

Understanding the Reasons Behind Failure of Higher Education in India to Enhance Employable Skill

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It is a widely accepted logic that education provides skill and skill enhances employability. Higher education is the final stage of education which equips any individual with the ultimate skills to get a decent job. Success of higher education depends upon its effectiveness to inculcate employable skill among the students. Since independence, there has been an upsurge in the demand for higher education in India, resulting in a virtual explosion in the number of universities and colleges in the country. However, it seems that government of India has focused mainly on expanding the quantity not on enhancing the quality of higher education. Having earned degrees, many graduates and post-graduates in India remain unemployed or under-employed because of insufficient demand for their skills. According to the 68th Round Survey of NSSO, almost 68 per cent of graduates and 53 per cent post-graduates from general education background and almost 45 per cent of graduate or post-graduate degree holders and 51 per cent of graduate or post-graduate diploma holders with technical education were unemployed during 2011-12. While the problem of educated unemployed Indian youth remains acute, paradoxically, there is a shortage of skilled manpower in the labour market. While around 40 per cent of teaching positions are lying vacant in different educational institutions, we observe extremely low success rate of aspirants in different eligibility tests for the posts of teachers in schools, colleges and universities, organized by different government agencies like CBSE, UGC, CSIR etc. According to the results of different eligibility tests, during the period from 2011 to 2016, more than 87 per cent of the aspirants of school teaching and during the period from 2010 to 2014, more than 90 per cent of the aspirants of college or university teaching were unsuccessful despite securing good marks in school, college and university level examinations. Despite a record growth in intake of engineering candidates at All India Council of Technical Education (AICTE)-approved institutes, more than 60% of passed out engineering graduates stay unemployed every year. The National Association of Software and Services Companies (NASSCOM) survey of 2011 claimed that over 75 per cent of technical graduates of India were not ready for jobs due to lack of desirable generic abilities. It is therefore clearly evident that unemployability is no less important problem than unemployment in India. Under these circumstances, it is quintessential to find out the indicators of inability of higher education system in India to inculcate the employable skill among the students and control all such dampening factors. It is observed that Indian universities do not find a place in the top 200 positions in the global ranking of

universities. There are wide variations in the quality of higher education institutions. There are a few high-quality institutions like IITs, IIMs etc. On the other hand, there is large number of mediocre institutions with poor infrastructural facilities and shortage of qualified full-time teachers. Due to scarcity and competing claims on available funds, the ability of financially poorer state governments to invest in higher education is circumscribed. As a result, these states are reluctant to fill permanent teaching posts in state universities and affiliated colleges regularly. However, the alternative of recruiting ad-hoc and part-time faculty impacts adversely on the quality of teaching. Insufficient government investment in the higher education sector has resulted in the increase in private sector's role in the growth of this sector. However, most of the private institutions act with the motive to extract high capitation fees and award useless degrees. Political interference often restricts the autonomy of universities to take important decisions. Universities and colleges are frequently disturbed by agitations by students backed by political or caste/religion-based associations. Older state universities continue to be burdened with the academic and administrative responsibilities of affiliated colleges, which restricts them to concentrate fully on teaching and research. In order to assess and enhance the quality and standards of higher education institutes in India, accreditation agencies like National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) and National Board of Accreditation (NBA) were established in India in 1994. While NAAC gives accreditation to the entire higher education institution, NBA gives accreditation to the programmes. Out of all universities and colleges accredited by NAAC till now, only 32 per cent of the universities and 9 per cent of the colleges are rated A grade or above. Out of all engineering programmes accredited by NBA, only 21 per cent got 5 years accreditation. Under this backdrop, this paper is an attempt to measure the inter-state variations in quality of higher education in India during 2014-15 and to find out the major explanatory factors behind such variations. Our study utilizes the All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) data for 2014-15, data of ranks of the Higher Education Institutions accredited by NAAC prior to July 2016 and data of engineering programmes accredited by NBA during 2014-16. To measure the state-level quality of higher education, we have constructed a Higher Education Quality Index (HEQI). To find out the significant explanatory factors behind inter-state variations in HEQIs, we use the OLS regression method, taking the state-level HEQI as the dependent variable and gross enrolment ratio, gender parity index, percentage share of temporary teachers, teaching-non-teaching staff ratio, pupil-teacher ratio, percentage share of state universities and private universities, percentage share of enrolment in state universities and private universities, budgeted expenditure on education as a percentage of GSDP, dummy variable for states with high political intervention in educational institutions as independent variables. Our study shows that gross enrolment ratio does not have any significant impact on quality of higher education in a state, whereas, states with higher gender parity, lower share of temporary teachers, lower teaching-non-teaching staff ratio,

lower pupil-teacher ratio, lower share of state and private universities, higher budgeted expenditure on education and less political disturbance have achieved better quality in higher education.

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