Research Article

Wide Gap between Indian School Education & Higher Education

PK Pandia[1]

Abstract

India has got various systems of education and on the top of it they do not have coordination amongst them. Almost every state of the country has got its own secondary board. There are some states, too, that have got more than one Board of Secondary Education. Some Union Territories such as Delhi have also got their boards of secondary education. Every state and region is at liberty to have their own medium of instruction. They can prescribe text books as per their requirement and ideology. Different types of schools cater to different aspirations of students as per the social status of students. If schools among themselves don't have coordination, it can be easily visualized what kind of messy situation there is likely to be when the higher education also emerges in such a picture. It won't be hyperbolic to say that in India as far as education is concerned, the right hand does not know what the left hand is going to do.

In India education is provided by the public sector as well as the private sector, with control and funding coming from three levels: central, state and local. School Education includes (i) Pre-school Education and (ii) 12 years of School Education and its equivalent. Institutions recognized/approved by a competent authority e.g., Central/State Government or other authorized agencies, e.g., Boards of Secondary Education, UGC, AICTE, MCI, ICAR, Directorates of Education or other duly empowered authorities. With a median age of 25 years, India has over 550 million people below the age of 25 years. According to Census figures, over 32 per cent of the 1.1 billion, the population is between the age group 0- 14. This means that the number of people in India needing primary and secondary education alone exceeds the entire population of the USA. Since these students are to seek higher education in India over the next decade it illustrates the need for the coordination between the school education and higher education. Presently about 11 million students are in the Higher Education system. This represents just 11% of the of the 17-23 year old population. The government hopes to increase this to at least 21% by 2017- a target which still falls short of the world average. With the emergence of India as a knowledge-based economy, human capital has now become its major strength. This has put the spotlight on severe inadequacies of India's infrastructure for delivery of education, particularly highlighting the need for co-ordination between school and higher education.

Keywords: Higher, School, Education, Gap

School Education

It is essential to know the state of affairs with regard to school education. At the primary and secondary level, India has a large private school system complementing the government run schools, with 29% of students receiving private education in the 6 to 14 age group. As per the Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) 2012, 96.5% of all rural children between the ages of 6-14 were enrolled in school. This is the fourth annual survey to report enrollment above 96%. Another report from 2013 stated that there were 22.9 crore students enrolled in different accredited urban and rural schools of India, from Class I to XII, representing an increase of 23 lakh students over 2002 total enrollment, and a 19% increase

[1]Assistant Professor, Faculty of Education, IASE (D) University, Sardarshahr (Churu).

E-mail Id: pkpandia2016@gmail.m

Orcid id: https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0288-4842

in girl's enrollment.[1] While quantitatively India is inching closer to universal education, the quality of its education has been questioned particularly in its government run school system. Some of the reasons for the poor quality include absence of around 25% of teachers every day. [2]

Various Boards

To understand the gravity of situation it is essential to know that the schools do not have the uniform standards, policies and facilities. The fact is that even the school education itself is so diverse that it also requires coordination at every level. Before the need for coordination between school education and higher education is highlighted, the complexity of the situation has to be taken into account. There are various types of schools in India: Most of the state governments have one "State board of secondary education". However, some states like Andhra Pradesh have more than one. The CBSE conducts examinations at the 10th and 12th standards that are called board exams. The Council of Indian School Certificate Examination (CISCE) conducts three examinations, namely, the Indian Certificate of Secondary Education (ICSE - Class/Grade 10); The Indian School Certificate (ISC - Class/Grade 12) and the Certificate in Vocational Education (CVE - Class/Grade 12).The National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS): The NIOS conducts two examinations, namely, Secondary Examination and Senior Secondary Examination (All India) and also some courses in Vocational Education. International schools affiliated to the International Baccalaureate Programme and/or the Cambridge International Examinations. Islamic Madrasah schools, whose boards are controlled by local state governments (or autonomous,) or affiliated with Darul Uloom Deoband or Darul Uloom Nadwtul Ulama. Autonomous schools like Woodstock School, The Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education Puducherry, Auroville, Patha Bhavan and Ananda Marga Gurukula.International schools, which offer 10th and 12th standard examinations under the International Baccalaureate, or the Cambridge Senior Secondary Examination systems.[3]

Education at Higher Level

Higher Education sector has witnessed a tremendous increase in the number of Universities/University level Institutions & Colleges since Independence. India's higher education system is the third largest in the world, next to the United States and China.[4] Accreditation for higher learning is overseen by 15 autonomous institutions established by the University Grants Commission (UGC).

As per the latest 2011 Census, about 8.15% (68 millions) of Indians are graduates, with Union Territories of Chandigarh and Delhi topping the list with 24.65% and 22.56% of their population being graduates respectively. Indian higher education system has expanded at a fast pace by adding nearly 20,000 colleges and more than 8 million stu-

dents in a decade from 2000-01 to 2010-11.[5] The quantum growth in the Higher Education sector is spear-headed by Universities, which are the highest seats of learning.

Education in rural India is valued differently from in an urban setting, with lower rates of completion. An imbalanced sex ratio exists within schools with 18% of males earning a high school diploma compared with only 10% of females.[6] The estimated number of children who have never attended school in India is near 10 crore which reflects the low completion levels. This is the largest concentration in the world of youth who haven't enrolled in school.

After passing the Senior Secondary Examination, students may enrol in general degree programmes such as bachelor's degree(graduation) in arts, commerce or science, or professional degree programme such as engineering, law or medicine After passing the Senior Secondary Examination, students may enrol in general degree programmes such as bachelor's degree(graduation) in arts, commerce or science, or professional degree programme such as engineering, law or medicine and become B. Sc., B. Com., and B. A. graduates. The main governing body at the tertiary level is the University Grants Commission (India) (UGC), which enforces its standards, advises the government, and helps coordinate between the centre and the state up to Post graduation and Doctorate (Ph.D).[7]

Universities: Various Categories

As is the case with the school education that there are various types of secondary boards, the higher education has also got various categories of universities. There are no uniformities with regard to policies and facilities. This calls for coordination at the higher education level itself. The different higher education centers have different profiles of students and teachers. Some institutions are vying for global standards whereas some of them don't stand anywhere in their own district or state.

Higher Education is the shared responsibility of both the Centre and the States. The coordination and determination of standards in Universities & Colleges is entrusted to the UGC and other statutory regulatory bodies. At present, the main categories of University/University-level Institutions are: Central Universities, State Universities, Deemed-to-be Universities and University-level institutions. The number of Universities has increased 34 times from 20 in 1950 to 799 in 2016. The number of colleges has also registered manifold increase of 74 times with just 500 in 1950 growing to 39071, as on 31st March, 2016.

As of 2016, India has 799 universities, with a break up of 44 central universities, 540 state universities, 122 deemed universities, 90 private universities, 5 institutions established and functioning under the State Act, and 75 Institutes of National Importance which include

AIIMS, IIT›s and NIT›s among others.[8] Other institutions include 39,071 colleges as Government Degree Colleges and Private Degree Colleges, including 1800 exclusive women's colleges, functioning under these universities and institutions as reported by the UGC in 2016. Colleges may be Autonomous, i.e. empowered to examine their own degrees, up to PhD level in some cases, or non-autonomous, in which case their examinations are under the supervision of the university to which they are affiliated; in either case, however, degrees are awarded in the name of the university rather than the college.

Indira Gandhi National Open University is the largest university in the world by number of students, having approximately 3.5 million students across the globe. Some institutions such as the Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs), National Institute of Technology (NITs), Indian Institute of Science, Indian Institute of Science Education and Research (IISERs), Indian Institutes of Information Technology(IIITs), Indian Institutes of Management (IIMs), International Institute of Information Technology (IIIT), University of Mumbai and Jawaharlal Nehru University have been globally acclaimed for their standard of education. The IITs enroll about 8000 students annually and the alumni have contributed to both the growth of the private sector and the public sectors of India.

No Significant Research on Co-ordination between Schools & Higher Education

Unfortunately India has not taken the issue of coordination between school and higher education seriously and as such no serious research has been done worth mentioning. However, America took the matter very seriously and as such it constituted a committee to look into the matter. The American report highlights the capacity of state P-16 and P-20 councils to create policy alignment between K-12 and higher education systems to ensure students transition from high school to higher education prepared for success. Using the examples of Arizona, Kentucky and Rhode Island, the report examines the details of successful councils, including their structural components, priorities, accomplishments, value added, barriers, and sustainability.[9]

Wide Gap between School education & Higher Education

The age of school going students is normally up to 18 years and the age above 18 is considered to be the age of the students pursuing Higher Education. It goes without saying that the school students are at the formative stages of the life. They are not matured, both physically and mentally. It is why when they are in the school they have the privilege of being guided and supported by their teachers. Moreover, whenever they happen to commit any mistake they are forgiven by the teachers believing that their students are not matured and as such they will grow up and be more responsible in the time to come. But when the same

students step into the premises of the colleges their world is altogether changed. Now the professors and the staff of the higher education institutions treat them as matured persons. They obviously hold them responsible for any act of omission and commission. The law also regards them as majors.

America issued a report prepared by the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education in 2009 on Policies to Improve Student Readiness for College and Strengthen Coordination between Schools and Colleges and this report extensively deals with the imperative to improve college completion rates for students and to raise the level of education attained by most Americans. [10] The report mentions that the economic and demographic forces that are changing the face of America, the reconfiguration of labor markets in this country, and the intense educational and economic competition internationally all point to the need for the nation and the states to produce more Americans with college-level knowledge and skills. While college access remains a problem for many Americans, high school graduates now enroll in postsecondary education at historically unprecedented rates.

Michael W. Kirst and Michael D. Usdan made a sincere effort to find out the Historical Context of the Divide Between K–12 and Higher Education and they came to the conclusion that there are the following areas which require improvement and it can be safely said that India also can derive benefit out of the findings arrived at by Americans:

- Disjointed curricula for grades 10 to 14;
- The evolution of teacher preparation programs;
- The detachment of community colleges from high schools;
- Divided governance and finance; and
- A lack of inter-level organizational relationships [11]

Based on American input as well the situation prevailing in India, these are the areas where coordination is required between school education and higher education for the smooth transition of students from school education to higher education institutions.

Curricula

The curriculum is very easy and less in the school. Besides it is the onus of the teachers to complete the syllabus and other assignments. On the contrary the curriculum in the college and higher education centers normally becomes very vast. Besides, the student is left to complete the curriculum on his own. At the best he can attend the class and benefit from the lecture. The student can normally satisfy his curiosity during the lecture only.

In India there are so many school boards to conduct the examinations.They have their different curricula and then

there are so many different higher education centers which have their own curricula.[12] There is hardly any coordination between the school education and higher education centers. The victim of such a system is the student. The school stresses on very primary things. Consequently the curriculum is very simple to follow but in the higher education centers it becomes very advanced and complicated. It is why that the students feel burdened too much and then they feel compelled to discontinue studies.

The need of hour is that the curriculum should be as such that the school students can switch over to the higher education without facing too much problems. Besides, the bridge courses also may be organized for such kind of students who find themselves unable to cope up with the curriculum. Modern school education in India is often criticized for being based on rote learning rather than problem solving. Business Week criticizes the Indian curriculum, saying it revolves around rote learning and Express India suggests that students are focused on cramming. Preschool for Child Rights states that almost 99% of pre-schools do not have any curriculum at all.[13] Also creativity is not encouraged or is considered as a form of entertainment in most institutions.

 Grade inflation has become an issue in Indian secondary education. In CBSE, a 95 per cent aggregate is 21 times as prevalent today as it was in 2004, and a 90 per cent close to nine times as prevalent. In the ISC Board, a 95 per cent is almost twice as prevalent today as it was in 2012. CBSE called a meeting of all 40 school boards early in 2017 to urge them to discontinue " artificial spiking of marks". CBSE decided to lead by example and promised not to inflate its results. Although the 2017 results have seen a small correction, the board has clearly not discarded the practice completely. Almost 6.5 per cent of mathematics examinees in 2017 scored 95 or more — 10 times higher than in 2004 — and almost 6 per cent of physics examinees scored 95 or more, 35 times more than in 2004.

Teacher Training

The system is such that if somebody wants to become a school teacher he has to do B. Ed, STC etc. But when the teacher is appointed in the higher education centers, it is purely on the basis of his academic degrees, NET. Consequently the college teachers do not have psychological and pedagogical trainings required to teach students effectively.[14] Many a time it has been observed that somebody may be knowledgeable but even then the person may not be able to deliver goods. Although the UGC has started some refresher and orientation courses yet they are very limited and that, too, are available after appointment. Even they are not properly structured.

Former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh said in 2007,

" Our university system is, in many parts, in a state of disrepair. In almost half the districts in the country, higher education enrollments are abysmally low, almost two-third of our universities and 90 % of our colleges are rated as below average on quality parameters. Teachers are poorly trained."[15]

Gap between Community & Higher Education Centres

The colleges in India are detached from schools. The gap between society/community and educational bodies is widening. When the student studies in the school, he finds that the schools are directly connected with the community/ society. The society takes interest in school activities. But the moment the child steps in the college or higher education centers from the school he finds that there is no control and involvement of the society/community in the higher education centers. The higher education centers are islands in themselves.[16] They normally don't have any social interaction with each other. Such a thing is neither good for the society/ community or for the higher education centers. Consequently, their parents lose control over the child and the child is left to himself. He can go astray.

Basic facilities

As per 2016 Annual Survey of Education Report (ASER), 3.5% schools in India had no toilet facility while only 68.7% schools had useable toilet facility. 75.5% of the schools surveyed had library in 2016, a decrease from 78.1% in 2014. Percentage of schools with separate girls' toilet has increased from 32.9% in 2010 to 61.9%in 2016. 74.1% schools had drinking water facility and 64.5% of the schools had playground.[17]

As of 2011, enrollment rates are 58% for pre-primary, 93% for primary, 69% for secondary, and 25% for tertiary education. Despite the high overall enrollment rate for primary education among rural children of age 10, half could not read at a basic level, over 60% were unable to do division, and half dropped out by the age of 14. In 2009, two states in India, Tamil Nadu and Himachal Pradesh, participated in the international PISA exams which is administered once every three years to 15-year-old›s. Both states ranked at the bottom of the table, beating out only Kyrgyzstan in score, and falling 200 points (two standard deviations) below the average for OECD countries. While in the immediate aftermath there was a short-lived controversy over the quality of primary education in India, ultimately India decided to not participate in PISA for 2012, and again not to for 2015. The performance of higher education centre students is also not good and that is why they stand nowhere against the global universities. Such a state of affairs highlights the need of better coordination between the schools and higher education centres.[18]

Poor Funding

Although the government allocates funds for the school education, they are not sufficient. At the higher level of education the requirement of fund increases. If India wants to keep pace with the world it is very necessary that there must be more allocation of funds.[19]It is why the Indian universities hardly have any mention in the top Global universities. The Indian Higher Education institutions normally stand nowhere when compared to International Universities and global higher education centers. In order to strengthen our Indian education it is very essential that more finance must be provided to the school and higher education centers. [20]The higher education centers and school education should be better coordinated to achieve the desired results.

Although the country targeted towards devoting 6% share of the GDP towards the educational sector, the performance has definitely fallen short of expectations. Expenditure on education has steadily risen from 0.64% of GDP in 1951–52 to 2.31% in 1970–71 and thereafter reached the peak of 4.26% in 2000–01. However, it declined to 3.49% in 2004–05. There is a definite need to step-up again.[21]As a proportion of total government expenditure, it has declined from around 11.1% in 2000–2001 to around 9.98% during UPA rule, even though ideally it should be around 20% of the total budget. Due to a declining priority of education in the public policy paradigm in India, there has been an exponential growth in the private expenditure on education also.

Poor Functional Relationships

When we talk of the schools, the local bodies such as Panchayat Samiti, municipality etc are actively involved. But in the higher education centers there is no role of any local bodies and the society.[22] As a result the higher education centers are cut off from the society and the local bodies also don't have any interest in the development of the higher education centers. To begin with, the government can nominate some more prominent personalities from the educational sector to bring about a positive change. In some cases, it has already started this practice but more needs to be done. The organizational relationship with regard to the structure of the school and higher education centers is different.[23]

Miscellaneous

 When the students are in the school, they are lucky enough to get the guidance and counseling at every step. If they face any problem they can share their problems with the teachers. Generally the teachers go out of the way to help out the student. But normally in our Indian Higher Education centers it has been observed that that the students do not have the same amount of guidance and counseling as was available in the schools. Consequently the students grope in the darkness and they become the victim of strain and stress.

It has been observed that some students in the higher education centers are drug addicts and criminals. They catch hold of the innocent school going students. To such kind of the students bad Company can make them criminals as well. Normally the school students are in the age group of the adolescence upto18 years but in the higher education centers the students maybe beyond the age of 30 aged. This huge gap can affect the innocent children very adversely.

 Indian higher education is in need of radical reforms. A focus on enforcing higher standards of transparency, strengthening of the vocational and doctoral education pipeline, and professionalization of the sector through stronger institutional responsibility would help in reprioritizing efforts and working around the complexities.[24] The rise of IT sector and engineering education in India has boxed students into linear path without giving them a chance to explore and discover their passions.[25] Concerted and collaborative efforts are needed in broadening student choices through liberal arts education. The University Grants Commission estimated that in 2013-14, an estimated 22849 PhDs and 20425 M. Phil degrees were awarded.[26]Over half of these were in the fields of Science, Engineering/Technology, Medicine and Agriculture. As of 2014-15, over 178,000 students were enrolled in research programs.[27]Across the country, tertiary enrollment rates have increased at a compound annual growth rate of 3.5% in the 5 years preceding 2016. Current enrollment stands at 34.58 million, over 15% more than the 29.2 million enrolled in 2011.

Conclusion

Understandably the scenario is very confusing. When schools don't have coordination amongst the schools itself, it can hardly be expected of them to have coordination at the higher education level. Every state has its own political or such other agenda. Some states want to promote their regional language at the cost of the national language. Some want to teach such history which can enable them to get votes. Some states want to debunk their cultural heritage. Students belonging to different religions, social class, cultures etc want to pursue different kinds of education both at the school level as well as the higher education level. The need of coordination becomes all the important. Following independence, India viewed education as an effective tool for bringing social change through community development. The administrative control was effectively initiated in the 1950s, when, in 1952, the government grouped villages under a Community Development Block— an authority under national programme which could control education in up to 100 villages. Even today despite tall claims, both government schools and higher education centers

remain poorly funded and understaffed. The problem is multiplied with non-coordination between them. Driven by market opportunities and entrepreneurial zeal, many higher education institutions are taking advantage of the lax regulatory environment to offer 'degrees' not approved by UGC & other regulatory bodies. Many institutions are functioning as pseudo non-profit organizations, developing sophisticated financial methods to siphon off the 'profits'. The victim is the student. The whole model of ignoring the coordination between the school education and higher education centers while focusing on ranking of a few universities and institutes is not a sustainable model for the nation. It is desirable that school education and higher education centers be coordinated forthwith to bring about qualitative change in Indian education.

References

1. "Gross enrollment ratio by level of education". UNESCO Institute for Statistics. Retrieved 10 December 2015.
2. «A special report on India: Creaking, groaning: Infrastructure is India›s biggest handicap». The Economist. 11 December 2008.
3. Secondary Education. Education.nic.in.
4. Singh, Y.K.; Nath, R. History of Indian education system. APH Publishing. pp. 172–175. ISBN 978-81-7648-932-4. Retrieved 11 January 2013.
5. "No of Colleges in India - India Education Statistics". Retrieved 25 February 2014.
6. Geeta Gandhi Kingdon. "The progress of school education in India" (PDF).
7. "12. Report of the HIGHER EDUCATION IN INDIA Issues Related to Expansion, Inclusiveness, Quality and Finance, May 2008". Ugc.ac.in. Archived from the original on 22 August 2010. Retrieved 1 September 2010.
8. «No of Universities in India». Retrieved 25 February 2014.
9. National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education in 2009, America
10. Ibid
11. Ibid
12. Rosser, Yvette Claire (2003). Curriculum as Destiny: Forging National Identity in India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh(PDF) (Dissertation). University of Texas at Austin.
13. «Indian schools dwarfed in global ratings programme». Indian Express. Retrieved 15 August 2014.
14. "India Country Summary of Higher Education" (PDF). World Bank
15. Prime Minister Manmohan Singh. "PM's address at the 150th Anniversary Function of University of Mumbai". Archived from the original on 12 January 2012...
16. Ramanuj Mukherjee. "Indian Education System: What needs to change?". Unlawyered.
17. Annual Survey of Education Report (ASER),2016.
18. Ibid.
19. India 2009: A Reference Annual (53rd edition), New Delhi: Additional Director General (ADG), Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, ISBN 978-81-230-1557-6.
20. "NCTE : National Council For Teacher Education". Ncte-india.org. Retrieved 16 August 2012.
21. Microsoft Word – Framework_Final_RMSA.doc. (PDF). Retrieved on 21 March 2011. Archived 7 October 2009 at the Wayback Machine
22. "A special report on India: Creaking, groaning: Infrastructure is India's biggest handicap". The Economist. 11 December 2008.
23. Ibid
24. "Higher Education, National Informatics Centre, Government of India". Education.nic.in. Archived from the original on 16 December 2009. Retrieved 1 September 2010.
25. India doesn›t figure in world top-100 universities, Press Trust of India via timesofindia.com, 2010-09-12
26. Anand, Geeta (5 April 2011). "India Graduates Millions, but Too Few Are Fit to Hire". The Wall Street Journal. Retrieved 19 March 2012.
27. De, Anuradha; Drèze, Jean (3 June 1999). Public Report on Basic Education in India. UK: Oxford University Press. ISBN 0195648706.