

# Quality Revolution of Higher Education: A Study in India

**Pritidhara Hota**

*Asst.Prof.HR, Global Institute of Management,  
Bhubaneswar, Email: phota85@gmail.com*

**Pratima Sarangi**

*Associate Professor in Governance and HRM,  
Sri Sri University, Odisha, Email: pratima@srisriuniversity.edu.in*

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**Abstract:** *It can be undoubtedly stated that, over the ages, the wealth or poverty of nations largely depends on the quality of higher education. Further, one can look forward to a lifetime of unprecedented economic fulfilment with a larger repertoire of skills and a greater capacity for learning. The education sector is a rapidly changing sector and this dynamic culture offers a challenge for the educational institutions to lead or to actually survive in this competitive environment. As the education sector, especially higher education, is a part of the overall service sector, this raises the need for a solid base to be developed to reach for high quality service. With burgeoning growth of higher education sector in our country and the increasing competition at the national and international level, the need for improving the quality of education and employability of our graduates and postgraduates has acquired a new urgency. The major challenges in achieving excellence in higher education are many and difficult to achieve in comparison to other industries. This paper basically focuses on the present status of higher education in India, their problems and challenges as far as quality is concerned. The main aim of this paper is also to study the role of different key regulatory agencies and quality regulatory boards for higher education in India. This study has been conducted by consulting existing literature through historical, analytical and secondary data.*

**Keywords:** *Quality Revolution, Higher Education, Problems and Challenges, Higher Educational Institutions*

## **Introduction**

As a result of globalization and technological advancement, today, competition is all-pervasive in every field. In this environment, only those industries survive which offer the best services to their customers. It has become a very hard job for industries to attract customers because these days they have many options available to them. In order to retain their share in the world market in terms of quality and reliability of their products, they must maintain quality of their goods and services. The term quality has, thus, taken a form of quality revolution which each institution today is striving to aim at. Therefore, it is very important for an organization to possess

knowledge about customer behavior and satisfaction in order to render quality service to its customers. It is noticed that service industries continue to grow significantly in the overall Indian economy such as education, banking, hospital, hotel, and transportation sectors. Thus, service quality has become a predominant part of all advanced organizations' strategic plan. This study is focused on education service industry and especially on higher education institutes and their status in India. Education is primarily considered as a philanthropic service and it largely contributes to the socio-economic development of a developing country. Traditional Indian education was based on the Vedas, the

Puranas, the Ayurveda, the Arthasathra etc. and is a marvel of the Indian intellect. Taxila, Vikramshila and Nalanda were among the most important universities of India in the ancient times.

In a society full of diversity, ideologies and opinions, professional education means different things to different people. The pluralism of views is quite inevitable and some would opine it should be like that. In terms of the level, higher education includes college and university teaching leading to professional educational qualifications. Higher education focuses on in-depth knowledge and understanding so as to advance the students to new frontiers of knowledge in different walks of life (subject domains). It is about knowing more and more about/less and less. Higher education develops the student's ability to question and seek the truth and makes him/her competent to critique on contemporary issues.

Today, more than ever before in human history, the wealth or poverty of nations depends on the quality of higher education. Those with a larger repertoire of skills and a greater capacity for learning can look forward to a lifetime of unprecedented economic fulfillment. But in the coming decades the poorly educated face little better than the dreary prospects of lives of quiet desperation.

#### **Role of Higher Education in the Society**

Higher education mainly focuses on teaching, research and extension. If we analyze the different concepts of higher education critically, then we can list the various roles higher education plays in the society. Higher education is the source or feeder system in all walks of life and therefore supplies the much-needed human resources in management, planning, design, teaching and research. Scientific and technological advancement and economic growth of a country are also dependent on the higher education system. Development of indigenous technology and capabilities in agriculture, food security and other industrial areas are possible because of our world-class higher education

Higher education also provides opportunities for lifelong learning, allowing people to upgrade their

*Quality Revolution of Higher Education: A Study in India* knowledge and skills from time to time based on the societal needs. The Kothari Commission (1966) listed the following roles of the universities:

- To seek and cultivate new knowledge, to engage vigorously and fearlessly in the pursuit of truth, and to interpret old knowledge and beliefs in the light of new needs and discoveries;
- To provide the right kind of leadership in all walks of life, to identify gifted youth and help them develop their potential to the full by cultivating physical fitness, developing the powers of the mind and cultivating right interests, attitudes and moral and intellectual values;
- To provide the society with skilled men and women trained in agriculture, arts, medicine, science and technology and various other professions, who will also be cultivated individuals, imbued with a sense of social purpose;
- To try hard to promote quality and social justice, and to reduce social and cultural differences through diffusion of education; and
- To foster in the teachers and students and through them in the society generally, the attitudes and values needed for developing the "good life" in individuals and society.

According to Ronald Barnett there are four important concepts of higher education:

- **Development of Qualified Human Resources:** Higher education is the production of qualified human resources. In this regard, higher education is seen as a process in which the students are counted as "products" absorbed in the labour market. Thus, higher education becomes input to the growth and development of business and industry.
- **Training and Research:** Higher education training is useful for a research career. In this regard, higher education is preparation for qualified scientists and researches that would continuously develop the frontiers of knowledge. Quality within this viewpoint is

more about research publications and transmission of the academic rigor to do quality research.

- **Educational Administration:** Higher education contributes to the efficient management of teaching provision. Many strongly believe that teaching is the core function of educational institutions. Thus, professional educational institutions focus on efficient management of teaching-learning provisions by improving the quality of teaching, enabling a higher completion rate among the students.
- **Participation in the Development Process:** Higher education is a matter of extending life chances. In this view, higher education is seen as an opportunity to participate in the development process of the individual through a flexible, continuing education mode.

### **Review of Literature**

Higher education, like any other business, is increasingly concerned about the quality of its goods and services. Currently, the literature pertaining to service quality in the higher education sector is significantly undeveloped. Traditionally, many researchers have focused their efforts on commercial services (Sultan and Wong, 2010). Subimal Kumar Chatterjee (2011) in his paper "Quality crisis in college education" identified the main cause for poor quality of higher education as the increase in the number of universities and affiliated colleges over a period of time. In addition to the above, the author also identified two common problems in all higher educational institutes, namely, lack of quality faculty and support staff and lack of quality laboratory and library. In order to impart quality education, important suggestions offered by him are : strict control over new establishments and enrolment of students; intake to be in proportion to college infrastructure; industry institute linkages should be established and made effective for proper training of undergraduate and postgraduate students; and inter-college bonding should be strengthened. Gilaninia, et al. (2012)

have investigated the relationship between readiness level managers for the implementation of *TQM* with organisational culture and effectiveness of managers in the Azad University of Guilan Province. This study constitutes the faculty, staff, and administrators based on random class sampling method. The results show that there is a significant relationship between studied variables in some aspects of *TQM* and organisational culture. The study of Murali Rao Someswara (2013) explored and evaluated the practices of quality management in higher education sector, which aimed at identifying different parameters of quality and tried to measure the level of quality maintained in MBA programs in various institutions. Elizabeta Mitreva (2015) in her article "Full Commitment of Top Management in Macedonian Higher Education Institutions" highlighted that the success of the application of TQM strategy depends on the commitment of the academic staff and administration and their motivation. Although the philosophy of total quality management (TQM) is deeply involved in many higher education institutions and business aspects of European and other countries, it is not sufficiently present in the other developing countries. Evangelos Psomas and Jiju Antony (2017) in their study found that the different TQM elements mostly adopted by the Greek HEIs concern the following: student focus, leadership and top management commitment, strategic quality planning, process management and teaching staff and employee involvement. On the other hand, the most significant results achieved by the sample HEIs concern quality performance improvement, teaching staff and employee satisfaction, operational performance improvement and the positive impact on society. Janette Rodriguez, Madonna Valenzuela, Nunilon Ayuyao (2017) explored the different CSFs of TQM like top management commitment, system approach to management, customer satisfaction, employee involvement, training, teamwork, and continuous improvement in his study on "TQM paradigm for higher education in the Philippines". Merita Bernik (2017) identified the key factors

that should be the priority in order to improve the quality management system of higher education. Some dimensions to be studied in order to determine the key factors are leadership, business processes, quality assurance, and governance of academic and non-academic process. Elham S. Hasham (2018) in his article “Academic Institutions Are No Different to Any Other: Total Quality Management Does Enhance Performance,” defines TQM and focuses on its influence on the various facets of an institution of higher education. TQM helps to provide better services to its primary customers-students and the community. Moreover, TQM focuses on continuous improvement and growth that can offer an enhanced and challenging learning environment for all involved. Thus, a more effective and efficient corporate culture emerges.

**Research Gap**

The above relevant literature study shed light on the importance of the evaluation process in higher education institutions. However, no study has been carried out so far in connection with assessing/analyzing the quality status in accredited higher education institutions . This study uses secondary data to know and analyze the status of higher education and the challenges they are facing to restore and improve quality. The study gives emphasis on the need and importance of different quality regulatory agencies and boards functioning in India, and explores the different key regulatory agencies and quality regulatory boards as far as quality is concerned.

**Objectives of Study**

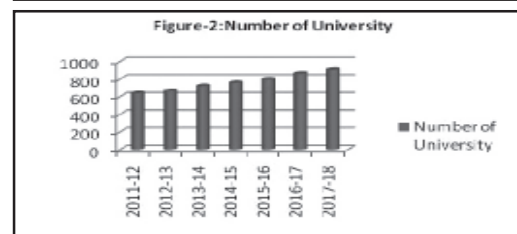
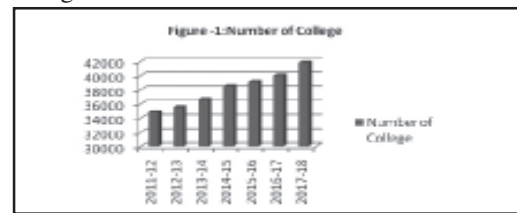
- To analyze the present status of higher education in India and their challenges as far as quality is concerned
- To study the key regulatory agencies and quality regulatory boards in India.

**Research Methodology**

This study has been conducted by consulting existing literature through historical, analytical and secondary data. Historical-analytical method has been taken into consideration while observing

the reports related with the study and while examining the other literature relevant to the study. Secondary data analysis technique is applied to study the present status of the different states as far as quality education is concerned. Growth in Number of Higher Educational Institutions:

The number of universities and similar institutions in India has increased from 621 in 2011-12 to 907 in 2017-18 by almost 46.06% as shown in the figure, whereas the number of colleges has increased from 34,852 in 2011-12 to 41817 in 2017-18. The significant growth of higher education institutions all over India and increased emphasis to improve quality of higher learning institutions to compete with the global standard displayed a growing concern for quality in higher education.



Source:www.aicte-india.org

**The Essence of Quality Assurance in Higher Education**

According to Wahlen (1998), quality assurance in higher education is the activity that aims at maintaining and raising quality, e.g. research, analysis, assessing acceptability, recruitment, appointment procedures and different mechanisms and systems. The aim of quality assurance in higher education is to guarantee the improvement of standards and quality in higher education in order to make higher education meet the needs of students, industries and financiers (Lomas, 2002), and other internal and external stakeholders. Quality assurance could be divided

into internal and external quality assurances according to the customers of education and their opportunities.

### **External Quality Assurance**

External quality assurance monitoring is a broad concept that includes several quality related assessments provided by different bodies or individuals outside the higher education institutions. The aim is to achieve accountability. The government institutions usually decide upon the systems of external quality assurance of higher education institutions. External quality assurance is necessary in order to prove to the public that the goals set by the institution will be achieved. Higher education institutions bear responsibility to assure their supporters, state and society in general that they are committed to the fulfillment of their mission, use the resources honestly and responsibly and that they meet the legal expectations (El-Khawas, 1998).

#### **Internal or Institutional Quality Assurance**

Internal or institutional quality assurance aims at institutional development and assessment of internal accountability. Institutional quality assurance incorporates every institutional activity that focuses on quality assurance and development in all the fields of activity of the institution (European dimension of institutional quality management, 2000). Internal quality assurance concentrates mainly on academic issues and lies in collecting evidence and information about mission fulfillment, efficiency of activity and ways of insuring quality within the institution.

### **Quality Assurance in India**

India's standards of higher education compare unfavorably with the average standards in educationally advanced countries. In 1980s, serious concerns were raised about continued deterioration in quality of higher education. It was found that the built-in controls were not able to ensure quality. Various options were examined. In line with global practices, external quality assurance was conceived in India as a solution (Antony, S., 2002). Presently, there are different agencies that evaluate quality of institutions and / or programmes through an external quality assurance in the country. These include the

National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) set up by the UGC in 1994 to accredit institutions of higher education, the National Board of Accreditation (NBA) established by the All India Council of Technical Education (AICTE) in 1994 to accredit programmes in engineering and related areas and the Accreditation Board (AB) established by the Indian Council of Agriculture Research (ICAR) in 1996 to accredit agriculture institutions, National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE), Medical Council of India (MCI), Indian Nursing Council (NC), Bar Council of India (BCI), Rehabilitation Council of India (RCI) and Distance Education Council (DEC). This study mainly concentrates on the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) and the National Board of Accreditation (NBA) as two quality assessment and regulatory bodies to restore quality in higher education.

### **National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC)**

Though the National Policy for Education (NPE) in 1986 recommended putting in place a quality assurance mechanism, the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) could only be established in 1994. Even after that, it took almost a few years for NAAC to accredit the first institution in January 1998. Initially, there was a debate on whether the accreditation in India could be made compulsory and linked to funding (Antony, S., 2002).

Finally, keeping in mind that built-in controls in the form of regulatory bodies and a strong affiliating system already existed, it was decided that assessment and accreditation would be used as an enabling mechanism towards self-improvement. The NAAC adopted core elements common to most external quality assurance systems, namely, assessment based on a pre-determined criteria that combines self-study and peer review that is valid for a specific period of time. Based on this, NAAC evolved its unique assessment model that combined three basic approaches to quality assurance, namely Accreditation, Assessment and Academic Audit. Accreditation is an evaluation of whether an



institution or program qualifies for a certain status. Accreditation provides the outcome in a binary scale – yes/no or accredited/not-accredited. Assessment gives an idea of the quality of the outputs. Typical outcome of assessment results in a multi-point grade — numeric or literal or descriptive. Academic audits are focused on those processes by which an institution monitors its own academic standards and acts to assure and enhance the quality of its offerings. The objectives of the institution or programme are taken as the starting point for the audit. The audit is usually done by a small group of generalists and it results in an audit report. Accreditation by NAAC is voluntary and is valid for five years. The NAAC has identified the following seven criteria to serve as the basis for assessment of HEIs:

1. Curricular Aspects, 2. Teaching-Learning and Evaluation 3. Research, Consultancy and Extension, 4. Infrastructure and Learning Resources, 5. Student Support and Progression, 6. Governance, Leadership and Management, 7. Innovations and Best Practices.

By June 2005, NAAC had accredited 105 universities and 2311 colleges. Overall, around 13 per cent institutions of higher education have been accredited by NAAC in India by June 2018. From the total 41817 colleges in India only 4430 are accredited, which is 10.59 of total. From the 907 universities in India, 288 have been accredited which accounts for 33.33%.

Overall, around 11.09 per cent institutions of higher education have valid accreditation now. This statistic shows a significant effort should be made to ensure quality in higher education institutions. Though accreditation in India is voluntary, many state governments have decided to make accreditation compulsory for the institutions within their states.

#### **National Board of Accreditation (NBA)**

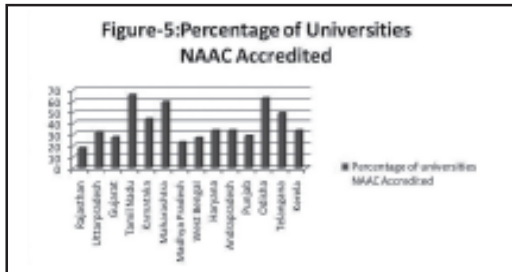
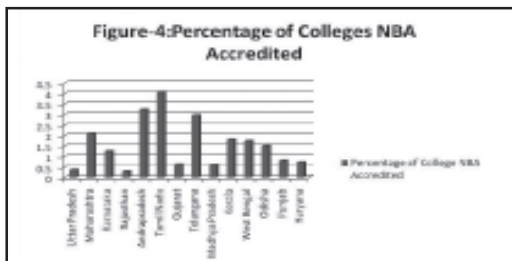
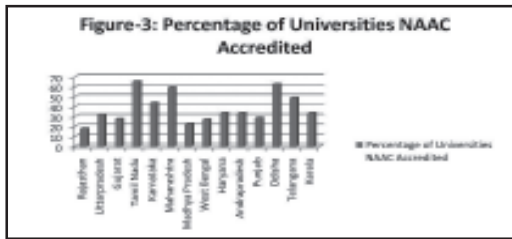
The National Board of Accreditation (NBA) under the AICTE accredits programmes that come under engineering and related areas. NBA follows the same process of external peer review as that of NAAC. Programmes with more than 650 marks out of a maximum of 1000 points are

“Accredited” and those that score less than 650 are “Not Accredited”. Programmes getting a score of more than 750 are accredited for a period five-years, whereas those securing between 650 and 750 are accredited for a period of three years. The outcome of NBA process is not linked to funding. The NBA evaluation processes are so designed as to facilitate identification of the strengths and weaknesses of the programmes under accreditation. The evaluation process is based on a set of eight broad-based criteria developed through a lengthy participatory process involving more than 1000 participants concerned with technical education all over India. Criterion I Organization and Governance, Criterion II Financial Resources, Allocation and Utilization, Criterion III Physical Resources (Central Facilities), Criterion IV Human Resources: Faculty and Staff, Criterion V Human Resources: Students, Criterion VI Teaching-Learning Processes, Criterion VII Supplementary Processes, Criterion VIII Research and Development and Interaction Effort.

Three of the criteria described above have been broken down into parameters, and weightages have been assigned to these parameters by the NBA. The parameters and the weightages assigned to them are different for diploma, undergraduate (UG) degree and postgraduate (PG) degree programmes. A large number of institutions are yet to complete two years after graduating of their first batch and, therefore, are not yet eligible for accreditation. Though AICTE is giving emphasis for accreditation of institutions by NBA for all institutions, the progress so far is poor. By May 2005, NBA had accredited merely 895 programs from 202 institutions as against a total of 14000 programmes in 3589 approved UG and PG and 1608 diploma level institutions. By 2018 the higher education institutions have shown significant growth in number to 42724 number of institutions including UG and PG level, with total accredited institutions of 719 which is 1.68 per cent of total. This statistic shows a very miserable condition of higher education as far as quality is concerned.

**Quality Status of Major States in India**

Taking into account the NAAC and NBA accreditation as the quality parameters for different higher education institutions in India, the table below shows the status of major states in India (which has valid accreditation as on June 2019) as far as quality is concerned. Source: www.naac.org.in



Source:www.nbaind.org

**Analysis**

The 14 states having more than 900 colleges and more than 20 universities have been taken into the analysis for this study. The above graph shows that the states have very poor percentages of accreditation status which is less than 25%. The state Uttar Pradesh lags behind having 3.42 per cent of colleges NAAC accredited and 0.37 percent of colleges NBA accredited. Rajasthan has the maximum number of universities at 78. But only 17.94 per cent have been accredited by the NAAC. Other than Tamilnadu and

Maharashtra no other state has more than 50 per cent universities NAAC accredited. Analysing the NBA status we found no state has more than 5 per cent institutions NBA accredited. The standard of higher education has a direct relationship with the development of a nation and the quality of life of its citizens. This survey shows the higher learning organizations have only shown a significant growth in number not in the standard of imparting quality educations in the higher education. None of the Indian universities found any place in the top 200 institutions of the world. To improve the standards of higher education, the quality of teachers the learning capacity of students and the physical infrastructure should be improved.

**Challenges of Higher Education in India**

The main problems faced by higher education in India are:

- Problem of Enrolment
- Problem of Financing Higher Education
- Inadequacy of infrastructure
- Problem in Teaching Learning Process
- Lack of international exposure and innovation

**Conclusion**

The higher education system of India has passed through various difficult situations in the post independence period. There are several improvement initiatives taken in the Indian education system from various perspectives to improve quality. The authorities involved in the management of higher education system in India like UGC, AICTE, QCI, DEC and BCI have made serious efforts to improve the quality education in India and also to match Indian education standards with the international norms. The future of our economic system, and thus our nation, is directly intertwined with our ability as a nation to establish and keep a high quality higher education system. If suitable and necessary recognition and support will be extended to Indian educational institutes and universities then India has the potential for extending frontiers of knowledge in all disciplines.

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