

Issues and Challenges before Higher Education in Bihar: An Empirical StudyGeetika¹, and Manish²^{1&2}Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science, Purnea University, Purnia, Bihar**Abstract**

Indian Knowledge Tradition believes that education is not just the beginning of the spiritual life of mankind, but it is also the training of human soul. It aims at all round development of an individual. Education plays an important role in shaping a country's socio-economic growth. India is one of the fastest growing economies with a huge human resource. With such vast human capital, the scope of higher education is very much wider in comparison to the other countries. We, in India have the tradition of believing and recognizing "Maa Saraswati" as the goddess of knowledge. We have Vedas, Upanishads, puranas in our core value system. The Bhagwad Gita enlightens and guides mankind in the gravest of life's problems and awakens not just human mind but also enlightens human soul. The role of women scholars in the Vedic era in developing and enriching Indian tradition cannot be undermined. Takshashila is regarded as the oldest university in the world. While Nalanda, Vikramshila in Bihar are the examples of many distinguished centers of higher education centers in India, which were way ahead of times. The main aim of such higher education institution was to impart Vedic knowledge which leads to spiritual growth. The glory can be traced from the writings of many of the foreign travelers who came to visit Bharat during those times in order to not just see the prevailing higher education system but also to attain knowledge. Our modern education system is largely based on colonial legacy and English education pattern. The foreign invasion and the British rule destroyed traditional Indian educational system in a planned way. According to UNESCO, there are around 235 million students enrolled in different universities around the world. If India is willing to become a super power someday it will only be through knowledge-based society. In this paper we will be discussing the issues and challenges before the higher education system in Bihar. There are 17 state Universities in Bihar, each university has broadly two types of colleges-namely Constituent college and Affiliated college. Constituent Colleges are more or less like Government College and Affiliated colleges are like Private college. This research is primarily

focused on the constituent colleges. Present paper seeks to highlight different issues and hindrances before the higher education system in Bihar e.g. Low Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER), inadequate Pupil-Teacher ratio, delayed session, poor attendance of students in college, absence of proper laboratory facility, NAAC accreditation, implementation of National Education policy 2020 etc. This is an empirical research based on observational methodology. Higher education has experienced expansion both in terms of institutions and enrolment over the period of time, but it has not been sufficient. Present higher education system has total disconnect from our great ancient tradition. Innovative and transformative strategies need to be implemented on priority basis at the higher education level.

Keywords: Higher education, knowledge tradition, issues, hindrance.

Introduction

“Education is the manifestation of perfection already in man.”- Swami Vivekanand.

Indian Knowledge Tradition believes that education is not just the beginning of the spiritual life of mankind but it is also the training of human soul. It aims at all round development of an individual and it brings out the balance of head, heart and mind altogether which further shapes one’s personality. Education plays an important role in shaping a country’s economic and social growth. India is one of the fastest growing economies with a huge human resource; it is expected to be the third largest economy in the successive years. With such vast human capital, the scope of higher

education is very much wider in comparison to the other countries. Keeping this in view we cannot overlook the obstacles the education system is facing or encountering. The National Education Policy, 2020 aims to settle many of the issues of the prevailing system. However, it is tough to say whether it will succeed fully in achieving its objectives or not.

We, in India have the tradition of believing and recognizing “Maa Saraswati” as the goddess of Knowledge. We have Vedas, Upanishads, Puranas in our core value system. The Bhagwad Gita enlightens and guides mankind in gravest of life’s problems and awakens not just human mind but also refreshes human soul. The role of women

scholars in the Vedic era in developing and enriching Indian tradition cannot be undermined. Maitreyi had great understanding of Upanishads which is still guiding the scholars. Yami was the first exponent of the concept of religion. Lopamudra,^[1] also known as Kaveri, Kaushitiki and Varaprada was regarded as a great philosopher according to ancient Indian Vedic Literature. This shows the early strong presence of women education and emancipation in ancient India.

India, being a country where for education the whole world looked upon in ancient times despite being the third largest in the world has its challenges and issues. The Constitution of India by the 86th constitutional amendment declares “Right to Education” as a Fundamental Right under article 21A. India has been prominent center for higher education from the time immemorial. Education is major contributing factor in a Nation’s development process, rather upon the education rests the economic growth. Takshashila is regarded as the oldest university in the world. ‘Nalanda Mahavihar’, Vikramshila and many

Buddhist monasteries are the examples of distinguished centers of higher education in India which were way ahead of times. These institutions were in Bihar itself and were the sole centers of learnings for even distant foreign learners and scholars. The main aim of such higher education institutions was to impart Vedic knowledge which leads to spiritual growth. The glory can be traced from the writings of many of the foreign travelers who came to visit India during those times in order to see the prevailing higher educational system and to observe how successful and organized their teaching learning was.

Our modern educational system is largely based on colonial legacy and English education pattern and system. There are seventeen state universities in Bihar.^[2] The purpose behind the conceptualization of such system was the cultural colonization of India. According to UNESCO there are around 235 million students enrolled in different universities around the world.^[3] During British period three Universities mainly Calcutta, Bombay and Madras were established in 1857. Before that the foreign invasion and the British rule destroyed traditional Indian educational system in a planned way. The Government of India Act 1935 can be attributed as a step

towards the Indianization of education system as it emphasized on physical as well as vocational education. Post independence although there were many challenges, yet many positive steps were taken to give a solid foundation to the higher education system. The government established the university education system to oversee the growth of higher education in India. With the changing world order and the onset of globalization there was a move towards the inclusion of private sector in the higher education field.

Objective of the Study:

The main objective of the study is to understand the major issues before Higher Education in Bihar. It is also going to throw light on the higher education sector of Bihar which nowadays is undergoing several structural as well as functional changes. This study will also identify and analyses the present scenario of higher education in the state.

Hypothesis:

The Higher Education of Bihar is going through difficult times- there are many

issues and challenges before it and they need to be addressed on priority basis

Methodology:

This is an empirical research based on observational methodology.

Issues and Challenges:

Bihar is a state with highest population density but it has lesser number of colleges as compared to other states in India. The situation seems to be gruesome as the colleges are serving beyond their capacity. The state has seventeen State Universities. The University broadly consists of constituent and affiliated colleges which can be broadly perceived as government and private college respectively. The Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in India is 27.3%. According to All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE),^[4] the GER of Bihar (2020-21) has increased from 14.5% in 2020 to 19% which is still lower than the national average. The GER of India is lower than the GER of developed countries. The average enrolment of a college in Bihar was 1858- third highest after Delhi, Arunachal Pradesh and Chandigarh. Apart from this disparity the institution size also varies as many colleges have enrolments in thousands

where as many institutions are smaller in sizes. For example, four colleges have 10,000-16,000 enrolments whereas an average enrolment in Sanskrit colleges are just 237. The institution density must be increased in order to cater the requirements of the higher education sector in Bihar.

The teacher-student ratio is another main concern in this regard, teacher-pupil ratio is very less in Bihar. The number of students is nearly 23.55 lakhs in the constituent colleges.^[5] There are many vacant positions still awaiting mentors. The recruitment process is either delayed or subjudice due to some or the other reason or irregularity to be very particular. This has become a major concern of any time of recruitment which takes place in Bihar and there authenticity is often under question. The standard student-teacher ratio according to University Grants Commission (UGC) at postgraduate level is 10:1 and at undergraduate level is 25:1. The national average of this student-teacher ratio in 2009-10 was 25:1 where as in Bihar it was 39:1. The information which is available is about faculty in terms of sufficiency but assessment of quality of faculty and training is elusive.

In comparison to the enrolments in the state, there are inadequate number and size of classrooms. Many colleges are yet to become techno friendly as they lack even the basics like smart boards and e-libraries. The need was witnessed during the pandemic times too where because of lack of such facilities the teachers were unable impart knowledge, although their presence was mandatory in the institution. This poor access resulted not just in academic loss but also in delayed session and the institutions are yet to overcome this. One more concern in this regard is that due to the over enrolment of student most of the time exam conduction becomes a tiring task which involves the overall participation of the teachers. Not just this it requires and all the available classrooms of the colleges. Many colleges have still got the pressure of the Intermediate classes as well. Most recently the colleges have been asked to conduct the intermediate exams monthly which has ended up in total chaos. It inevitably will burden not just the academic staff physically and mentally but it will land up in complete collapse of the academic work of teachers who are there to teach the undergraduates and postgraduates primarily. This is disturbing the academic tempo of the institutions which has or rather is

gaining momentum after decades. Delayed sessions have become a long practice in state. For an undergraduate student it takes around five years and for a postgraduate student it takes three years on an average for the completion of the course. The Pandemic has further contributed to this.

The other challenge which is of sole concern is of poor attendance in the college. Particularly many universities lack proper planning process for admissions. Many students get admissions in distant colleges which are far away from their home. Rural areas have different nature of concerns as transport access are not quick and affordable but they are rather costly and difficult at times. Students in such areas just get themselves enrolled for the sake of degree and they keep on doing some or the other work for their livelihood. The scenario is much more degree- centric rather than being education- centric. The state government is doing much harm by providing state funded freebies or schemes which will completely ruin the education system completely in future if not taken care of on time. The attendance of girls specifically is also low and reasons could be ranging from early

marriage, family pressure, orthodox mindset and lack of awareness.

Proper laboratory facility is also one of the major concerns in this regard as the poor maintenance of many such laboratories are causing problems for the students of science faculty. There is no laboratory assistant in many of the institutions. In fact, even there is none availability of social science and language laboratory in many of the colleges. The new choice-based credit system (CBCS) based on NEP 2020 has been implemented in the universities of Bihar and it is an irony that despite massive enrolments there are very less faculties and subject experts. Many new courses are even lacking subject experts.

The women's colleges in Bihar are facing the problems of shortage of funds as higher education in Bihar for girls is free of cost. The general mentality of girls in the rural areas is to just earn a degree rather than acquiring knowledge. This is resulting in poor standard of education which has just become degree centric. Many of the colleges are lacking accreditation also by NAAC, out of 272 colleges only 38 colleges are having NAAC accreditation. More recently turf war has become a common phenomenon between the state government and the Raj Bhawan. Among

all the colleges only two colleges, Patna Women's College and St. Xavier's College of Education are autonomous and accredited with 'A' grade. As of now no university has got grade A from NAAC. Most recently A N College, Patna has been given 'A+' grade [6]. The Higher Education institutions in Bihar also lack proper facilities for the differently abled students. Colleges do lack proper infrastructural support for differently abled students. They even lack even basic requirements for them like proper toilets and ramps and variety of architectural barriers. The verdict of the Supreme Court in 2017 is significant in this regard which observed that – institution of higher education that lack facilities for the differently abled persons amount to discrimination.

Bihar is a state with ample human resource but the human capital is bound to leave the state due to lack of opportunities and growth. There is very less or almost nil MNCs, FDI, and start up culture in the state which is a sort of hindrance in overall development and growth of the state.

Implementation of the New Education Policy 2020 is difficult to be implemented in the state which is over-burdened and under-resourced and also undergoing a sort of

instability due to tug of war between the Raj Bhawan and State government. The CBCS becomes a farce in such a tough situation where subject wise enrolment is around 500 with just 2-3 faculties. Rather it seems to be a managing all-inclusive system. Employability after college is also an issue in higher education and the state government must work on finding ways to increase the funding for higher education.

Conclusion:

As a conclusion we may argue that while higher education has expanded in terms of institutions, enrolments etc. over a period of time, but it has not been sufficient. Present higher education system has a complete disconnect with our traditional knowledge tradition. As per the NEP 2020 various recommendations have been done but still there is way to go. Innovation and transformation strategies must be implemented at higher education level in Bihar. For the development of infrastructure required grants should be given to the universities and colleges in Bihar. Last but not the least a strong will and administrative willingness and effectiveness can process a change in the state for good in the prevailing circumstances. A vigilant

leadership with a vision can surely paves the way towards the progress of this sector.

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