

Chapter 14

Globalization of Higher Education: An Indian Perspective

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ABSTRACT

India has one of the largest and most complex higher educational systems in the world. Prior to a few decades ago, due to multifarious reasons, India was unable to attract a good number of foreign students in its universities. Keeping this in mind, the Government of India has taken various steps and launched a few ambitious programmes like the Pan-Africa project, UGC-Infonet, and the E-Journals Consortium. All these efforts have contributed to establishing the Indian higher education system as one of the best in the world. Now, Indian universities and other institutes are open to the global market and hope to attract foreign students. The establishment of the distance learning university, Indira Gandhi National Open University, has immensely helped in attracting a large number of international students and it has also brought remarkable changes in the field of self-learning and distance education. This chapter discusses the global shift toward transnational distance learning and India's role in this transition.

INTRODUCTION

Globalization of higher education has brought remarkable changes in cross-border education. Attracting a good number of international students has been fairly a strong base of educational trade

that is growing rapidly around the world. Higher educational trade has already become an important part of the economy in developed countries like the United States, UK, Australia, and Canada. A few of the Asian countries, such as Japan and China, are already putting phenomenal efforts

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into attracting the pool of international students. India is similarly going to great lengths to capture its share of the global higher education market.

The Government of India has been systematically planning to strengthen its academic resources, which were lacking. At the time of independence in 1947, India had 20 universities and 500 colleges. The situation was in such a grim state that the overall literacy rate was merely 18 percent. After independence, the state governments handled the educational system. With the enactment of the 42nd Constitutional Amendment (1976), education became the joint responsibility of the central and the state governments. Presently, the Indian higher educational system has grown to become one of the largest in the world with approximately 16 million students. Managing such a huge educational system is a daunting task.

Whereas, the enhancement of quality education imposed enormous challenges, the government has periodically established commissions and committees to identify problems and propose suggestions on ways to strengthen the quality of higher education in India. These committee and commission reports identified a lack of proper infrastructure, such as university libraries fulfilling the information needs of students. Other needs were qualified teachers and pedagogical innovations needed to promote analytical thinking. All of these were identified as priorities. The Government of India has initiated a planned development of higher education in the country with the establishment of the All India Council of Technical Education (1945) and the University Grants Commission (UGC) in 1953. With the help of these bodies, the Ministry of Higher Education has made progress to strengthen the quality and standard of higher education, improving infrastructure, enhancing quality resources of information from different corners of the world, enriching academicians, and developing distance education mechanism in the country. These initiatives have provided a sense of sustainability in the Indian higher educational system even in the face of multiple challenges like

resource crunches and a low gross enrolment ratio compared to the developed countries.

This chapter focuses on the following issues that will establish India as a global hub in higher education.

- Government planning and policies
- Milestones in distance education
- Steps to improve infrastructure
- Initiatives to acquire quality information resources

The objective of the chapter is to highlight the Indian higher education system, which is scaling new heights in the current realm of globalization.

BACKGROUND

Mellow and Woolis (2010) sensed the transformation of higher education into a dynamic economic power. They described three fundamental and seismic shifts that would profoundly change the field of higher education in the next several decades. These shifts include:

- Globalization of higher education
- Impact of technology on changing denotations of students, faculty, and knowledge
- Market analysis using a *business model* of higher education

In the new knowledge economy, higher education is becoming a powerful economic force. Over the last decade, the wave of distance education in higher education has spread from local to regional, and now toward online learning is crossing country and continental borders. Cross-border traffic in learning materials and courses are growing rapidly. During this era of economic globalization, The World Trade Organization (WTO) under its General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) is treating higher education as a commodity for enforcing trade among member countries. The

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