged in decisions affecting their future. Guided by the United Nations Youth 2030 strategy, I urge everyone to act for youth skills development as a priority, at the Summit and beyond." - UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres. Post-pandemic we just do not require a skillful workforce but a digitally trained skillful workforce. Personality development is the most often neglected area in our curriculum, and its impact is huge on the entire life of a person. All dimensions, opportunities, challenges and their successful completion demands a stable, confident personality. Unfortunately, we find counselling centres full of youth in the age of productivity treating themselves or say training themselves to be suitable for the job. These aspects should be part of the curriculum in the educational years itself, which helps to build a strong personality.

Education is relevant only if it can serve the needs of a changing society. We have to remove this never-ending vicious circle of examination-rote learning- the highest scorecards.

4. Challenges for Faculties in Higher Education

This section explores the viewpoint of faculties from eminent colleges of two districts. There is no ready-made recipe for world-class universities. We need to analyze the working pattern of top-ranking universities. For example, universities like Harvard University, Stanford University, and Wharton University emphasize more Case Studies, Experiential, Project-Based and problem-solving learning, Collaborative learning and less emphasis on Lecture-Based learning. More involvement of students in managing decision-making parts in universities. Learning from successful universities, and implementing them is the right way towards our dream of world-class universities.

"If we teach today's student as we taught yesterday's, we rob them of tomorrow." ***- John Dewey, 1915***

Cognitive learning is a 6-Level Hierarchy (Bloom's Taxonomy): Remember - Understand - Apply - Analyze - Evaluate - Create. In higher education institutes students should come to accomplish the final step of Bloom's Taxonomy which is Create, but unfortunately, these 6 levels are played differently by students coming from different sections of society.

4·1 Admission Process

Day by day admission cut off for different colleges, is getting lower than ever before. And under the pressure of low admission and filling up of seats, a first come first admission process is even applied. Due to this, students enter college with minimal education. An ample amount of time gets consumed to clear the basics of any subject chosen. The latest changes in admission procedure due to NEP 2020 seem to be a little complicated for students because they have to make numerous choices. Earlier it was a clear combination and divisions but not functionally very fruitful to all students. NEP 2020 came up with structural changes and tried to make students skillful right in their graduation years and beyond. But this transition will take time to get accommodated and used to such choices in advance.

Today a greater number of exams are taking objective patterns it's harmful to decide merit based solely on MCQ kind of exam. This type

of exam pattern has its limitations like- not being able to measure complex problem-solving skills, depth of knowledge, creative logical and analytical skills, and effective writing/oral skills. A blend of both objective and subjective patterns is a must. The recently introduced entrance exam for top HEIs in India is the CUET exam which ignores the twelve years of educational achievements, and it will later develop giving less importance to school achievement if ultimately getting admission to any prestigious college depends upon objective questions only. This will again pull down students towards Bloom's taxonomy's first level of remembering.

4·2 Online Training Opportunities

We need to emphasize the quality of education. In this process, ICT can play a vital role. Incorporating it strategically into the higher education system can have a transforming effect. As we can already see many MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses) run online and give Personalized learning which customizes learning for each learner's strengths, needs, skills and interests. Certificates and credit score achieved by this is acceptable in the industry. This is an opportunity for both teachers and students to avail this opportunity, learn new skills and upgrade the efficiency of the teaching-learning process. 4 faculties were engaged in the development of online courses. All 12 faculties have completed capacity building programs (CBP) one or more and faculty development programs (FDP) to upgrade mainly in ICT in the preceding 8 months.

21st century skills can be best described as the 4C's : Critical thinking, Creativity, Collaboration, and Communication. For this our mentors and teachers have to be the lighthouse of students, visionaries of the future, well-trained and updated to direct students in the right and required direction, and most importantly with human values, and empathy.

4·3 Research Work and Innovation in Higher Education

Coming to research publications (qualitative) our performance is poor. Most of the research papers were published merely to complete some mandatory rules attached to the position, getting a degree, and increasing the API (Academic Performance Indicator) score that hardly caters to the needs of contemporary society. Those works are hardly of any use in the market or industry. The problem of plagiarism is also severe. Though we have today many tools to detect

plagiarism percentage, and strict punishment for it, there are several ways to avoid it. The fundamental reason behind all these difficulties is the lack of research aptitude among students. Original work based on primary data is not published in abundance. Science and Commerce streams are far ahead of the Humanities stream in terms of original research publications of high market value.

Swami Vivekanand "What the Nation wants is pluck and scientific genius. We want great spirit, tremendous energy, and boundless enthusiasm. A Nation is advanced in proportion as education and intelligence spread among the masses." The question is why research is so important for any institution or country. When a student passes intermediate (10+2), then enters higher education institutes with an entirely different atmosphere as compared to all those 15 years one spends in school starting from Play Group (PG). The objective of Higher education is to train young minds to think freely, observe properly and research to conclusions. For this reason, scientific aptitude is required. According to NEP 2020, research work is more emphasized starting in the graduation period itself. Research skill contributes towards teachers' better discernment, builds credibility, and ignites the mind towards the new phenomenon. It helps to identify problems and tries to find solutions scientifically irrespective of discipline. Even teachers in higher education are highly benefitted by research works.

4·4 Shortage of Faculties

Central universities, State universities, colleges and all higher education institutes, are facing an immense shortage of faculties. There are several factors affecting this situation including financial constraints, geographically remote locations of institutes, admissions are increasing and the ideal ratio is not maintained. UGC guidelines talk about a 1:30 teacher-student ratio but unfortunately, it has surpassed 1:100 or even 1:150. It left existing faculties overburdened, increasing their working hours. Guest faculties and ad-hoc faculties are not supposed to work at their cent per cent capacity with many constraining conditions, and the most one is the uncertainty they carry all the time of their opportunity.

With new vocational courses added and made mandatory with an internship in the final year from the associated college of the student itself, more faculties will be required. And for this regular

recruitment drives need to be held. Respondents among the faculties experienced this sudden change brought about by NEP 2020 and associated consequences left them exhausted by the end of the semester. Regularization of the semester system is another major challenge. The entire semester ended in a rush, with no face-to-face interaction with students. Projects are being submitted by students without actual research, it is just online surfing and the file is ready, but they are also new to this changing environment and pattern of higher education. Making them understand the basics of research in the initial years is challenging.

To revolutionize higher educational institutes, we need 3 pillars that are :

1. Diversification (Multidisciplinary Institutes as per the needs of society).
2. Massification (Increasing GER in higher education in the next 30 years).
3. Research (Gaining new knowledge in any field for society).

Existing problems in HEIs are diverse :

- The first and fundamental problem lies in students taking admissions in HEIs without any interest or orientation towards research.
- Lack of training in research methodologies both among students and faculties.
- Central universities are still better, but the situation of state universities is far worse, in terms of funds, innovation, international exposure of students, and on-field training of students in research.
- Mass of the colleges have the same syllabus, promoting rote learning, the objectives of students are to gain marks and pass and have a degree.
- A plethora of students coming out of college are mostly unemployable in industries.
- In graduation years most students are preparing for various government services. So, the fundamental objective of establishing HEIs is still a distant dream.
- Dream is of an innovation-driven society, but young minds are wasting their productive years for a long period inside four walls and memorizing facts.

- Lack of highly qualified faculties. Mostly teachers working on a non-permanent ad hoc basis, guest faculty with minimum remuneration and unhealthy and uncertain atmosphere. (Not equal pay for equal work)
- And in the contemporary scenario we see numerous UGC regulations on the appointment of faculties with minimum eligibility instead of some high standards. This is a serious problem because for faculty to impart wider knowledge to the student they are first well educated and informed about their subjects.
- Today the focus is on securing a government job not transforming it. Once it is achieved cosmetic processes keep on going for years without much productivity and enthusiasm.

Ways for Innovation in HEIs can be flipped classrooms, blended learning, E-content, online certificate courses, social networking sites for increasing collaborations with like-minded people etc. Better faculty recruitment procedure to ensure well-qualified faculty with enthusiasm towards teaching, well lecture delivery and other activities essential in HEIs. Along with it, a rigorous drive towards research training is essential.

Innovation is the key ingredient that we are missing in our HEIs. Innovation as defined by Merriam-Webster is "a new idea, method, or device, novelty, the introduction of something new, innovational".

India was ranked 40th position out of 132 in the Global Innovation Index (GII) 2022 rankings released by the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO). The theme of GII 2022 was "What is the future of innovation-driven growth?". India has covered a long way from 80th rank in 2015 to 40th in 2022.

Indicators used for ranking countries were :

"Institutions, Human capital and Research, Infrastructure, Market sophistication, knowledge and technology outputs and create outputs".

Ten Initiatives by UGC for quality improvement are :

1. Induction Programme for Students,
2. Learning Outcome-Based curriculum framework (LOCF) - revision of curriculum in regular intervals,
3. Adoption of information and communication technology (ICT) - based learning tools for an effective teaching-learning process,

4. Imparting life skills to students,
5. Social and Industry Connections for every HEI: Every HEI shall adopt at least five villages for the exchange of knowledge and the overall social/economic betterment of the village communities,
6. Evaluation reforms,
7. Tracking of student progress after completion of the course,
8. Faculty Development Programmes,
9. Quality research and the creation of new knowledge and
10. Mentoring of non-accredited institutions, so that every institution can get accreditation by 2022.

There are also numerous scholarships based on merit for students of different categories to provide financial assistance to students for education and research. A multidisciplinary approach as indicated in NEP 2020 is needed today. Especially incorporating technology in education in early years of education, to prepare students for upcoming challenges in future. The world has witnessed various technological revolutions. Today artificial intelligence, robots and most recently CHATGPT pose a threat to the traditional role of employees on various fronts. The problem is that we are witnessing just the reverse of what we dreamt of:

"Today technology-based society instead of society-based technology is a harsh reality."

To survive in this era of the tsunami of information surrounding an individual continuous innovation is essential. The major issue is today people are equating information with knowledge. But this is dangerous, merely having access to mass sources of information is not sufficient to use them and transform them into knowledge, and for that reason, training is required. No field visit, no conversation with respondents, only relying on data published on national and international levels does not always accurately define situations on the ground. Science and innovations have a huge impact on society and similarly, the vice versa is equally true.

5. Education and its Impact on Surroundings

Prime Minister India Honourable Narendra Modi in a speech at the Education Summit at Varanasi organized by UGC (University Grant Commission) on July 7, 2021, said "The fundamental objective behind NEP 2020 is to bring education out from limits of narrow

thought-process and integrate it with thoughts and ideas of the 21st century. We should not only prepare the degree holders but also develop responsible citizens to meet the future challenges."

What is the ultimate goal of education? Being the human species, we consider ourselves at the pinnacle of the process of human evolution, but we should not forget that we are just among other creatures living on Mother Earth. Our skill, knowledge and all the processes involved in development should always be sustainable with other living species on this planet.

A bench of the Supreme Court consisting of Justice B. S. Chauhan and Justice F. M. Ibrahim Kalifulla (2013) said "It is unfortunate that today's education instead of reforming human behaviour in our humble opinion, appears to have failed to achieve its objective. In comparison to earlier times, the literacy level has increased but it did not result in better human value which calls for transformation in the education system. In fact, in the earlier years, though the literacy level was not as high as of today, the human value had its respected place in the society."

NEP 2020 aims at universalization of education from pre-school to secondary level. Minimum education for all was in policy long back. However, emphasizing homogenous education across borders, where developing countries try to imitate developed countries is not the solution for all societies. Geographically dispersed populations with different and yet unique cultural practices on an everyday life basis with different requirements. Urban settlements are different from rural settlements, tribal areas, mountain areas are different from plain areas and plateau areas, similarly clod places are different from hot and humid places etc. divisions and diversities. Today rate of migration is far more rapid, diverse and unevenly distributed as compared to earlier times. Migration for the best opportunity is different from migration out of sustenance requirements. If I address the second type here mass percentage falls under this category. Why we are not able to provide the kind of education and skills required in different settlements? "Local education" should be given space and voice on international platforms, in textbooks catering to the needs of locals. Unfortunately, our education system is trying to colour all diversities into one, which ultimately serves the needs of elites.

Today needs are generated with huge investments in the advertising sector. We need a bottom-up approach in the education

sector too. With the brightest minds coming from every corner of society and getting trained in the best possible way and giving back to their respective societies. The problem with the Indian Education System is that what Lord Macaulay suggested in 1813 in the 19th century based upon which the education framework was established continues after 200 years. At that time perspective and objective of the British government were different but today's scenario has completely changed but the education system remains the same with the 19th century mindset applying some new processes of the 20th century with the advent of information technology but completely ignoring the need of 21st century India. Today we are providing cheap labour to other countries and getting work done, then how it is different from the colonial period.

NEP 2020 addressed all such gaps, to create a new system aligned with the aspirational goals of the 21st century, while building upon India's traditions and value systems. Education must work holistically upon 3 faces of human personality :

1. Fundamental concepts of literacy and numeracy
2. Higher-order cognitive capacity for critical thinking and problem-solving
3. Social, Ethical and Emotional capacities and Dispositions.

Developing a global citizen with an Indian heart and completely aware of the need and responsibilities towards the roots one comes from. Only quantitatively focussing on GER (Gross Enrolment Ratio) increasing which is currently less than 30 per cent and the target is to take this percentage to 50 by 2035. The first reason behind it is higher education is not catering to the needs of people and they find preparing for exams or working part-time or anything else except continuing for higher degrees. The second point is the lack of skill development centres in HEIs. Third is age-old books in libraries, non-functional laboratories in HEIs, the absence of hobby clubs etc. make this aspect unattractive to many students. Funds play a vital role but planned execution of programs is equally important.

6. Conclusion and Discussion

There is a requirement to follow global standards of infrastructure which includes: quality libraries, high-tech classrooms equipped with technology, sports and recreation areas, student discussion spaces, and dining areas, along with visiting related

research areas along with faculties regularly appointed etc. We need to let the students explore regional/local culture and let them interact with local people regularly to come up with more practical plans. The direction of the plan of development should be bottom starting from local and finally global. With massive networking available today students can collaborate at different levels and can gain knowledge by stitching fragments across borders : At the Local -Regional - State - National - International - Global level we need interconnections.

National Digital Library (NDL) provide access to millions of books with just one click of a student on his or her phone. Respecting diversity and including them from all sections and strata of society, listening to their needs at each level by providing them optimum learning environment we can move towards achieving all SDGs (sustainable development goals) 17 together. Faculties require more innovation and to remain ahead of students all the time. Because successful implementation of any reforms in the education sector, even NEP 2020 ultimately resides on the shoulders of powerful faculties and researchers.

7. Future of Higher Education

More and more artificial intelligence will be used in every sector and education is not an exception. From this I can relate the story from Mahabharata of Ekalavya who learned archery with greater excellence without the physical presence of Guru Dron Acharya but only his idol. Similarly, today with great internet connectivity (though a digital divide exists), interconnectedness and access to anywhere anytime, at one's own pace physical presence of students in classes in HEIs (especially for theoretical classes) slowly becoming irrelevant unless made mandatory. The introduction of Digital University e-Vidya by the Government of India is a step towards adapting to the new digital era of education.

Autonomy should also be given to selected institutes qualifying certain criteria because it allows them to set new visions about tomorrow, and mission for today and incorporate values of inclusiveness, participation, quality and openness. It allows institutes to generate funds, international collaborations etc. to upgrade institutions to the next level. It will facilitate competition at all levels compelling us to perform better. And higher education institutes should work towards the development of attitudes of cooperation,

collaboration and interaction among diverse groups of people. Taking into consideration one report published in one of the leading English newspapers about the attitude developed among students studying in top leading colleges/universities of the country. One leading company recruited fifteen employees from different Indian universities in the same office. Three among them were from central universities and the rest were from other state or private universities. One task was allotted to their group in a stipulated time of three months. That task turned out to be a failure. Reason was investigated and it was found that students from different education institutes formed groups within the groups, and maintained separate identities. Those from central universities refuse to work collectively, instead ready to work individually and get results. This problem is not exclusive to any particular country. We need to inculcate community development, and group achievement in youth to prepare them for future challenges well in advance.

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