RECENT SCENARIO OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN TELANGANA STATE – ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

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Abstract
As of independence, India's higher education system has generally seemed depressing and has left many questions unanswered. Some of the relevant cases that present ongoing threats to Indian higher education are the unplanned growth of higher education opportunities, the spiraling trend of educated unemployed people, the commercialization of education, the imbalance between quantity and quality, and ignorance of equity and excellence. Given this, the upcoming educational reforms must address all of the aforementioned issues in higher education and incorporate creative approaches to categorizing and reclassifying data, approaching issues from fresh angles, and, finally, creating a new society that will be able to handle the challenges of the future. Teachers should not be exempt from such significant reforms in order to meet the future prospects of Indian higher education, as they supply the nation's best-trained workforce, including scientists, doctors, engineers, policymakers, business people, and technicians. Therefore, in order to meet the increasing demands of globalization and liberalization in the world, reforms for Indian higher education should also empower teachers. Therefore, in order to meet the evolving needs of the contemporary Indian society, the higher education system must be innovative and forward-thinking. In the particular instance of Telangana, an Indian state that is changing quickly, access, equity, and quality in higher education are essential pillars for promoting inclusive and sustainable development. This essay looks at the new issues that Telangana's higher education system is facing as it tries to strike a balance between growth, academic excellence, and inclusivity.

Keywords: Higher Education, Access, Equity, Telangana.

Introduction

The framework of any society is higher education. Higher education encompasses the teaching and learning that students receive at colleges and universities in order to advance toward higher educational qualifications. It is where students receive in-depth instruction and comprehension in order to push their knowledge to new heights in a variety of fields. It involves learning more and more about progressively less. Most importantly, it helps students become more capable of questioning, seeking the truth, and critiquing current issues, which expands their intellectual capacities within a specific field and provides them with a broader perspective on the world.

The higher education in India especially in Telangana state is at cross roads. No, doubt, adequate resources are pumped in and utilized, but the quality of education is being deteriorated day by day. The universities and the affiliated undergraduate and post graduate colleges in Telangana state have just remained graduate producing Kharkhanas(Factories) resulting in huge number of qualified unemployed youth roaming on the roads creating hue and cry over petty issues.

The Context of Higher Education

Quality in Higher Education has become a primary agenda of the countries worldwide. In the context marked by expansion of higher education and globalization of economic activities, education has become a national concern in developing countries with an international dimension. To cope with this

changing context, developing countries have been pressurized to ensure and assure quality of higher education at a nationally comparableand internationally acceptable standard. Consequently, many developing countries such as India, China are initiated national quality assurance mechanisms and many more in the process of evolving a suitable strategy. But it's not going to be easy where there are resource constraints.

Global trends in higher education

According to British Council, A combination of demographic and economic drivers, bilateral trade patterns, and shifts in inbound and outbound student flows linked to growing global competition and rapid expansion of tertiary education capacity, will re-shape the global higher education landscape by 2020(British Council Study, 2012). According to a report of University of Oxford, Participation in higher education in India has expanded enormously in the past decade, doubling from 14 million in 2007 to 28 million in 2013, and India is forecast to have the largest student-aged population in the world by 2025, of around 119 million.16 Quality control in the Indian higher education sector has lagged behind institutional expansion however, with a British Council report highlighting overemphasis placed on rote learning, a shortage of qualified faculty, and outdated curricula, leading to students graduating unprepared for employment, and institutions which fail to be internationally ranked.

Changing scenario of higher Education

An academic revolution has taken place in higher education particularly in the past half century marked by a paradigm shift in scope and opportunity. Over the years higher education system has become an enterprise having much of business orientation with all its exposure to fierce competition at different level of stakeholders. Indian education system considered as one of the largest of its kind in the world also faced/encounters enormous challenges in the new millennium. These challenges are diversified and manifold stretching from contemporary curriculum development, quality assurance and accreditation and ethical value propositions to policy planning and governance. In a technology driven society knowledge rewrites the fate of a nation and so does higher education. One of the major reasons for India's performance for being not that encouraging was due to suboptimal investment on higher education in the recent past. With unprecedented growth of knowledge typically in the area of information and communication followed by globalization shrinking the world into a global village, competitiveness has become a decisive force of growth. This necessitates massive investment on higher education so that availability of internationally acceptable highly skilled manpower can be ensured. But this drive for internationalization of higher education is a highly ticklish and dedicate move and should not be accomplished at the cost of identity of the nation as rightly quoted "internationalization of higher education is one of the ways a country responds to the impact of globalization yet, at the same time respects the individuality of the nation." As a part of India's integration into the world economy the role played by potential foreign participants need a special mention. The impact of potential entrants on Indian higher education system can be felt in most of the functional areas like access, equality and quality.

Status of Higher Education System In Telanagana

The most recent addition to the list of states in the nation is Telangana. Compared to many other Indian states, it is not the poorest, despite being the youngest. In terms of both area and population, it ranks as the twelfth largest state. After a lengthy battle spanning over 60 years and numerous sacrifices made by the populace and jobless youth, Telangana became a reality. In essence, the Telangana movement was a movement led by the people. had the distinctive quality of having a large number of

weaker groups, including Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Other Backward Classes, and Minorities, which make up almost 90% of the population. The GER of women in Telangana soared from 34.1 per cent in 2017-18 to 41.6 per cent in 2021-22. Similarly, the GER of men went up by 3.8 per cent from 34.7 per cent to 38.5 per cent during the same time frame, according to the All-India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) 2021-22. Girl students of Telangana have taken an unprecedented 73% of the total post graduate seats in all the Telangana state universities 2023-2024. Telangana has 60 Govt and Private medical colleges offering a total 9120 MBBS seats ranking it 5th among all states in India. To fulfil the wishes of these sections, a new model of development which is inclusive is required. Another important feature of Telangana is that more than 50 per cent of its population is below the age of 25 years.

Telangana has emerged as a significant player in India's education sector, showcasing notable progress in higher education over the past five years. According to the ASHE 2024 report by the CII Higher Education Committee and Deloitte, drawing from AISHE and Census 2011 data, the state's literacy rate stands at 66.46%, though gender disparities persist, with male literacy at 74.95% compared to female literacy at 57.92%. Positive trends are evident in the rising Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER), an increase in PhD enrolments, and a favorable Pupil-Teacher Ratio (PTR), which reflects the state's commitment to quality education. While gender representation in faculty is male-dominated, nonteaching roles see a slight female majority. Telangana's institutional framework is also expanding, with steady growth in enrolments, particularly in specialized and interdisciplinary programs, signaling a shift towards more diverse and advanced educational opportunities.

The awareness about all the above trends among the students and the teachers in H.E in Telangana is low. This may be because of non-exposure or sheer negligence of the students and the teachers in Higher education. Women participation in higher education has grown tremendously throughout the world. In Telangana state a total of 19,413 more women than men got enrolled in higher education in 2018. Telangana state has given permission to 5 private universities, which will function from 2020, to boost higher education in the state. It is very much unfortunate to have observed that in Telangana, the teacher – centered methodology is in practice.

Junior Colleges: There are 2,493 junior colleges functioning during the year 2014-15 and number of enrolled are 3,42,754 consisting of girls 1,73,666 and boys 1,69,088.

Degree Colleges: At Present 195 Degree Colleges functioning: in the state with an enrollment of 1,41,250 students consisting of 71,618 men and 69632 women Engineering colleges are primarily established to produce engineers and techni cians. There are about 354 engineering colleges in the state with a total intake of 96,648 students and polytechnic colleges numbering 250 with a strength of 61.799 students.

The Collegiate Education monitors the administrative functions and academic quality in 126 Government Degree Colleges and 69 Aided Colleges with an enrolment of 91,966 and 58291 students respectively in the state. Development of Model Degree Colleges Government of India introduced the concept of Model Degree Colleges covering 374 districts in the country through XI Five Year Plan based on low Gross Enrolment Ratio in Higher Education. The assistance from MHRD, Govt. Of India under RUSA is 65% and 35% has to borne by Govt. of Telangana.

The enrolment data in Telangana from 2017 to 2022 reveals significant trends across various educational levels. Undergraduate (UG) enrolments have steadily increased, from 1,068,001 in 2017-18 to 1,186,775 in 2021-22, reflecting a robust demand for foundational higher education. Postgraduate (PG) enrolments remained stable, with a slight dip in 2019-20 but recovering to 162,908 by 2021-22.

PhD enrolments show a notable rise, doubling from 3,430 in 2018-19 to 6,921 in 2021-22, indicating growing interest in research-oriented education. Conversely, MPhil enrolments sharply declined, from 794 in 2017-18 to just 71 in 2021-22, likely due to its phased-out status in favor of direct PhD programs.

Total Universities in India. As of January 29, 2024, The total number of universities in India is 1,113 51000 and 34.6 million students the Indian HE boasts of having the largest HE system in the world in terms of institutions and second-largest in terms of enrolment. Government has set a target of 30% GER in higher education by 2020, from the current 24.5%. Indian Higher Education Sector witnesses spending of over Rs 46,200 crore (US$ 6.93 billion) and it is expected to grow at an average annual rate of over 18 % to reach Rs 232,500 crore (US$ 34.87 billion) in next 10 years. However, according to a FICCI estimate, the Indian higher education sector would need up to INR 8,00,000 cr. (USD 133bn) of investment by 2030 to reach 50% GER.

By 2030, with nearly 140 million people in the college going age-group, one in every four graduates in the world will be a product of the Indian Higher Education system. As a nation of young people, India has been bestowed with a demographic advantage - out of a population of above 1.25 billion of which 672 million i.e. almost 50% are in the age-group 15 to 59 years, which is usually treated as the 'working age population'. India is expected to be the fastest growing economy touching a GDP of USD 7.5 trillion by 2030 and one of the youngest nations in the world with a median age of 32. Projections show that our country would require a gross incremental workforce of 250 million by 2030. The greying developed world is expected to face a skilled talent shortage of approximately 56 million by 2030 and India alone would provide 47 million skilled talent Private sector plays a huge role and accounts for 64% of the total number of institutions and 62% of enrolment. Over 80% of investment in professional education is done by the private sector according ficci report.

Issues of Higher Education of Telangana
Poor Facilities in Rural Colleges: Basic amenities like adequate classrooms, labs, libraries, internet access, and dorms are lacking in many government and assisted colleges in rural Telangana.

Outdated Labs and Equipment: Students' access to practical experience and hands-on learning is restricted by the frequently antiquated laboratory infrastructure found in technical and scientific institutions.

Lack of Training: Teachers who have few opportunities for professional development or training end up using antiquated methods and lacking the skills necessary for contemporary pedagogy.

Challenges faced by Higher Education in Telangana State
1. Post-Bifurcation Adjustments (2014):
The bifurcation of Andhra Pradesh in 2014 posed significant challenges for universities in Telangana, especially concerning resource allocation, faculty redistribution, and infrastructure.

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Telangana government focused on developing its own educational ecosystem, increasing budgetary allocations for higher education. They also emphasized establishing new institutions such as Kaloji Narayana Rao University of Health Sciences and the transformation of Osmania University.

2. Funding Shortfalls
Many state universities faced financial constraints due to inadequate funding, resulting in infrastructure deficiencies and delays in research projects. To counter these issues, the government has sought funds from central schemes like Rashtriya Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA) and created specific policies to boost university research. However, limited fiscal space often constrained extensive funding initiatives.

3. Faculty Shortages
Most universities in Telangana have struggled with vacancies in teaching positions. Lack of adequate faculty affected student outcomes and research output. The Telangana government periodically announced faculty recruitment drives and aimed to fill vacancies, but bureaucratic delays and hiring freezes often hindered the process. Efforts were made to recruit contract faculty to address immediate needs, but long-term challenges persist.

4. Access and Equity in Higher Education
Despite several universities, regional imbalances and disparities in access to higher education have persisted, especially for marginalized groups, including students from rural areas, SC/ST categories, and economically weaker sections. Telangana implemented fee reimbursement schemes, and scholarships under the Telangana State Minorities Study Circle were expanded. In recent years, programs aimed at social equity, such as improving the hostel facilities and special quotas for marginalized students, were initiated.

5. Quality of Education and Accreditation
Many universities in Telangana struggle to maintain high academic standards and secure good accreditation scores from agencies like NAAC (National Assessment and Accreditation Council). The Telangana government encouraged institutions to upgrade their curriculum and align programs with national accreditation standards. The establishment of specific skill development initiatives (like Young India Skill University) also aligned with attempts to improve employability and skills, linking education to the job market.

6. Research and Innovation Deficits
Universities in Telangana lag behind in research outputs and innovation compared to central institutions. Low research funding, inadequate facilities, and a lack of interdisciplinary programs were critical challenges. In an attempt to foster a research culture, the government has encouraged collaborations with industries and international institutions. Osmania University's research collaborations with IT hubs in Hyderabad and the Telangana government's focus on leveraging Hyderabad's tech ecosystem to boost academic research are notable examples.

7. Digital and Infrastructure Gaps
During the COVID-19 pandemic, the shift to online learning exposed digital and infrastructure deficits. Many students from rural and underprivileged backgrounds lacked access to necessary technology and internet connectivity. The government rolled out initiatives to provide digital devices

to students and improve online learning platforms. Programs like "Mana TV" aimed to bring online education to the masses, but large-scale adoption was limited.

8. Political Interference and Governance

Universities in Telangana have faced issues related to political interference, affecting the autonomy and governance of these institutions. While successive governments have made attempts to introduce governance reforms, including autonomy for some institutions, political influence has continued to be a factor in administrative decisions. The government has also worked towards making appointments to key university positions more transparent, although challenges remain.

9. Student Unrest and Movements

Universities in Telangana have witnessed student movements and unrest, especially related to reservations, fee hikes, and job opportunities post-education. The government has responded with schemes like the Telangana State Education and Employment Policy (T-SEEP), aimed at increasing employability through vocational training and skilling initiatives. Moreover, measures like dialogue with student unions and fee regulation frameworks have been employed to address grievances.

10. Focus on Skill Development

Universities were criticized for focusing more on traditional academic streams rather than promoting skill-based education that could directly lead to employment. The establishment of skill universities, especially Young India Skill University, marked a shift towards promoting employability-focused programs, tying higher education with industry requirements, and creating green jobs.

Conclusion

Over through the past ten to fifteen years, Telangana state's higher education system has gotten worse. Every stakeholder, including governments, educators, parents, students, and the general public, neglects nearly every aspect of education, which leads to unemployed graduates and postgraduates living on the streets and claiming to be young people without jobs. The state's colleges and universities have a lax attitude toward high-quality education. The infrastructure is not receiving enough maintenance. The students are not the focus of the curriculum or the pedagogy. The labs are no longer in operation. The U.G. and P.G. students' communicative English abilities are extremely weak. There is a very poor research culture among the students and faculty. Several of the the major problems have been lessened by the state government's attempts to reform the industry, especially through legislative measures like fee reimbursement, hiring campaigns, and online education initiatives. To support a strong higher education environment in the state, however, ongoing reforms and investment are needed to address structural issues with funding, governance, educational quality, and equitable access. This historical summary sheds light on how the Telangana government has balanced immediate demands with long-term learning objectives in response to changing issues within its universities. The issues of quality, equity, and access in Telangana's higher education system are interrelated and require a comprehensive approach. Even though programs and policies have had a beneficial effect, structural inequality still exists.

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