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**Melhorar o Ensino Superior na Índia: Percepções
dos estudantes e do governo**

**Improving Higher Education in India: The students'
and Government's Perceptions**



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and Government Perceptions**

Thesis presented to the University of Aveiro to fulfill the formalities essential to obtain the degree of European Master in Higher Education (Erasmus Mundus), done by the scientific supervision of the Dr. Maria Teresa Geraldo Carvalho, Professora Auxiliar of the Department of Social, Legal and Political Sciences of the University of Aveiro

I would like to dedicate this work to my mom.

the juri

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palavras-chave

Concepções de ensino superior, percepções dos estudantes, acesso dos alunos ao ensino superior.

Resumo

O ensino superior na Índia tem desempenhado um papel importante no desenvolvimento económico e social do país. A educação é considerada como uma ferramenta fundamental na promoção da cultura e da igualdade entre os cidadãos. Embora sendo essencial para promover mais oportunidades para todos, o aumento do auto-financiamento por parte das instituições de ensino superior, em virtude das pressões governamentais, resultando, por vezes, em privatizações, tornou a educação inacessível para alguns. Actualmente apenas 7% da população entre os 18 e os 24 anos participam no ensino superior.

Este estudo procura analisar as percepções do governo e dos estudantes relativamente às diferentes formas que podem ser utilizadas para melhorar o sistema de ensino superior.

Um estudo foi desenvolvido baseado na análise de conteúdo de documentos oficiais do Ministério da Educação e do discurso dos estudantes recolhidos através de 17 entrevistas. A análise revela diferenças entre as percepções do governo e dos alunos às quais subjazem, igualmente, diferenças entre as concepções que ambos possuem relativamente aos papéis consignados ao ensino superior na sociedade.

Keywords

Conceptions of higher education, students' perceptions, student access.

Abstract

Higher education in India has played a significant role in the economic as well as social development. Education is considered as an important tool to promote country's culture and equality amongst the citizens. Although it seems essential to provide more opportunities to everyone, the growth of self-financing institutions encouraged by the government, resulting in privatisation, has made education out of reach. At present only 7 percent of youth in the age group of 18-24 participate in higher education.

This study tries to analyse government and students' perceptions about the different ways higher education in India can be improved. A qualitative study was developed based on content analysis of government documents and 17 students' interviews. The analysis reveals differences between students and government perceptions that translate also different conceptions about higher education roles in society.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The higher education in India seems to be under pressure to turn into a massification system. On the one hand Indian government aims at increasing the participation rate, 7 per cent at the moment, but on the other hand the universities do not have enough places to provide to the aspiring students (The Hindu, 2005). In addition, the Indian universities do not have the required infrastructure to perform the basic functions of higher education; such as teaching and research, they under crisis. They are not capable to provide adequate number of places for students neither do they impart quality education to match the international standards (Altbach, 1993). After 23 years the situation does not seem to have changed, “higher education in India is ill-equipped, fragmented and outdated” (The Hindu, 2005).

The study aims at finding the perceptions of the students and the government of higher education. Do they share the same perceptions? And also to evaluate the measures taken by the government to overcome the issues related to access with respect to the students’ perspective. In order to do so, the National Policy on Education was selected to get the information on the measures taken to make higher education more accessible and government’s general notion of the higher education. Also, 17 students of Punjab University, Chandigarh (Chandigarh is the capital of regions Punjab and Haryana in the north of India) were interviewed to access the students’ perception on the measure taken by the government.

1.1 Background of the study

The earliest universities, as viewed by Meiners: author of the ‘comparative history of the universities’ written in 1802-5, were ‘a manifestation of the powerful progress of spirit’ and further explains that their origin were in accordance with the ideas of the enlightenment about the unceasing advance of the human striving for knowledge (Ruegg, 1992). It seems that the basic function of the higher education remains unchanged however, higher education itself has undergone many changes among them is the increase in student enrolment. It has increased many folds. Trow (1970) traces three stages of this development; from “Elite” (when only 15% of the total population had an access to higher education) to “Mass” (15-50 percent of the population participating in higher education) to

further “Universal” (over 50% participation). Government and policy makers are not only faced with the issue of participation but also with the funding. As public funding is decreasing, the higher education institutions are asked to look for the alternative financing sources. This phenomena is called cost-sharing, it is defined as the “shift of financial responsibilities for higher education from government towards students and their families” (Johnstone, 2006, p: 53). The rationale of the cost-sharing is that since students benefit the most from higher education therefore they should bear at least a portion of the cost of higher education. It relates to the increase in tuition fees and reduction of government subsidies (shift from loans to grants).

One may argue that cost-sharing could motivate students to work hard and efficiently. Also, that it is a means of “empowering” consumers in higher education (Jongbloed, 2006). But from equity point of view this creates an imbalance in the society as the students from well-off families benefit most from the higher education services. Therefore, government can provide financial support for those who can not pay. The student financial support is the means to protect access for students from disadvantaged background.

Rationale of the study

The massification of higher education has increased the demand of the higher education services and thus increased the requirement for the public funding. But the situation in many developing and developed countries is not as desired, the government funding is decreasing which puts pressure of paying high tuitions fees on the students. The principal behind this shift from public funding to the students is efficiency, equity and necessity. Efficiency, when the price of the program exhibits to some extend the real costs and the trade-off present in the provision of the higher education services (Jonhstone, 2006). Moreover, efficiency of the market depends on the customer¹ choices.

Rationale of this study is that the students’ choice depends on the government decisions and policies. The students, as consumers, of the education, as a good, expect government to understand and fulfill their needs. Therefore, this study aims at finding the perceptions of students and that of government of the higher education. Furthermore, it aims at establishing relationship between the government policies and student access.

¹From economical stand point students are referred to as customers and consumers.

1.2 Indian higher education

“Our ancient scriptures define education as that which liberates...that is, provides the instrument for liberation from ignorance and oppression” (National Policy on Education- NPE, 1986)

Higher education in India has played a significant role in the economic as well as social development. New opportunities have been created aiming to move India in the direction of knowledge society. Education has been given utmost importance in the National Policy on Education (NPE). It is considered essential for everyone because it helps to develop an individual’s critical thinking. It provides manpower for the labour market to facilitate the development of economy. Furthermore, education is taken as a tool to promote country’s culture, democracy, secularism, egalitarianism.

Since the independence, in 1947, India has experienced a phenomenal growth in higher education. Going back to 1950-51, when there were only 263,000 students in all disciplines in 750 colleges affiliated to 30 universities. This has grown by 2005 to 11 million students in 17,000 Degree colleges affiliated to 230 universities. The rate of enrolment in Indian higher education is growing by 5.1% per year with a stagnant growth rate in funds available (Tilak, 1995a) (Table 1).

Table 1:

Institutions	1950-51	1990-91	1996-97	2005-06
Universities	27	184	228	355
Colleges	578	6627	8529	18064
Enrolment ('000s)	263	4925	6755	11028
Teachers ('000s)	24.0	272.7	321	488
Source: UGC Annual Reports; and Selected Educational Statistics (New Delhi: Ministry of Human Resources Development) & Report of CABE Committee on Financing of Higher and Technical Education, 2005				

Higher education is very important not only for an individual but also for the society. Therefore, it seems essential to provide more opportunities to everyone irrespective of their socio-economic background. Appropriate steps are to be taken to overcome the problem of access. Government has taken initiatives to help the private institutions to be established, certain institutions have been granted the status of a university or “deemed universities”.

The growth of self-financing institutions which has been encouraged by the government has led to the privatization of higher education in India. This has made education out of reach. UGC (University Grant Commission) has organized various seminars to discuss this matter of great importance. It aims at providing quality education to the students at nominal cost. UGC is responsible for coordination, determination and maintenance of standards in universities. It was established in 1952 and was constituted as a statutory body under the Act of Parliament in 1956. In addition to its basic functions it also allocates and disburses grants placed at its disposal by the Central Government to the universities after an assessment of their requirements. The commission is responsible for the provision of the grants for development and maintenance, to the universities established by the Central Government (Neelakantan, 2007).

At present, although the rate of enrolment in higher education has reached only 7% of the population between 18-24 years it is only half the average for Asia (Neelakantan, 2007). The majority of the institutions, with an exception of a few, have not been able to maintain the standards required to keep up with the growing demand and to be in sync with the developments in the fields, especially in the field of knowledge and technology. With the passage of time, the financial support provided by the state has deteriorated as a result of increase in enrolments and in demand from primary and secondary education and decrease in funds. The universities are under-funded and require a substantial improvement in terms of quality (Altbach, 1993 & The Hindu, 2005). Moreover, the higher education system is not well –equipped, nor does it have enough places in the universities to fulfill the needs of all the students who want to enroll in higher education. In addition, it seems that the quality of higher education requires extensive improvement.

In the knowledge race of the 21st century India has noteworthy advantages. It has the third largest higher education system in the world, after China and United States, with respect to the number of students. And, English is the primary language of teaching and research. Also, it has a long academic tradition (Altbach, 1993). But in order to benefit from these advantages and to be able to sustain its economic development it needs to take serious steps to improve its system. Some of the tendencies to improve it have been divulged based on changes in the system, both in the institutions and the steering mechanisms.

1.2.1 Expansion of the system

In what concerns the system level the development to a mass stage seems appropriate. With the aim of increasing the rate of student participation the government needs to provide places in the universities and other higher education institutions. Therefore, the expansion of the system is one possibility as the National Knowledge Commission (NKC) proposes through the increase in the number of universities. Around 1500 universities nationwide are expected to increase the participation rate to at least 15% by the year 2015. The aim is to focus on new universities and to transform some affiliated colleges into universities. Besides this increase in the number of higher education institutions it seems also important to make some changes in the regulatory system.

At present, the requirements to enter the higher education are high, demanding and the system responsible for giving authority to enter is burdensome. Besides, there exist multiple regulatory agencies which are at times confusing and overlapping. In general, the system is “over-regulated” and “under-governed” (Altbach, 1993).

Therefore, the NKC feels the need to create Independent Regulatory Authority for Higher Education (IRAHE). One of the main roles will be to set the criteria and to take decisions on entry. It will be responsible to grant the right to the higher education institutions to award a degree, give the license to the accreditation agencies. It aims at re-defining the role of UGC (University Grant Commission). The focus of the UGC will be only on awarding grants to public higher education institutions and also grants for their maintenance. And, the functions performed by the All India Council of Technical Education (AICTE), the Medical Council of India (MCI) and the Bar Council of India (BCI) will be taken by IRAHE.

However, the regulatory system does not seem to be the only problem. As Altbach states: “The Indian colleges and universities have become large, under-funded, ungovernable institutions”.

China, Singapore, Taiwan and South Korea- the main competitors of India, in the knowledge race, are investing principally to create large and distinguished higher education systems. Access is provided to a large number of students, making their institutions to compete with the world’s best institutions (Altbach, 1993).

The envisaged expansion can not become reality without increasing the funds. This is required from both public as well as private sources. Government needs to increase the

support for the higher education. The raise should be at least 1.5 per cent of GDP for the total 6 per cent of GDP for education in general (Tilak, 1997, p: 7-21). For the massive expansion of the higher education system different sources for funds can be considered to complement the public funding. Universities may be encouraged to use their land as one source of financing their requirements. Also, universities may want to have the autonomy to decide the level of fees (tuition fees, and other related costs), even if according to the regulations the fees should meet at least 20 per cent of the total expenditure. However, effective support (scholarships, fees waivers, grants) should be made available for the students who can not pay. Philanthropy along with private sources may be encouraged. Having referred to the main proposal about the changes at the system level, the next section sheds light on the changes at the institutional level.

1.2.2 Reframe institutions

As we referred previously to Altbach (1993), the colleges and universities in India are highly “under-funded” and “ungovernable”. The quality is highly affected by the under-investment in the libraries, laboratories, information technology and classrooms. This has also resulted in discouraged academics to engage in research. Moreover, lack of performance-based incentives and lack of accountability fails to motivate academics.

NKC considers evaluating universities as an essential step. It needs to update the curriculum which has remained almost unchanged for years and, also it is not in accordance with time. Therefore, it seems important that the universities revise their curricula on a regular basis. To improve institutional performance more emphasis on research could be an appropriate measure: also, following the international tendencies incentives based on the performance can be applied in order to retain and attract talented faculty. Moreover, it is indispensable that the libraries, laboratories and other teaching-learning support be up-graded regularly (The Hindu, 2005).

These changes can be expanded to the other organisational levels such as; colleges affiliated to the universities may need, in this context, an upgrading to match the needs of the students. In order to do so it may be appropriate for the government to reflect upon the possible need to provide autonomy to the colleges to decide their curricula, examination

system. This could help bring significant changes in the quality. Also, some of these colleges may be transformed into community colleges to provide vocational and formal education.

Following the international tendencies one can also expect that the measures to turn institutions more accountable to society and to develop internal accountability may be taken in a near future.

1.3 Organization of the study

The study is divided in seven chapters.

Chapter 1 presents the general introduction. Also, the background, rationale of the study, significance of the study and the research questions are presented.

Chapter 2 discusses the methodology opted for the study. It includes the theoretical framework; which presents the concepts used as the base of the study and for the analysis of the data and the questions used for the interview

Chapter 3 is the literature review explaining the concepts from the theoretical framework. Higher education has since the beginning contributed in the development of the societies and their economies. In general terms, higher education plays a multiplicity of purposes which are related to the creation and transmission of the knowledge. The marketization policies raise the need for higher education to focus on market, which means to become competitive. This chapter discusses the factors that affect the student choice.

Chapter 4 presents the higher education system and funding of higher education in India. Higher education in India is considered as a tool to strengthen economic and socio-cultural development. It is an important factor contributing to the national cohesion. It brings everyone from different cultural, social and economical backgrounds at the same level, therefore, fosters equality amongst people. The main emphasis is on the teaching role of higher education. But, the Indian higher education is at cross roads (Tilak 1995a). It is experiencing the significant stress with respect to financing. In the present situation, the resources are limited and government does not have adequate funds to meet the growing demands of higher education sector (Tilak, 1997).

While total expenditure on higher education in India has increased remarkably during the post-independence period in current prices, the increase in real prices is not so attractive. Increase in expenditure per pupil is very small and in real prices the same has indeed declined (Tilak, 1993).

Chapter 5 presents the analysis of the data based on the literature review. The NPE defines various steps to eradicate illiteracy and to encourage participation from all the sections of the society. In order to provide equal opportunity to all it provides facilities, special aids and reservations of seats in the higher education for the weaker section of the society (SC's, ST's). 17 students were interviewed to obtain the perception of the students and to compare it to that of the government. All of them shared the opinion that reservations are no longer important, they rather create more competition because of the less number of seats available to general public (without any reservation). They think that Indian higher education system needs more higher education institutions and funding to answer the need of the students. Higher education is important for better life and personal growth as stated in the NPE.

Chapter 6 draws the conclusions while answering the research questions. There is a wide gap between the students' expectations and government policies and reforms. Students perceive higher education as a means to improve life standards and personal development. And, the government perceives higher education as a tool to enforce equality. It recognises the importance of higher education for personal growth. However, the government policy does not favour student choice rather it limits it to fewer opportunities. With the lack of quality institutions, talented faculty and outdated course structure it is difficult to envisage the rapid increase in participation. The higher education system is not well-equipped to meet the demands, nor does it have enough places in the universities to fulfill the needs of all the students who want to enrol in higher education.

Chapter 2: Literature review

Higher education has undergone changes over the years and the relationship between the state, higher education institutions and the society also has changed. This chapter presents the traditional functions of the higher education and the actual state higher education is in. In addition, this chapter describes the concepts and theories which will be used to analyse the data and to draw the conclusion.

2.1 Functions of the Higher Education

“The traditional missions of higher education institutions are to teach students, to carry on research and to provide services to the community” (Mora and Villa, 2003).

Castells (2001) identifies four major functions of the universities² (higher education). First function is of the ideological apparatus: earlier the church-based universities were dominant and served as a function to set and transmit the ideologies amongst the youth. This still is one of the functions because “both conservative and radical ideologies find their expression in the universities” (Castells, 2001). Moreover, this function favours more the social changes rather than the social conservation. Second function is the selection of elites; the English system with the dominant Oxford and Cambridge is perhaps an example of the elitist role of universities. Third function is to generate new knowledge. Fourth function is the training of the skilled labour force so as to answer the growing demands and needs of the labour market.

These four functions present the essential responsibilities carried by the universities with different emphasis on one or the other function depending upon the country. In addition to these functions Trow (1997) defines two more functions; defined as popular functions. With the increase of the societal and market needs, pressure on the universities is

²University has a crucial role to play in an economy and society. The primary function of this system is to impart knowledge (building block of the university) and to be able to do so efficiently is the main goal. Also, it is responsible for the creation of the new knowledge. To achieve these goals and to survive the university has to answer diligently to the demands set by its environment. Also, it needs to be flexible, innovative and creative. It should be competent to attract the best talent; researchers, teachers and students (Birnbaum, 1991).

increasing equally to provide places for as many students as can be encouraged to continue their education. And secondly to provide useful knowledge and service to nearly every group and institution that want it.

The functions described by both Castell (2001) and Trow (1997), can be categorised into three basic roles performed by the higher education institutions. Firstly, the teaching role is to impart knowledge by providing opportunities for instruction in all the spheres of higher education from liberal arts to vocational training. This role is further divided by two different philosophical principles, meritocratic and egalitarian principles.

According to the meritocratic principle teaching should be focused only for able and competent individuals, in order to get economic security and higher social status for the students and their families (Mora and Villa, 2003). The egalitarian principle opposes the meritocratic principles; it puts focus on the capacity of higher education to reduce inequality in the society in terms of economic and social backgrounds. However, both philosophical principles are not independent of how and what is taught and learned in the higher education institutions. Therefore, the emphasis should be not only on the teaching goal but also on the quality of services provided.

The second role of the higher education institutions is doing research and development. Higher education institutions are responsible for the creation and diffusion of knowledge. The knowledge, hence produced can be used as an opportunity to reduce the costs of innovation both in production and in institutional change (Mora and Villa, 2003).

Higher education institutions should provide this knowledge to those who would put it to practical use. This can be accomplished by performing various activities, such as; providing technical knowledge to the private sector, to policy makers, start-up and spinoff, verifying the knowledge generated by the private sector, providing feedback. Therefore, the third “community services” role of the higher education institutions aims at consuming knowledge for the development of the society, socio-economic development. The increasing importance higher education has been assuming makes it relevant to develop more about economy and education.

2.2 Economics and Education

Economics deals with the description and analysis of the production and consumption of goods and services. It attempts to relate the human needs with the finance; finding means to allocate the limited resources to these unlimited needs.

As higher education has an impact on other sectors of the society and the use of resources to have the benefiting output (Canton and Venniker, 2001) is important the economic stand point is also relevant in higher education. Like other organisations higher education also produces and sells educational services but its non-profit nature differentiates it from the companies, firms. Economics is characterised by two concepts: equity and efficiency. Equity implies to the equal distribution of the goods and services amongst the customers (students in higher education). Efficiency is to utilise the available resources and time as efficiently as possible to get more results, (absence of waste).

2.2.1 Education as a public good

It is often argued that education is a “public good” (Grace, 1989). According to economists a public good should fulfil three conditions (Tooley, 2002):

Indivisibility it implies that a good can be utilized by anyone without having to pay extra costs.

Nonrivalness “is virtually the same as indivisibility, except that it is the benefits available to every member of the public which are not reduced, rather than the amount of the good”. (Tooley, 2002, p: 4).

Nonexcludability no one can or should be excluded to consume the good.

This explains the reason for the government to intervene in education, to overcome the inequality in access. “Reason for government to subsidise institutions may be that they regard themselves as better informed about the performance of universities and colleges than the students” (Canton, Venniker, 2001, p: 44). But the regulations imposed by the government do not leave room for the innovation, any *manoeuvre* for the institutions. Clearly, the government has financial as well as non-financial means to make sure that students get enrolled in higher education and that there is no waste of talent (human capital). From this point, the intervention of the government is considered to resolve the problems related to equity (Jongbloed, 2003). However, general public is still disappointed

to a greater extent from the government policies on higher education (idem, 113). Higher education is still unable to satisfy the needs and expectations of the students, their parents and labour market (Wolf, 1988).

Moreover, the global trends and developments raise the need for higher education to focus on market, which means to become competitive. To compete for students, teachers, researchers and research funds. This will lead to the increased competition among the higher education institutions and consequently, may motivate them to enhance their quality and pricing of their services. In order to compete for the best on the national and international market, institutions require enhancing tremendously their performances (Jongbloed, 2000). Lately, the sectors previously steered by the government are introducing marketization policies and market type mechanisms. Also, governments in some countries have been encouraging deregulatory policies and privatization schemes, in order to free and facilitate markets (Weimer and Vinning, 1999). The main aim of these marketization policies in higher education is to strengthen student choice and improve quality, and other various services provided by the higher education providers. Marketization is aimed at making the institutions responsive towards the needs of the students and pay attention on the innovation in teaching and research. Moreover, the marketization policies intend to increase competition between the higher education institutions and introduce performance related rewards schemes. This will, as a result, increase efficiency of the higher education sector in general and will make institutions and students aware of the consequences of their decisions related to costs (Jongbloed, 2003).

However, the environment (state, society, labour market) influences a lot in the decision making, governance and structure processes of an institution. Previously, the state was a dominant force taking all the important decisions related to degrees, funding, access, quality, institutional management, personnel matters and other areas (Jongbloed, 2003). Clark in his famous triangle of coordination depicts the relationship between the factors mentioned above; the state being on the top and the faculty with very little or no autonomy and the market (see figure 2). With the introduction of the market-type mechanisms; which aims at benefiting the society through innovation, development of new services, the relationships between the components are changing. The state is not as dominant as before, it is allowing the institutions to regulate demand and supply. The government is assuming

the role of supervisor and let others decide themselves. Even though the US state government also have funding and regulatory responsibilities with respect to public higher education, in most states the financial and regulatory instruments are not very restrictive and provide a lot of autonomy to the institutions, (Cloete and Maassen, 2002). This phenomenon has in general, given rise to the market-driven higher education system. Looking at the Clark's triangle one can see that the triangle depicts three factors, namely; the state authority, the market (society) and the academic oligarchy (institutions) influence and hence, determine highly how a higher education system of a country is co-ordinated.

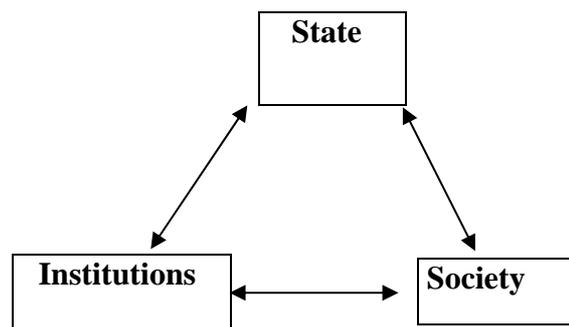


Figure 1: Cloete, Nicol & Maassen, Peter, 2002

Based on Clark's triangle, national steering systems are depicted, for example the move from state control to state supervision (Vungt in Jongbloed, 2003). The figure 2 represents the depiction of Clark's triangle in the era of globalization. This triangle shows that state allowing market to regulate demand and supply. The role of the government is only to create the rules and let others decide themselves. "This triangle attempts to show that the role of the state, as well as that of the other agents (providers/academe, students/business), is constantly subject to re-evaluation" (Jongbloed, 2003).

Looking at the Indian higher education system, it represents the old model in which the state authority is still the most powerful body. At present, Indian higher education insitutions lacks both autonomy and accountability. Autonomy of the universities is highly affected by the government intervention and also by the intrusion from political processes. It is extremely difficult to provide generalized information on the system because there is not enough transparency and accountability in the system (National Knowledge Commission, 2006). The main emphasis is on the teaching role of higher education. The Indian universities do not have the required infrastructure to perform the other two functions of higher education, they under crisis (Altbach, 1993). In this respect one of the proclaiming ways to improve the system it to increase students' participation. In order to

analyze the measures that can be taken to accomplish this objective one has to reflect upon the reasons people go to higher education.

2.2.2 Why do people attend higher education?

“What was a privilege that became a right transformed into something very near to an obligation for growing number of young men and women” (Trow 1970).

Higher education has since the beginning contributed in the development of the societies and their economies. In general terms, higher education plays a multiplicity of purposes which are related to the creation and transmission of the knowledge (Mora, and Vila, 2003). The human capital theory stresses that “education enhances the knowledge and skills embodied in people, thus raising their human capital” (Canton and Venniker, 2001). In addition, individuals participate in higher education for two main reasons: *consumption* according to this perspective the main motivation is the curiosity and to enhance the knowledge (immediate benefits). The second reason is the *long-term investment*, according to which the motivation is the future benefits, such as high earnings, lesser risk of unemployment and longer professional activities (monetary benefits). The research under human capital theory shows that the education has positive effects on the skills and knowledge of the individual, thus increases the individual earning capacity in the labour market (Mora and Vila, 2003). Besides, there are some other benefits: reduction of crime, better social cohesion, and health. The outcomes of higher education are not only benefited by the individual but also by the society (Canton and Venniker, 2001).

In addition, education enhances the skills and the knowledge of the individual which further allows the individual to get better salary, job-satisfaction, personal development and better social life. Furthermore, education reveals the innate ability it is beneficial for the individuals even if it did not have any effect on their productivity.

As higher education is an experienced good students can not know or judge the quality and efficiency of a degree/program until they finish it (Winston, 1999, p: 138-139), and the opportunity cost is high because participating in higher education is an investment of money as well as time. This makes the choice of investing in the higher education is difficult for the students.

In this context, students from financially weak background tend to be more sceptical to invest in higher education. As for them investing in a house is more beneficial than to invest in higher education due to the risk involved and higher education being an experienced good. Moreover, to avail all the benefits the higher education offers, students need resources and information to be to make considerable choices.

2.3 Transparency and Information

Efficiency of the market highly depends on the choices the customers make. Therefore, to make these choices customers need to be in the position by which it implies that having information about what is offered in the market (Jongbloed, 2006). Thus, these issues need to be taken in consideration while making the information available on the products (programs). The problems regarding transparency could be easily resolved through student counselling and guidance. For example; confusion arising because of the programs having different names but the same contents, this could be make more clear by asking the institutions to weed out the programs causing the confusion. In the Netherlands, for instance, government asked the institutions to make the information about the programs offered easily surveyable by the students (Jongbloed, 2006). Therefore, government could intervene to solve the information related problems by setting conditions for the institutions (providers) to supply the clear information and by subsidizing the higher education services, awarding grants, loans and other benefits to the students. Also, how the information is made available to the students, friends, family play a very important role.

2.4 Affordability

In this era of cost-sharing, where the government funding is getting weaker, the aspect of affordability has become very important factor in student choice. Affordability is the extent to which the students (parents) are able to pay for the higher education program. Students need to bear the tuition fees, cost of study material, living and travel expenses. To follow higher education students consider following five aspects (Vossensteyn, 1997):

1. *Cost of study*: direct cost related to follow a program for example: tuition fees, study material, living and travelling expenses.

2. *Student financial support*: this is further divide into two types: a) direct financial support; the governmental benefits as grants, loans, voucher.

b) *Indirect financial support*; government support in the form of child allowances, tax benefits to the parents of the students participating in the higher education.

3. *Study progress demand*: if students to show certain progress in their studies to stay eligible for the student support.

4. *Developments in student aid*: if the student support system has undergone any changes and what are the consequences for the students.

5. *Socio-economic background*: students' choice depends heavily upon the socio-economic background of the student.

Of these five aspects I shall discuss cost of study, student financial support and socio-economic background in detail. I am of the view that these three factors influence to the greater extend the decisions of the students. Therefore, it is interesting to find out their effects on the student choice. India is a land of diversity (cultural, socio-economical) and Indian government aims at increasing the participation in higher education, but India's population ranges from poor (socio-economic reasons, discussed in the analysis chapter) to people living in tribal or other un-accessible places. So, how government is trying to attract students from weak socio-economical backgrounds to enrol in higher education?

2.4.1 Cost of study

Cost of study is the expenses the students (parents) have to bear to follow the program of their choice. It includes the tuition fee, expenditure on the study material (books, stationary, etc), living costs that is housing, travelling and other expenses like hobbies, recreation, etc.

Student fees can be considered a way of empowering the "consumers" in higher education. Other studies state that the higher the fees students pay, the higher the expectations they have to reap the benefits from the higher education provider (Jongbloed, 2006). This implies that the tuition fee refers to the client-producer relationship in higher education, very much like in market. Also, it could be said that the fees (tuition fees) acts as a catalyst to motivate students to perform efficiently and to make more conscious choices.

The rationale behind the cost-sharing (why students should pay for their education in terms of tuition fees) is that students get benefits out of higher education, as higher income, skills and knowledge development, job-satisfaction and therefore, they should bear at least a portion of the costs (Johnstone,2006). Furthermore, Johnstone defines cost-sharing as, “cost-sharing refers to the shift of the higher education cost burden from exclusive or near exclusive reliance on government or taxpayer to those parents who can afford to pay- and providing means-tested grants for those who are unable to contribute- is a step in the direction of greater equity”(idem, p: 51-52).

Therefore, government intervention provides the required guarantee. According to Canton and Venniker (2001), “a reason for government to subsidise institutions may be that they regard themselves as better informed about the performance of universities and colleges than the students” (p: 44). The statement may be considered as a valid reason to explain why the number of student enrolment is higher in public institutions as compared to the number of student in private institutions.

Moreover, government intervenes to avoid the human capital spillovers and to provide equal opportunities to all to participate in higher education. It also intervenes to provide the assurance by making the student loans available, subsidies, graduate tax. Furthermore, the intervention by the government allows setting the criterion to provide the correct and sufficient information about the services. Since, higher education is an experienced good, customer (student) feels in doubt while investing in the unknown. These doubts are cleared by the government intervention as it plays the role of the guarantor of the good.

2.4.2 Direct student financial support

The financial support provided to the students in the form of loans, grants, vouchers are basically to provide access to the students who otherwise, would not be able to pay the cost of study. Students from disadvantaged background may be discouraged by the high tuition fees or are debt averse in any case this could discourage them to get enrolled in the institutions of their choice or to participate in higher education at all. Debt aversion, “situations where individuals are unwilling to take out loans to finance their post-secondary schooling even though they know that schooling represents a good investment and it could be facilitated by the loans in question” (Finnie 2004, p: 12).

According to the human capital approach, education enhances the individual's skills and knowledge and everyone should have equal opportunities to have an access to higher education. Student support by the government provides alternatives to participate in the higher education. It reduces the cost of education and could influence the demand too by increasing it. Student support proves to be an essential factor to enhance the human capital of the student. It could serve as one of the motivation for the individuals to enrol in the higher education.

Financial support system serves as an instrument for the government to protect access for those from low-income families. This could be done by lowering the price of the educational services via subsidies. The subsidization not only lowers the financial barrier but also increases the education options to make a better choice. Consequently, the financial support for the students is a way to strengthen the student (consumer) choice in higher education. Thus, it enhances the access for the students from low-income background (Jongbloed, 2006).

The student support system in France is diverse as the system itself is. French system could serve as an example for Indian higher education system to strengthen its support system provided to the students. This student oriented system provides many services ranging from grants to cheap transport, with the aim to encourage the students to participate in higher education. Efficiency can be measured in terms of student enrolment and students benefiting from the services. In France, more than 37% of the student population enrolls in higher education. To overcome the barriers imposed by the tuition fees, the government offers grants and loans. There are two kinds of grants awarded by the state in France: *Grants awarded on social criteria*- the first one takes the economical background of the student into consideration. It includes student's own income and that of her/his parents and also the family expenditure. The income considered to award a grant can differ from one year to the other, as it is declared every year by the ministerial circular. *The Grants awarded on university criteria*- they do not take the economic background into consideration. It is purely on merit basis. It includes the assessment of the work accomplished and the school results. Students having a post-graduate degree (Bac+5 years) or the ones preparing for the entrance exams of great importance such as CAPES or agrégation (CHEPS, 2007).

2.4.3 Socio-economic background

Most of the countries aim at removing the financial barriers posed due to the socio-economic background. Student financial aid is one of the methods used by the governments to provide access irrespective of the background of the individual. Countries that provide both direct and indirect aid provide direct aid mostly to the students in financial need.

Grants in France, Germany are only provided to a very small percentage of students all those from low-income background. In Norway interest free students loans are available to all irrespective of the income and but the grants are only provided to low-income students (Opheim, 2006).

2.5 Significance of the study

Human capital theory states that an individual benefits from the investment in the higher education, “more human capital, in turn, implies higher salaries and a smaller chance of ending up unemployed” (Canton and Venniker, 2001). Human capital also generates non-monetary benefits related to personal development, knowledge which leads to the fulfillment of the curiosity, also better health and awareness. Monetary benefits are those which concern job and career opportunities. Investment in higher education for sure increase the career options, better lifestyle of the individual. Society too gains from the individual investment in the higher education as it leads to reduction of crime, economic development of the country (Canton and Venniker, 2001). However, the decision of the individual to invest in higher education highly depends on various other factors for example; socio-economic background, cost of study, financial support (if available). If the opportunity cost is too high it could have negative effects on the student decision. Thus, government subsidies, loans, grants play an important role. Financial support is the instrument government uses to protect access to the higher education for those who are not in the position to pay (Jongbloed, 2006).

The study will analyze the National Policy on Education of India (NPE). The factors such as access, equal opportunity and cost of study, affect student choice. Therefore, the study will find out if these factors are dealt with in the policy and how are these perceived by the students and affect their choices.

Summary

Higher Education is expanding and so are the needs of the students. Market needs to respond to the increasing demand. Ideally, increase in demand is re-compensated by the equal increase in the supply but this situation does not always find its way to the reality. The miss-match in demand-supply (when demand is higher than the supply) leads to the rise of the costs of the product and it is the case in higher education in some countries. This results in a market failure affecting the student choice. These market failures risk in the drop of the number of students who would want to pursue higher education. Furthermore, the efficiency of markets depends on the student (customer) choices and on how well they are informed to make these choices. The decisions about the participation in higher education (the student investment decision) depend highly on the available educational supply (Jongbloed, 2006). Also, these decisions depend on how well the consumer (students) is informed and if the information is readily available or not.

On the other hand, higher education plays an important role in the socio-economic development of a country. Students seek admission in the higher education institutions to increase their human capital (skills and knowledge) eventually to be better placed in the labour market. Higher education institutions seek better students in particular to be ranked higher in the global market. This relationship leads to the rise in the competition amongst the demand side (students) to get a place to study in the reputed institutions and on the supply side (higher education institutions) to compete for the best students. This competition, the result of marketisation policies, puts emphasis on the efficiency. Institutions need to provide quality courses and faculty, therefore, require more autonomy. These marketisation policies encourage students to take choices and be aware of their consequences. In order to strengthen student choice government needs to provide relevant information (which is easy to access) about the cost of study, financial support and other facilities offered by the higher education institutions.

Chapter 3: Research problem

Looking at the present condition of the higher education in India, “Indian higher education system has undergone massive expansion in post-independent India with a national resolve to establish several Universities” (UGC, 2003). It is interesting to see how providers (state) perceive the present higher education system and to compare it with the perceptions of the consumers of the higher education (students).

This study aims at finding the response to the following question:

What are the perceptions of the students’ and government regarding higher education in India?

Based on this research question the study will focus on the following aspects:

- Conceptions of higher education
- Affordability
- Student access

The research question can be operationalized through following sub-questions:

1. What kind of measures NPE take in order to enhance students’ participation in higher education?
2. What are the underlying conceptions about higher education roles in the national policy?
3. How do students perceive the policies on the services of higher education?
 - 3.1 Do these policies influence students’ decisions to go into higher education?
 - 3.2 Are students’ perceptions about the role of higher education in society, similar to those revealed in the National Policy?

The main question was further operationalized into three sub questions. The first sub-question would serve to set the background for the study. It aims at finding different steps taken by the government to increase the student participation in higher education.

Further, the second sub-question aims at describing the government's notions of higher education. The third question is to analyze the interviews to find how students' view the system and the policies of the government to make it accessible to all. The third question is, further, divided into two questions which enquires students about the factors, mainly the governmental policies, influencing their decisions to enroll in higher education. And, finally the last question will compare the students' and government's perceptions to see if the government is providing what the consumer needs or expects from it.

Chapter 4: Methodology

4.1 A case study

The case-study approach has been chosen in this study since it gives an opportunity for a problem to be studied in some depth within a limited time scale (Bell 1987: 6).

Attempting to define a case study, Merriam (1998: 31) summarizes that a case study can:

- Explain the reasons for a problem, the background of a situation, what happened, and why.
- Explain why an innovation worked or failed to work.
- Discuss and evaluate alternatives not chosen.
- Evaluate, summarize, and conclude, thus increasing its potential applicability.

An evaluative case study

Hoyle, Harris, and Judd (2002: 338) suggest that the purpose of evaluation research is to answer practical, real-world questions about the effects of some policy or program. Since this study is intended to discuss the perceptions of the government and students about the higher education in India, it can be defined as an *evaluative case study*. Also, “case study is the best reporting form for evaluations”(Guba and Lincoln 1981 in Merriam 1998: 39). Evaluative case studies involve description, explanation, and judgment (Merriam 1998: 39).

The research question was formulated based on the idea that there are differences between the government and students’ perceptions about higher education. These differences are present not only in what concerns the measures to increase students’ participation in higher education but also concerning the notions of what is higher education for.

4.1 Data collection

To obtain the data two main qualitative techniques were used: document analysis and interviews. The documents elected were the national policy on education, UGC reports concerning higher education which were gathered through the website of the government. And, to assess the student perception on the measures taken by the government to enhance

participation in higher education and their dominant notions about higher education, students were interviewed.

Sampling: Snow ball sampling was used due to lack of time and information on the targeted population: students currently enrolled in the universities. According to the snowball sampling technique “a few appropriate individuals are located and then asked for the names and addresses of others who might also fit the sampling requirement” (Oppenheim, 1992, p: 43). The final sample resulted in 17 interviews. From these, the majority were women (58.8%) and the average age of 22 years; the younger of 19 and the older of 27 years of age. The majority of the students were studying to get the first degree (70.5%) and others were master students. All the students were studying at the Punjab University, Chandigarh and majority of them come from middle class. Their distribution according to their field of study is presented in table 1. In the first degree the number of students interviewed from Humanities and Arts and Engineering and Computer Science was same. However, in the master degree more students were interviewed from Arts.

Table 2: Interviewees: distribution by gender and field of study

	Field of study	Women	Men	Total
1st Degree	Humanities and Arts	0	4	4
	Engineering and Computer Science	4	4	8
Master	Arts	3	0	3
	Engineering and Computer Science	1	1	2
Total		8	9	17

Interview: “Interview as a strategy to find out from people things that we can not directly observe” (Patton 1990). The focus during the study was on the thematic interviews- to have a theme/ idea before conducting an interview.

Patton characterizes interviews as structured and unstructured. *Structured interviews:* to collect one kind of data from every person interviewed. For the study structured interviews were planned with an open set of questions. The aim was to gather all the information related to the topic and avoid any vague or general set of answers.

More precisely interviews were taken via telephone due to shortage of time and distance problems as all the interviewees are from India. Therefore, interviews via telephone were an economical option compared to have to travel to India.

Figure 2: interview schedule

<p><i>Questions for the interview:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><i>1. What is your field of study?</i><i>2. What is your enrolment status?</i><i>3. Which factors helped you to take the decision to enter higher education?</i><i>4. Could you list three factors (from the most important to the least important) and explain how and why they were important to your decision?</i><i>5. How are you funding your education?</i><i>6. What kind of student support systems are available?</i><i>7. How did you get this information?</i><i>8. Who influenced the most your decision? Why?</i><i>9. Under what kind of reservation did you apply for the admission?</i><i>10. What is your opinion about the reservation in the higher education?</i><i>11. What are the main issues that according to you higher education in India is facing?</i><i>12. How do you think higher education can be made more accessible to everyone?</i>

4.3 Limitations of the study

Limitations of reliability and validity

One limitation of this study is that the information provided through interviews is filtered through the views of the informants. Many factors can influence responses, one way or another (Bell 1987: 73). The caste system and therefore, reservation is a sensitive issue consequently, some information may have been altered or retained by the interviewee. Also, the information tends to be influenced by the personal views and experiences therefore, the information could be biased in some cases. Moreover, “validity depends on the respondents’ candour and willingness to cooperate”, also it is difficult to know how accurately the chosen sample represents the entire population (Oppenheim, 1992). Therefore, the results can not be generalised.

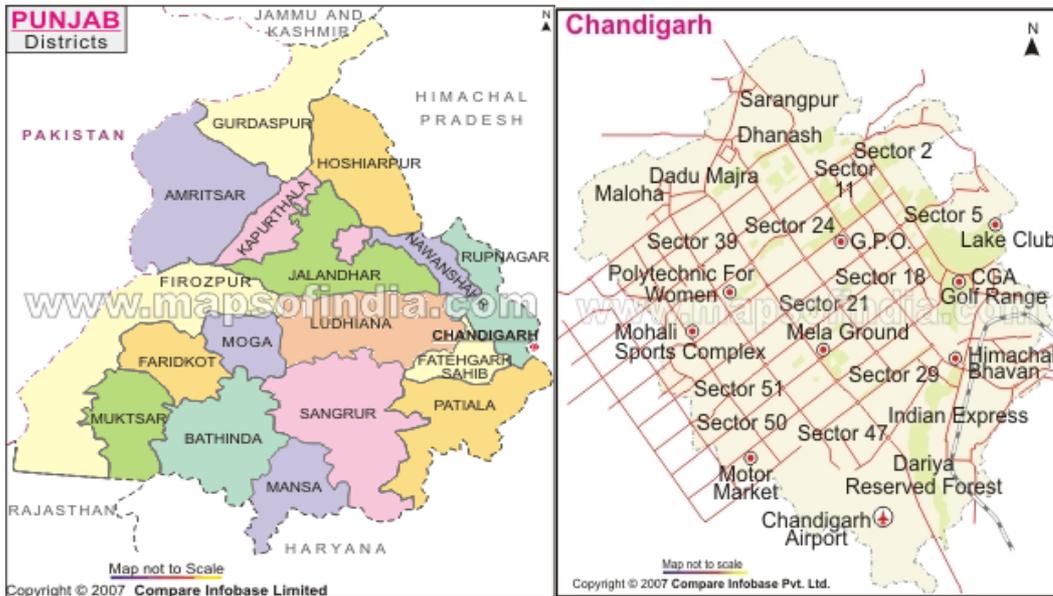
Chapter 5: Higher education in India

Introduction

The Indian higher education system, being one of the largest systems in the world, has evolved gradually over the past years. It aims at creating harmony between the past and the present through knowledge. Henceforth, allowing an individual to explore his roots and providing him the opportunity to progress.



The data for the study was collected mainly from Chandigarh- capital of two states; Punjab and Haryana.



COUNTRY OVERVIEW

Population

Total Population: 1,147,995,8981

Male: 51.5% Female: 48.5%

GDP

2,843,897 Rs. Crore (2005)2

Policy developments

Main agencies influencing Vocational Education and Training:

- Ministry of Labour and Employment (MoLE)
- Directorate General of Employment & Training (DGE&T)
- National Council for Vocational Training (NCVT)
- Pandit Sunderlal Sharma Central Institute for Vocational Education (PSSCIVE)
- Labour Bureau and the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD).
- All India Council For Technical Education (AICTE)

Key developments 3

- The Apprentices Act (1961) regulated the training of apprentices in the industry
- The All India Council for Technical Education Act (1987): this Act established the Council, with a view to improving the planning and co-ordination of Technical education between states
- Vocationalisation of Secondary Education (1998): the main objectives of this scheme include: enhancement of individual employability, reduction of imbalance between supply and demand of skilled manpower and the provision of alternatives for those pursuing higher education.
- National Institutes of Technology Act (2007): this act declared certain institutions as “institutes of National importance”
- Vocational Training improvement Project (2007): aims to improve to employment outcomes of graduates from the vocational training system through facilitating dialogue with industry and enhancing the design and delivery of training by making it more responsive to demand

Sources: 1 U.S. Census Bureau, International Data Base

2 Ministry of Statistics and Implementation

3 Ministry of Human Resource Development

5.1 Higher education system in India

Universities Despite the diverse and complex structure of the Indian higher education, Indian universities are mainly of two kinds: the unitary and the affiliating universities.

Unitary Universities are the ones which are confined to a single campus and offer both postgraduate as well as undergraduate courses. They, also give more importance to research, Aligarh Muslim University, Banaras Hindu University, Mysore University are examples of unitary universities. The Jawaharlal Nehru University however does not offer any undergraduate teaching although being an unitary university. Another type of unitary universities is the city universities which have constituent colleges, for example: University of Allahabad and the Maharaja Sayajiaro University of Baroda.

Affiliating Universities are the most common type observed in India. In general, these universities possess a central campus which has its department(s) or schools to impart postgraduate courses and to do research. Various colleges are affiliated to these universities. This means that the right to award the degree and regulations for the courses and admission is invested in the affiliating university. Most of these colleges impart postgraduate courses in selected subjects. The majority of the Indian universities are the affiliating type, such as: Delhi University, Calcutta University, Mumbai University, and Bangalore University consisting of a large number of colleges affiliated to them.

There are third kind of higher education institutions which are specialized in the technical and professional courses at both undergraduate and postgraduate level. Some of them are prestigious institutes like: Indian Institute of Technology (ITI), Birla Institute of Technology, All India Institute of Medical Services (AIIMS) among others and contribute to the technological development of India.

Furthermore, two more types of universities are present in the higher education system: Deemed-to-be-universities and Institutions of National importance. Firstly, the *Deemed-to-be-universities* also referred to as *Deemed Universities* are those institutions that have acquired the status of the university based on their long traditional path of specialization and excellence in a specific domain of knowledge. Deccan College Postgraduate and Research Institute, Pune and Tata Institute of Social Science, Mumbai are the Deemed Universities. The status is granted by the University Grants Commission (UGC) with the approval of the Department of Education, Ministry of Human Resources Development.

The *Institutions of National importance* are realized through Acts of Parliament. At present there are 11 such institutions which include the 6 Indian institutes of technology. They have the right to offer their own courses. This right generally is given only to the universities.

Colleges are the institutes which impart the undergraduate and postgraduate instructions. They are like branches of the universities which in order to make the higher education accessible can open their centers to the farfetched places. There are four main kinds of colleges in India: government colleges, privately- managed colleges, university colleges and professional colleges.

Government colleges are very few in number, only 15 to 20% of the total number of colleges are government colleges. They are supervised by the state government.

University colleges are also known as the constituent colleges. These colleges are entirely under the control of the universities. It's the university which takes all the important decisions related to the degrees, courses and about the regulations for examinations and admissions. However, such colleges remain small in number.

In contrast to the government and university colleges the *privately managed colleges* make up to 70%. These colleges have been established by the private trusts or societies. More than one-third of these colleges are set up in the rural areas. Although they were initiated by the private ventures they receive government funding. Their management is constituted according to the norms laid down by the statutes of the university concerned. Their relationship with the university is defined by the university act and statutes. The right to award affiliation is possessed by the universities in consultation with the state government.

The *professional colleges* mainly offer courses in Medicine, Engineering and Management in addition to some other subjects. Some colleges are managed and funded by the government and certain are under private sector authority. Recently, states like Karnataka, Andhara Pradesh, Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu have seen increase in the number of privately managed professional colleges. These newly established colleges do not entitle for the government funding instead charge huge amount from students. Consequently, the Supreme Court has put forth a list of guidelines for admissions and fees charged by the privately managed colleges.

Enrolments: As against the total enrolment of about 200,000 students in the year 1950, the present enrolment of students in universities and colleges has risen to 1,10,28,020, out of which 87.06% are enrolled in Affiliated Colleges in pursuit of undergraduate, postgraduate, research and diplomas, whereas only 13.03% are enrolled in the universities/ university colleges. A detailed stage-wise students' enrolment (2005-06) is given in Table 3 below.

Table- 3

No.	Stage	University Department/ University College	Affiliated Colleges	Total (% to Grand Total)	Percentage in Affiliated Colleges
1	Graduate	950892	8854085	9804977 (88.91%)	90.30
2	Post-Graduate	347096	691714	1038810 (9.42%)	66.58
3	Research	64161	6555	70716 (0.64%)	9.27
4	Diploma/ Certificate	64644	48873	113517 (1.03%)	43.05
Grand Total		1426793	9601227	11028020 (100%)	87.06

Source: Education in India vol.II (S)

In discharging its responsibility, towards coordination and maintenance of standards in various fields of higher education, the Central Government has established a number of regulatory and statutory bodies. A list of such bodies and their mandates are given below:

Table 4:
List of Regulatory and Statutory Bodies in Higher Education
Source: Education in India vol.II (S)

S.No.	Name of the Body	Mandate
1	University Grants Commission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Co-ordination, determination and maintenance of standards in higher education. • Release of grants to individual institutions
2	All India Council for Technical Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proper planning & co-ordinated development of technical education system throughout the country.
3	Distance Education Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promotion of Open University and Distance Education systems in the educational pattern of the country and for coordination and determination of

		standards of teaching, evaluation & research in such systems
4	Indian Council of Agricultural Research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Co-ordination of agricultural research and development programmes and develop linkages at national and international levels with related organisations to enhance the quality of life of the farming community.
5	Bar Council of India	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Co-ordination, determination and maintenance of standards in legal education and profession.
6	National Council for Teacher Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Achieving planned and co-ordinated development of the teacher education system throughout the country, the regulation and proper maintenance of norms and standards in teacher education and for matters connected therewith.
7	Rehabilitation Council of India	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standardization and regulation of training of personnel and professionals in the field of Rehabilitation and Special Education.
8	Medical Council of India	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishment of standards in medical education and to define medical qualifications in India and abroad.
9	Pharmacy Council of India	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prescription, regulation and maintenance of minimum educational standards for the training of pharmacists uniformly in the country.
10	Indian Nursing Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regulation and maintenance of uniform standards of training for Nurses, Midwives, Auxilliary Nurse-Midwives and Health Visitors
11	Dental Council of India	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regulation of the Dental Education, Dental Profession, Dental ethics in the country and recommend to the Government of India to accord permission to start a Dental College, start higher courses and increase of seats.
12	Central Council of Homeopathy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintenance of the Central Register of Homoeopathy.
13	Central Council of Indian Medicine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintenance of the Central Register of Indian Medicine
14	Council of Architecture	Regulation of the education and practice of Architectural profession throughout India besides maintaining the register of architects

5.2 Courses and Degrees

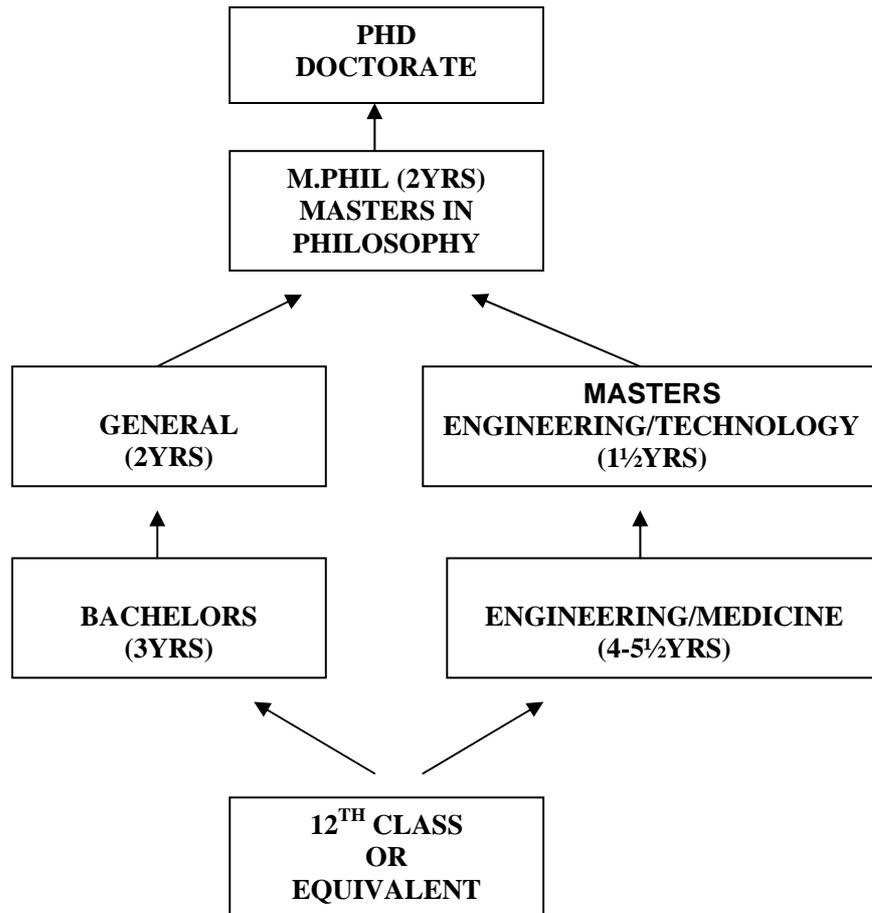


Figure 3: The structure of education in India.

The main courses and degrees existent at the moment in the Indian higher education can be seen in figure 3. Next the eligibility and admission procedures are analyzed more in depth.

5.3 Eligibility and Admission

In order to get admission in an undergraduate course, the candidate needs to have completed the 12 years of schooling. And in the senior secondary level or equivalent examination they should have passed in five subjects. These subjects depend upon the field chosen by the student for example: in the Medical field the student will have subjects as Physics, Chemistry, Biology, English and one subject of choice like: information technology. In the Non-Medical field instead of biology the student will study Mathematics and the rest of the subjects will be the same. In other fields like, Arts the choice remains wide, which however is limited by the combination of subjects established by the institution.

The percentages to get the admission in a reputed university are very high; the student should obtain minimum 60-70% in their qualifying examination. And if the subjects were Mathematics / Biology, Chemistry, Physics and English then the minimum required percentage varies between 80-90%. The requirement for high percentage is due to the limited number of seats available. Moreover, the admission to professional colleges is based on the admission test(s) at country level. The admission tests for the six Indian Institutes of Management and the All India Medical Institutes at Delhi and Chandigarh are the most competitive. For instance, 10,000 students from all over the country compete for less than 2000 seats in order to get admission in the IIT (Indian Institute of Technology). While some institutes keep a certain number of seats for overseas applicants or just paid seats according to the guidelines of the Indian University concerned.

Admission in non-professional colleges remains less difficult with exception to the colleges in the metropolitan cities where the competition is high. Admission at the postgraduate level gets even more competitive. Certain universities based on their reputation are more selective than others, only the best students can get admission. Recently, some universities have started their own admission tests to make the admission process selective.

Furthermore, to qualify for the M.Phil degree a great deal of emphasis is laid on the course work, a dissertation is also very important. More than 60% of the universities have instituted this course.

Admission to the PhD is entirely based upon the competence and the interest of the candidate in the research. The Board of Studies is responsible for the approval of the application for the admission; however, in some cases the Research Degree Committee of the concerned university makes the recommendations.

Lately, the University Grant Commission (UGC) and the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) have started a joint selection twice a year to ensure that a minimum and uniform standard of research is maintained. About 2000 candidates are declared eligible to pursue research every year. A good number of fellowships are available for those who qualify the test (table 5).

Table 5
Scholarships/ fellowships available for students

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial Assistance to Visually Handicapped Teachers • Junior Research Fellowship In Engineering & Technology • Junior Research Fellowship In Sciences, Humanities And Social Sciences • Junior Research Fellowship(JRF) And Research Associateship (RA) For Foreign Nationals • Part-Time Research Associateship For Women • Facilities for Differently-abled Persons • Emeritus Fellowship • Visiting Associateship • Research Awards • Faculty Improvement Programme • Research Funding Council for Major and Minor Research Projects • The Travel Grant Scheme for College Teachers/Vice Chancellors Commission Members • Post Graduate Indira Gandhi Scholarship Scheme For Single Girl Child • Post Graduate Merit Scholarship Scheme For University Rank Holders In General & Honours Courses At Undergraduate Level • Post Doctoral Fellowship for Scheduled Caste/Scheduled Tribe Candidates • Post Graduate Scholarship For Professional Courses For SC/ST Candidates • Norms and procedures for operation of Rajiv Gandhi Chairs • Rajiv Gandhi National Fellowship (RGNF) for Scheduled Caste/Scheduled Tribe Candidates • Research Fellowship in Sciences for Meritorious Students. • Revised Guidelines For Post Graduate Indira Gandhi Scholarship Scheme For Single Girl Child for academic session 2007-08 • Revised Guidelines For Post Graduate Scholarship Scheme for University Rank Holders at Undergraduate Level for academic session 2007-08
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Source: UGC website 2008.

5.4 Reservation system

The reservation was primarily meant to allow the under-privileged (untouchables, for example) to have an equal opportunities related to jobs, education to help them lead a normal life. The reservation came into being with the inception of constitution. The initial provision of reservation under constitution was originally meant for 20 years. But every consequent government extended this for further years and years there since.

With the framework of our constitution 27% seats are reserved in government jobs and higher education. But different state governments have different percentage of reservation for example Tamil Nadu is having 69% of reservation in government jobs and higher education.

Seats are reserved for S.C., S.T., Backward Castes and O.B.C. in varying ratio by the central government and state government. This caste is decided based on birth, so can never be changed. While a person can change his religion, and his economic status can fluctuate, the caste is permanent. In central government-funded higher education institutions: 22.5% seats are reserved for scheduled caste and scheduled tribe students. (15% for SC and 7.5% for ST) *for example AIIMS offers 14% reserved seats for SC and 8% for ST. In addition, SC/ST students with only 50% scores are eligible for admissions.* But in some states there is also reservation for some minor communities as such Andhra Pradesh is having 4% reservation for muslims. Besides reservation on the basis of caste and religion there is provision of reservation in higher education on the basis of state of domicile and college of under graduation (UGC, 2007).

5.5 Funding of Higher Education in India

The Indian higher education is state (government) controlled, it is the state's (government as a whole) responsibility to provide education to all and subsidize it for those who can not afford it. Article 41 of the constitution (one of the Directive Principles of the State Policy) as it relates to education states: "The state shall, within the limits of its economic capacity and development, make effective provision for securing the right to education".

The higher education institutions receive their funds from State or Central governments; in the form of block grants and maintenance grants-in-aid. The majority of the institutions receive their basic grants, to operate the systems, from the state governments. Each of these state governments have their own funding approach. Although the grants given to the institutions are called block grants but the restrictions on the expenditures and policies on staffing do not give autonomy to the institutions. India shows various nuances of negotiated funding. "Negotiation enables the government to maintain high degree of political control over the university system as a whole, as well as over individual institutions" (Albrecht & Zideman, 1992, p: 20-21).

Mridula (1985) presents three categories of budgeting in India; i) Budgets which are calculated from the operating deficit of an institution. Each state applies its own method to calculate the portion of the deficit to be funded, hence, it gives decision-making power to the government. ii) Incremental budgets; they vary from one to five percent annually for the surveyed institutions (survey conducted by Mridula). Increment too varies; in some cases it is given every year and in others it is given after three or six years. iii) Purely ad-hoc budgets; these grants fluctuate every year, as they depend highly on the availability of the state resources. Mridula conducted a survey which included 55 universities. She found that 26 universities received their grants on a deficit basis, 16 on an incremental basis and 12 on completely ad-hoc basis. The methods used to grant funds to the institutions reveal that the government exercises a lot of control over the higher education activities (Albrecht & Ziderman, 1992).

Higher education in India is at cross roads (Tilak 1995a). It is experiencing the significant stress with respect to financing. In the present situation, the resources are limited and government does not have adequate funds to meet the growing demands of higher education sector. Tilak (1997) presents the trends of financing higher education in India: While total expenditure on higher education in India has increased remarkably during the post-independence period in current prices, the increase in real prices is not so attractive. Increase in expenditure per pupil is very small and in real prices the same has indeed declined (Tilak, 1993).

The priority given to higher education in allocation of resources of the economy has been steadily falling. The share of higher education in GNP was nearly 1 percent in 1980-81; but it declined, to nearly half by early 1990s and to < 0.4 % by mid- 1990s compared to 1.0-2.5 in many developed countries, (table 6).

Table 6:
Priority for higher education

		% Share of higher education In total expenditure on education	In GNP
New Zealand	1992	36.7	2.53
Canada	1992	27.9	1.98
Netherlands	1991	31.9	1.79
Sweden	1992	19.8	1.72
Australia	1991	29.5	1.50
Norway	1992	16.9	1.27
U.S.A	1990	24.1	1.16
U.K.	1991	20.7	1.04
Japan	1988	22.5	1.04
Singapore	1987	30.7	0.98
Germany (F.R.)	1990	22.4	0.81
France	1992	14.1	0.73
India	1991	14.7	0.56

Source: Unesco (1994)

5.5.1 Sources of income for higher education

“Higher education is no longer a luxury; it is essential to national, social and economic development” (Unesco, 2000).

The economic reforms have resulted in the cuts on the higher education funds; this is done with the aim to accomplish universal elementary education (Table 4, Chart 1). Consequently, there has been a shift of funds from higher to primary education. This is clearly mentioned in the approach paper to the Tenth Five-year Plan and Tenth plan document, it states: “Since budget resources are limited and such resources are available, need to be allocated to expanding primary education. It is important to recognise that the universities must make greater efforts to supplement resources from the government” (Government of India, 2001, 2002-2007).

There are three main sources of income for higher education: government, student fee and other sources (philanthropy, industry, sale of publication). Higher education has always been funded by the government; about three-quarters of the total expenditure is provided by the government (table 7). A statement indicating the amount spent on education as percentage of GDP during the few selected years is given below:

Table 7
Statement indicating the Public Expenditure on Education

S.No.	Year	GDP at current prices (at factor cost) on the bases on 1993-94 year (Rs. in crore)	Expenditure on Education by Education & other Departments. (Rs. in crore)	Expenditure on Education by Education and other Departments as % of GDP
1	1951-52	10080	64.46	0.64
2.	1961-62	17116	260.30	1.52
3.	1971-72	44923	1011.07	2.25
4.	1981-82	152056	4298.29	2.83
5.	1991-92	589086	22393.69	3.80
6.	2001-02	*2090957	79865.70	*3.82
7.	2002-03	*2249493	89220.45	*3.97
8.	2003-04	*2516912	94163.44	*3.74

Source: Education in India vol.II (S)

But, the needs of higher education system have been growing rapidly because of increase in the demand side; enrolment in public higher education institutions³ have been increasing but the number of higher education institutes has not shown any increase. And, the public budgets are decreasing and not have become inadequate to fund higher education. Therefore, the need to experiment with several other options such as student fee, student loan schemes, graduate tax and privatization was intensified.

Unfortunately, the policies on new ways of diversifying resources undermine equity of access of higher education. According to the equity principle; students benefiting from the

³The information here pertains to public higher education institutions, there is no comprehensive information available on the growth of private higher education institutions and the number of students enrolled therein.

secondary education sectors should be able to afford access to higher education, in order to attain upward mobility (Punnayya Committee, 1993, p.18). However, the attempts to evaluate systematically the impact of increase of fees on access of higher education are very rare (Rani, 2002).

Confronted with the economic reforms and budgets cuts in the education system several committees have been set up to evaluate the issue of mobilisation of resources. All the committees agree that fees from students constitute as one of the major sources of income for higher education institutions. They, henceforth, recommend increase in the level of fees charged to the students. The increase should be in such a way that at least 15 to 25 per cent of the annual cost per student is recovered from the students.

Various revenue-raising measures take place in the form of (Rani, 2004):

1. Raising tuition fees as a significant source of revenue for the support of instructional cost.
2. Full cost recovery of other fees such as institutionally provided services (hostel, food, libraries and so on).
3. Sale of research publication, consultancy.
4. Participation of private sector both non-profit and proprietary providers.
5. Philanthropy for endowments, for direct operations and for scholarships to students.

5.5.1.1 Student fees

The policy of government of India encourages the augmentation of resources by each institution (including public institutions) in order to recover the cost of services provided by the higher education. The cost of recovery will be in the form of fees hike, introduction of self-financing courses and seats in accordance with liberalisation policies⁴.

At present, as much as 80 countries offer student loans. It is argued that it is done to protect the poor students from the increasing costs of higher education. However loan schemes also include some risks; they could discourage students from low-income families, women and other weaker sections of the society from participating in higher education (Rani,

⁴ Certain number of students in each department pay full cost fee, while the rest of the students pay normal (subsidised) fees. It is to be noted that the normal fees itself has been increasing.

2004). The actual Educational Loan Scheme was introduced in India in 2000-2001 and is undertaken by the commercial banks⁵.

Various recommendations made by the committees have been encouraging to generate funds through students' fees; by revising fees (to recover the cost from the students) in order to finance higher education.

Tuition fee: Tuition fee may be revised upwards with immediate effect and may be periodically adjusted keeping in view the inflation and rise in costs of higher education. The revision of fees must be related in a meaningful manner to the recurring cost of the course of study and employment opportunities offered by the course (suggesting for a differential fee structure) (UGC, 1993, p.77). Full cost recovery is suggested in government and aided institutions targeting that the established government funded/ aided colleges may be allowed to start new specialised programs for specific target groups on self-financing /net revenue earning basis (AICTE, 1994, p.19). Tuition will seek to recover the actual cost of imparting education. Tuition and all other fees, which are not to be charged on one time basis should be tenable for 12 months. Modified unit cost method i.e. 3 per cent of the unit cost worked out by Punneya Committee should be the basis of fee structure, annual upward revisions may be made at 2 per cent of the suggested rate and after five years the commission may consider the entire issue again for upward revision in the fee structure. It is recommended that certain mandatory provisions be made to ensure that the revised fee structure being suggested by the committee is implemented (UGC, 2000, p.41-44 and p.16).

Other fees: With regard to fees for admission and examination fee, it is recommended to recover the recurring cost of operations. While in library, laboratory, sports and similar other facilities are concerned, it is suggested that these fees must be revised to recover a significant part of the recurring cost (UGC, 1993, p.77). It is recommended to revise the development fee to meet the actual recurring cost on no-loss-no-profit basis (UGC, 1999; 2000).

⁵ Some private banks also operate students' loans schemes.

* One lakh is equivalent of one million.

Hostel and mess fees: It is recommended to meet the actual recurring cost and to cover part of the capital cost over time (UGC, 1993; 1999; 2000).

Municipal, Civil and Other Services: It is recommended to revise appropriately to recover costs. It may include cost of transport, phone, postage and stationery, typing, computing, photocopying, etc (UGC, 1993; 1999; 2000).

Fees as a Source of Income: Various committees recommended that institutions should raise the fee levels in such a way that at least 15 to 25 per cent of the annual recurring cost per student is recovered from the students in the form of fees and from other sources at the end of ten years. Government should in course of time shift the funding of universities to a system of students funding (UGC, 1993; 1999; 2000). The tuition fee for the government funded and government aided institutions to be revised to at least 20 per cent of the recurring expenditure per student per year (Chart 3). Fees so fixed may be reviewed and re-fixed once in every three years (AICTE, 1994, pp.19).

Contrary to the general belief that the fees in the public institutions are very low and have remained unchanged for decades, the reality is the most of the universities have not revised only some components of fees; tuition fees for example. But it is only one component of the total fees charged by the universities; other fees include services as hostels, water, electricity, food costs and other development fees have been revised to a substantial extend (Table 9).

Tilak and Rani (2002) evaluate the finances of universities in India. They found that in 19990s, in a sample, of 40 universities, there have been modest to steep increase in students' fees; tuition fee, examination fees, administration, registration, entrance examination, hostel and services like application forms, brochures. With steep decline in government grants universities are resorting to students' fees. As much as 20 universities have already increased their fees which covers more than 20 per cent of their income. The share of fee income reached up to 22 per cent of recurring cost. Chart 3 indicates that the fees are already higher.

5.6 Student loan scheme

The scheme covers a wide range of courses in higher studies from post-secondary to research studies, both in India and abroad. Eligibility criterion is that any student who secures admission in domestic / foreign educational institution is eligible for loan. The loan covers both instructional cost and living expenses. A maximum of Rs.7.5 lakhs* for studies in India and Rs.15 lakhs for studies in overseas institutions / universities is envisaged under the scheme.

For loans up to Rs.4lakhs, no margins are required and collateral security is not insisted upon. Loan amounts exceeding Rs.4 lakhs require 100 per cent collateral security or guarantee of a third person known to the bank for the entire loan amount. Margins vary from 5 per cent to 15 per cent for loans above Rs.4 lakhs. Interest rate is charged according to the Prime Lending Rate (PLR) for loans up to Rs.4 lakhs and with one per cent addition to PLR for loans exceeding Rs.4 lakhs. The loan can be repaid in five to seven years and repayment would commence one year after completion of the course or six months after getting employment, whichever is earlier. Simple rate of interest is charged during the period of study and up to the commencement of repayment.

However, it is to be noted that there is no income ceiling on students / parents for the eligibility of this loan scheme. Neither the academic achievement is considered as an eligibility criterion, that is, there is no minimum qualifying marks required. There are no special provisions of any kind for the weaker sections in terms of security, government guarantee, lower rate of interest or repayment period, repayment in accordance with earnings, waivers, etc. It is to be noted that the scheme neither adheres to the efficiency nor the equity principles unlike in many other countries, where merit-cum-means determine the eligibility for student loan.

“Given the world experience on student schemes, the new scheme in India is insensitive to the needs of the poor and does not concern equity aspects as there are no special provisions of any kind for the weaker sections. The present loan scheme neither takes into consideration the various details, such as eligibility, interest rates, repayment terms and conditions as recommended by various committees. Hence, an alternative scheme

specifically for the weaker sections needs to be evolved as the present scheme is not flexible to the needs of the weaker sections” (Rani, 2004).

However, the loan schemes, hike in fees does not resolve the issue of size of the higher education institutions which are inadequate to cater to the need of the growing number of students. It has given rise to private, self-financing institutions offering higher education. It has been the private sector which is playing an important role of increasing the supply of higher education. As Cloete & Maassen state: “The main challenge facing higher education in India is a continuous *public under-funding* that is getting worse and worse through the gradual decrease in relative share of the gross national product (GNP) invested in education...” (2002, p: 13-57) This has played a leading role in the privatisation of higher education.

5.7 Privatization of Higher Education

The 1990s witnessed the drastic reduction of public budgets for higher education, without any option of improvement in the years to come. The discussion paper on Government subsidies in India by the Government of India’s in 1997 offered a revealing insight into the thinking of the government, (UGC, 1997). For the first time, higher education as well as secondary education were put under the category of “nonmerit good” (and elementary education under “merit good”), government subsidies for which then need to be reduced. Though, the Ministry of Finance has partly modified its classification of goods it re-categorised higher education under “merit 2 goods”, which implies that there is no need to be subsidized by the state at the same level as merit goods. Consequently, the public higher education institutions are suffering from under-investment in the sector. The Indian universities do not have the required infrastructure, they are not capable to provide adequate number of places for students (Altbach, 1993). Universities are facing financial crunch. Of its total expenditure, about 75 per cent are on the salaries and pensions. 15 per cent of the remaining 25 per cent is spent on rents, electricity, telephones and examination. The rest, which is less than 10 per cent is not enough for the maintenance of libraries, laboratories. This financial non-flexibility is showing in the deteriorating conditions of the system. Laboratories, libraries, class rooms, auditoriums and sports facilities are essential to support teaching-learning process. Much attention is required to upgrade these areas to promote quality (National Knowledge Commission, 2006).

The crisis in the public sector gave rise to the “self-financing colleges” which had sufficient funds to provide quality and places to match the demands of the students. The private higher education colleges are divided into two categories: aided and non-aided. The aided private colleges are entitled to get up to 95% of the teacher’s salary reimbursed. The non-aided ones have no access to the state funds. They depend on the tuition fee and on the grants or donations (Jongbloed, 2000).

In 1992 Supreme Court passed a judgment which practically banned high fee charging private colleges, known as “Capitation fee colleges”, stating that capitation fee is “patently unreasonable, unfair and unjust”, this was followed by an another judgment passed in 1993, under which the same capitation fee colleges found their way to establish themselves and to grow, but under the name of self-financing colleges.

Today such colleges in engineering and management outnumber the public institutions. For instance, in 2001 the state of Andhra Pradesh had 95 self-financing engineering colleges compared to only 11 government engineering colleges and 303 self-financing medical colleges compared to 25 government medical colleges.

There have been several initiatives from the state in favour of privatisation. For example, certain private institutions have been given the status of a university, they have been recognized as “deemed universities”. Certain universities, too, have been established. These universities consist of affiliated private self-financing colleges, like Guru Gobindsingh Indraprashta University in New Delhi. Also, there are a few institutions that have been given the right to offer degrees and diplomas and therefore operate as universities or their equivalent. This rapid growth of private self-financing colleges, which is given a push by the state, has made a large part of the higher education privatized.

Out of many private self-financing colleges that have been established, only a few offer quality higher education (Altbach, 1993).The sole goal for the majority of them is to make quick profits.

Summary

Indian higher education system has become large, highly bureaucratized with complex control system and all the regulatory powers in the hands of Central and State Governments, statutory bodies such as UGC, AICTE, others, university administration and local management. Moreover, the infrastructural facilities range from inadequate to dismal. Classrooms are often unattractive and laboratories are inadequately stocked, leading to poor teaching. It is estimated that only 20% of the institutions have basic minimum laboratory equipment.

Higher education institutions (universities, mainly) came into being with the goal of, both, imparting and creation of knowledge. In order to do so it takes the means or method-called “instruction” or “teaching”. But in today’s fast growing world only this method is no longer efficient, it has to produce learning with each and every student by whatever means that work the best. Under the logic of “instruction paradigm” the higher education institutions suffer a serious lack of governance, without any increase in the funds available it is impossible to increase the output, which if done poses a threat to the quality. This is the present scenario of the Indian higher education, emphasis on the increase in the output with the constant funds available.

Chapter 6: Case Study: The Students' and Governments Perceptions of Higher Education in India

The data will be analysed according to the two methodologies used; interviews and the government documents (National Policy on Education). The unstructured interviews were applied to obtain the perceptions of the students on the higher education system. And, the National Policy on Education was used to layout the conceptions of higher education by the policy makers. Finally both categories will be compared to draw the conclusions.

6.1 Analysis and discussion of National Policy on Education (NPE)

After reflecting upon the data obtained through interviews, this section presents the results from the NPE analysis. The National Policy on Education (1986) and modified in 1992 was chosen as it provides government's perspective on higher education. Also, it presents in detail the steps envisaged to improve access and participation in higher education. The policy document is analysed under three broad categories which are further subdivided.

6.1.1 Government's notion of higher education

Government's notion of higher education contains economic and socio-cultural notions; the role of the government is divided into: provider and supervisor. And finally, higher education as a tool to enforce equality contains: gender, socio-economical, physical handicap equality. Next the main results in each of them will be presented. NPE (National Policy on Education) states that the education is not only important but necessary for the personal development of an individual. "In our perception education is essential for all. This is fundamental to our al-round development, material and spiritual. The NPE recognises the importance of education for the economic and social development of the country. Also, NPE recognises the importance of education for personal growth and development of critical thinking" (p: 4-6).

Moreover, education has a screening effect; it reveals the innate ability(ies). It is beneficial for individual even if it does not have any effect on the productivity. "It refines sensitivities and perceptions that contribute to a scientific temper and independence of mind and spirit and to national cohesion. It provides equality and international co-operation. Life-long learning is a cherished goal of the educational process with the aim of universal literacy" (p: 4-6). Based on these sentences we can not say that this document was made based

exclusively on human capital theory. In fact, Indian government seem to extend further the objectives of higher education.

6.1.1.1 Economic notion of higher education

The NPE states that an individual invests in education to have better career opportunities and better social life, but it also emphasizes that the society benefits equally from this individual investment (economical development of the country by providing labour force to the market, reduction in crime and so on), “Education is an investment in the present towards better future. It is also the substrate on which research and development flourish, being the ultimate guarantee of national self-reliance. Education prepares manpower for the labour market. It prepares skilled labour force which further is very important factor contributing to the economic as well as social development of a country” (p: 4-18).

6.1.1.2 Socio-cultural notions of higher education

The NPE considers education as a tool to protect the diversity of the country. It brings people from different cultural, social and regional backgrounds to the same platform, aiming at making people aware of the past in order to reinstate equality amongst the citizens of India. “Education has an acculturating role. NPE was conceived with the aim to enhance the national progress, national integration and to overcome the cultural differences by promoting a sense of common citizenship and culture. The common core (curricula) will include the history of India’s freedom movement, the constitutional obligations and other content essential to nurture national identity. All educational programs will be carried on in strict conformity with secular values” (p: 4-10).

Based on these statements it seems that for the government higher education is a tool to strengthen economic and socio-cultural development. It is an important factor contributing to the national cohesion. It brings everyone from different cultural, social and economical backgrounds at the same level, therefore, fosters equality amongst people (National Knowledge Commission, 2006). The analysis of this first category supports the idea that Indian government defends a public good notion of higher education. It is near traditional

conception of higher education. To obtain more sustainable conclusions we have also to reflect upon the perceptions about the role of the government.

6.1.2 The role of the government

The government of India controls the higher education system it takes all the important decisions related to the funding, curricula, faculty appointment, regulations and examinations. The NPE defines one of the goals of the government, which is to overcome illiteracy and encourage women in particular to pursue education and enter in higher education, “A variety of new challenges and social needs make it imperative for the government to formulate and implement a new education policy for the country. The UGC, AICTE, ICAR, IMC will be strengthened to play an important role in giving shape to the national system. The removal of women’s illiteracy is one of the priorities. It will be provided with special support services, setting of time targets and effective monitoring” (p: 7). The government of India plays following roles; provider, supervisor. Unlike in many other countries in India government is highly centralized. It plays mainly the role of the provider and to very lesser extend the role of the supervisor. Based on Clark’s triangle one can say that the state is still the main actor in the system which makes the Indian higher education state controlled.

6.1.2.1 Provider

State is an important role as provider of higher education system because the government who is responsible for providing the required funds to the higher education institutions. “The government will initiate appropriately funded programs to cater to the needs of research and advanced study and to promote excellence at all levels of the educational pyramid throughout the country” (p: 8).

6.1.2.2 Supervisor

The role of the supervisor is defined to supervise and maintain the balance between the supply and demand. Also, NPE targets to evaluate regularly the efficiency of the system and to propose suggestions for better performance of the system, “To study, monitor the educational requirements of the country as a whole in regard to manpower for

development. The government of India will also review, every five years, the progress made and recommend guidelines for future development” (p: 7-30). The role of the supervision implies that government will make sure that the objectives of the education are attained and that the regulations are being practiced as they are stated in the policy document. “Union government will be responsible to reinforce the national and integrative character of education to maintain quality and standards (including teaching at all levels). Also, government will be responsible to look after the international aspects of education, culture and human resource development” (p: 7-30).

This second category reinforces the idea that the state is still an important actor in Indian higher education. The document states its main role to be that of provider and supervisor of the system.

6.1.3 Higher education as a tool to enforce equality

One of the main roles of the higher education described by the NPE is to foster equality amongst the people of the country. It states the facilities that will be made available to the students from socially weak background, to make them come at par with the rest of the population of India. The concept of a national system of education implies that all students irrespective of caste, creed, location or sex should have access to education of a comparable quality. “To promote equality, it will be necessary to provide equal opportunities to all, not only in access but also in the conditions for success. The purpose is to remove prejudices and complexes transmitted through social environment and birth. Steps will be taken to foster among students an understanding of the diverse cultural and social systems of the people living in different parts of the country. Access to secondary education will be widened with emphasis on enrolment of girls, SC’s and ST’s in science, commerce and vocational streams” (NPE, 1992, p: 5-12). This equality effort seems to be developed mainly based on such variables as gender and socio-economic conditions.

6.1.3.1 Gender equality

Gender equality seems to be an important target for government. NPE says; “Education will be used as an agent of basic change in the status of women. Greater emphasis will be on the participation of women in vocational technical and professional education. Women will be equally encouraged to participate not only in non-traditional occupations but in

existing professions in emergent technologies as well. At least 50 per cent of teachers recruited in future should be women”. (p: 5-12). Also, NPE aims at making higher education accessible to the rural and tribal students with special attention given to women who would want to study. “National education system will play a crucial role in the empowerment of women. It will foster the development of new values through teachers, decision-makers and administrators and the active involvement of educational institutions” (pp: 8). “Government will take special steps to cater to the needs of women, rural and tribal students and the deprived sections of the society. The government and community, in general, will find funds for programs as: the universality of elementary education, liquidating illiteracy, equality of access to educational opportunities to all sections throughout the country; enhancing the social relevance, quality and functional effectiveness of educational programs” (p: 7-30).

6.1.3.2 Socio-economic equality

The focus is to provide equal opportunities to SC’s, ST’s, minority groups to benefit from the educational process and contribute to the national development together with others. “Compulsory secondary education; incentives will be offered by the state till the age of 14 to encourage the participation of children from deprived sections” (NPE, 1992, p: 5-12). “Scholarships will be offered specially to the children of families engaged in occupation such as scavenging, flaying and tanning. For ST’s the scholarships will be offered with emphasis on technical, professional courses” (p: 5-12).

Also, “special courses will be formulated to match the needs and requirements of ST’s and to enhance the opportunities to pursue further education and employment. Enrolment status will be verified to avoid the drop outs”(p: 5-12).

Employment opportunities: “recruitment of teachers from SC category. And young people (ST’s) will be encouraged and trained to take up teaching jobs in the tribal areas. For ST’s special curricula will be developed at the initial stage considering the lingual differences. And, later on, students will be encouraged to take up studies in the regional language. To improve access, hostel facilities will be provided. Adequate services will be provided in the hill, desert districts and other remote, inaccessible areas, also, the islands” (p: 5-12).

6.1.3.3 Equality for disabled

Government aims at integrating the physically and mentally handicapped people, to provide them with the opportunity to lead a normal life. “Physically and mentally handicapped children are to be considered as equal partners, the objective is to integrate them, to prepare them for normal growth and to enable them to lead life confidently. Therefore, common education will be imparted to the children with mild handicaps and those with motor handicaps. They too will be provided schools with hostels to improve access. Arrangements will be made to provide them vocational training and also teachers training program will have an extra subject, that is to learn to deal with the special difficulties of the handicapped children” (p: 5-12).

6.1.3.4 Adult education

In order to eradicate illiteracy government plans to promote adult education; “the central and State governments, political parties and their mass organisations, the mass media and educational institutions, teachers, students, youth, voluntary agencies, social activist groups and employer must reinforce their commitment to mass literacy campaigns, which include literacy and functional knowledge and skills and awareness among learners about the socio-economic reality and the possibility to change it” (p: 11-12).

Based on the data one can say that government believes in the role of higher education as an instrument to improve social equity and use it, in fact, as affirmative action policy.

Summary

Higher education is viewed as important instrument to strengthen economic and socio-cultural development. It refines the thinking of an individual which is an important factor contributing to the national cohesion. Also, higher education brings everyone from different cultural, social backgrounds to the same level, therefore, fosters equality amongst people. Moreover, higher education allows personal development of the individual; by developing his/her critical thinking, better employability, independence of mind and spirit. The NPE defines various steps to eradicate illiteracy and to encourage participation from

all the sections of the society. In order to provide equal opportunity to all it provides facilities, special aids and reservations of seats in the higher education for the weaker section of the society (SC's, ST's). Government is conscious of the cultural and lingual differences, and hence aims at overcoming these differences steadily through the educational process. The NPE seems to be over ambitious with an ideal description of the higher education system.

In order to compare the theoretical version to the practical side, 17 university students were interviewed and asked questions about the higher education system in India. The interviews were categorized into three main categories with the aim to get information on the motivation of the students to join higher education, if they had information about the support system available and what did they think about the higher education system. All of them entered higher education with the goal of getting better job opportunities and better social life. Only 3 of 17 students worked part-time to fund their education and the rest depended on their parents for funding. All of them share the opinion that reservations are no longer important, they rather create more competition because of the less number of seats available to general public (without any reservation). They think that Indian higher education system needs more higher education institutions and funding to answer the need of the students. Higher education is important for better life and personal growth as stated in the NPE.

6.2 Analysis and discussion of interviews

For this study, 17 students were interviewed; each representing different fields of study (as we have seen before). This was done with the aim to avoid any biased opinions and to get different views on the topic. Keeping in mind the research questions and the concepts discussed in the literature review the following categories were elaborated: motivations to attend higher education, students' funding of higher education, perceptions about the available student support, perceptions about the reservation of the seats in public higher education, access to information and finally, perceptions about higher education policies in India (perceptions of the students about the higher education and suggestions given to improve it).

6.2.1 Motivations to attend higher education

This category emerges both from the literature review and from the empirical data. With it we try to get further information concerning the reasons Indian students choose to attend higher education. According to the human capital theory, as discussed previously, education enhances the skills and knowledge of an individual, which effects on the income. To obtain job satisfaction, better social life and personal development is one of the main motivations to invest in higher education (Canton and Venniker, 2001). Our results are in accordance with this theoretical development because most of the students interviewed went to higher education for personal reasons. A majority of them pursue higher education to improve their status (social as well as financial); "My urge to be independent and to benefit from good job opportunities motivated me to join higher education" (student from Master in Child Development). A student from Language and Education stated that, "I want to empower myself by gaining professional competency and then comes the thirst for knowledge". To enhance the knowledge was also referred by other students; "I wanted to enhance my knowledge" reported a student from engineering.

A minority of these students stated that they were influenced either from a family member or from peer-group to enter in a specific field of study, "My sister was working too as a software engineer and my teachers always inspired me that I can be great in this profession". Hence, the motives can be further categorized into personal interest and social factors which influenced the decision.

6.2.2 Students' funding of higher education

In this category we gathered all the information about the ways students use to fund their studies. We try to understand not only the way students support their studies but also what information do they have about the support system available by the government.

Almost all of the interviewed students depend on their parents to fund their education; "My mother has been funding my education up till now" (student of Bachelors in Arts). A very small minority of them fund their studies themselves (only 3 out of 17). As Jongbloed (2006) explains that from an economics standpoint fees is considered as one way of empowering the consumers in the higher education. Some studies show that higher the fees students pay, higher the expectations to reap the benefits from the higher education provider. When asked about the student support provided by the government the majority of them did not know if it existed, even if few of them (only 4) knew about scholarships, grants and reservations for weaker section of the society. "None in India, if there are then I am not aware of any", most of them concluded by saying, "I do not have much knowledge about it". Some added to the point, "I think this is the area Indian authorities need to work upon".

6.2.2.1 Perceptions about available student support system

The support system provided by the government includes the scholarships, study grants for the students from economically-weak background and the reservations for the socially weaker section of the society (SC's⁶, ST's⁷). The support provided to the students in the

⁶Scheduled Castes in India are also known as Dalits. Dalits, sometimes called Untouchables in the Indian caste system, are people who according to traditional Indian society are regarded as low caste. In traditional Indian society there are 5 castes "creating a social stratification that has existed for 1500 years". In this caste system, Dalits are considered the 5th caste and are treated as *Untouchables*. Dalits include leather-workers (called *chamar*), carcass handlers (called *mahar*), poor farmers and landless labourers, night soil scavengers (called *bhangi* or *chura*), street handcrafting people, folk artists, street cleaners, washermen *dhobi*, etc.

⁷Scheduled Tribe people are also referred to as Adivasis: literally "original inhabitants", comprise a substantial indigenous minority of the population of India. Indian tribals are also called *Atavika* (forest dwellers, in Sanskrit texts). These autochthonous people, popularly known as the Tribal peoples are particularly numerous in the Indian states of Orissa, Madhya Pradesh, Chattisgarh, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, West Bengal and in extreme northeastern states such as Mizoram. Officially recognized by the Indian government as "Scheduled Tribes" in the Fifth Schedule of the Constitution of India, they are often grouped together with scheduled castes in the category "Scheduled Castes and Tribes", which is eligible for certain affirmative action measures.

form of grants, loans, vouchers are basically to provide access to the students who otherwise, would not be able to pay the cost of study. Interviewed students seem to have a general idea about the available student support; “Scholarships are available to needy and on merit-based, subsidized education, lodging, health services, book-stores” (Student of Master in translation). Jongbloed (2006) contests that the students from disadvantaged backgrounds may be discouraged by the high tuition fee or are debt averse. This could lead them to take decisions of not enrolling in the higher education (discussed in chapter 3), “Government gives aid to the students of minority class of the society” (Student of Language and Education). Government provides support to provide equal opportunities to all to participate in higher education. “Reservation of seat for girls, low fees and free education for girls” (Student of B.Sc Computer Science).

6.2.2.2 Perceptions about reservation

Investment in higher education increases the career options, better lifestyle of the individual. Society too gains from this investment, as education results in reduction of crime, economic development of the country. Based on these ideas the Indian government uses reservation as a tool to provide equal access to all irrespective of an individual’s socio-economic background. This category was created in order to analyze the perceptions the students have about the existing reservations. From the data analysis one can conclude that the great majority of students interviewed did not benefit from them. Only one of the students interviewed enrolled under reservation category i.e. Sports category. However, result can be justified by the fact that students did not feel at ease to talk about their caste, which still evokes the sentiment of being judged. Further, when asked if they were in favour of reservation of seats in higher education in India most of the students were against the reservation of seats in higher education; “Reservations for the financial weak section of the society should be imposed instead of present caste-based reservation” (Student of Journalism). Six of seventeen students share the opinion that the entrance to higher education should be merit based. “Higher education should be purely based on merit and should not be based on reservation. It further encourages division based on caste and class” (Student of Computer Science). The majority of the students say that reservation does not answer the problem of access for deserving once, “Competition gets worse because of the

reservations and the deserving students get behind, it should be merit-based” (Student of Engineering).

6.2.2.3 Access to information

One important element to assist students to take the decision whether or not to enter in higher education is the access they have to information regarding courses, financial support and other benefits provided to the students. Therefore, information plays an important role. A relevant number of students interviewed did not have any information regarding the student support provided by the government and 9 of them obtained it in informal ways; from internet or through friends, family, educational institutions or the former students, “Through living on the campus, practical experience and word of mouth” (Student of Master in translation).

6.2.3 Perceptions about higher education in India

Finally, we try to understand what students think about the higher education system in India and how it can be made more accessible. The main concerns of the students regarding the higher education system can be classified in three different categories: *the infrastructure, the criteria for access to higher education and the pedagogical issues*. The first two were the more frequently cited. Students showed concern about the neglected infrastructure, “Lack of good institutions, faculty and resources are some reasons for the present situation of higher education” (Student of Communication Design). Yet others raised also the issue of access in higher education, pointing out the lack of number of seats and considering that reservation reduces even further the number of available seats, “There are not enough number of seats available for students and lack of good institutions in remote areas” (Student of Engineering). Access is also affected due to high fees charged by the higher education institutions, “The fee structure is higher and the middle class can not afford such high amount of fees, it discourages them to send their child to higher education” (Student of Masters in Computer Application). The pedagogical concerns were mainly identified with the fact that course contents are out dated and do not offer any

practical knowledge, “Higher education in India is giving more and more theoretical knowledge; it is not helpful in earning livelihood” (Student of Language and Education).

When analysing their perceptions concerning the ways to improve participation in higher education and provide better access, all of them said that more universities or other higher education institutions are required to provide access to a large number of students. Also, that the government needs to provide support in terms of grants, scholarships and more information, “Higher education can be improved by opening new institutions, proper use of government aid, making higher education more affordable and giving more information to people will surely help improve participation” (Student of language and Education). A student of hotel management showed concern about the issue of brain-drain and said, “Government should prevent brain-drain and provide adequate funds to institutions and salaries of the teachers, professors should be at par with foreign institutions”.

Summary

From the analysis of the interviews some important conclusions can be drawn. The main motivations of the students to attend higher education are personal and mainly based on the possibility to get better job opportunities and hence enhance the social status. When analysing the funding of higher education we conclude that the main source of funding are the parents revealing almost complete absence of knowledge about student financial support system. Even if they have a general idea about the financial support, they did not have any formal access to it.

However, as we have emphasized before, this is a convenience sample which means that these results can be only dominant in this group of students not corresponding to the entire population. In this sense, the way the great majority revealed negative perceptions about the reservations can be related to the fact that none of them stated that they benefited from it. It would be interesting in further studies to try to include students in the sample who have already benefited from reservations.

The main problems identified by the students in the Indian higher education system are the lack of institutions and neglected infrastructure and also the access to higher education and pedagogical concerns.

From the data obtained one can say that this group in particular seem to have an idea about higher education close to the economic view sustained in the human capital theory. In fact, even if they seem to agree with the expansion of the system (in route to massification) they only emphasis the personal advantages of attending higher education and seem to be more in line with the meritocratic principles.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

The research question was: **What are the perception of the students and the government on higher education?**

Throughout the study I have discussed the aspects of affordability which is closely related to the funding of the higher education system and consequently affects student access. Also, concepts related to affordability and other concepts related to the student choice were elaborated in detail. The research question can be operationalized through following sub-questions:

1. What kind of measures NPE take in order to enhance students' participation in higher education?
2. What are the underlying conceptions about higher education roles in these policies?

3. How do students perceive these policies?
 - a) Do they influence students' decisions to go to the higher education?
 - b) Are students' perceptions about the role of higher education in society similar to those revealed in NPE?

In this chapter I will present my general findings and evaluation based on the concepts discussed earlier in the study and the evaluation will include my suggestion for change.

Human capital theory states that an individual invests in higher education to increase his skills and knowledge. This is evident when we compare the column of motives in the table I; the information given by all the students interviewed shows that all of them enrolled to enhance their knowledge and get better jobs (social status, better salaries). Also, only few made their decisions on their own and majority of the students were influenced by their parents as they are the once who fund their education.

- What kind of measures NPE take in order to enhance students' participation in higher education?

The National Policy on Education focuses mainly on the deprived sections of the society, SC's, ST's, physically and mentally handicapped, women and other minority groups in India. The policy emphasises the one main role of the education in India which is to

implement equality in the system and in the society at large with the aim to eradicate illiteracy from all sections of the society. Also, it recognises the need of the education for personal as well as social development. In order to do so government offers various services, facilities. It is conscious of the cultural, lingual differences of the people and therefore, aims at overcoming these differences with the help of education. Special attention is given to the deprived sections of the society; women, SC's, ST's and other minority groups, physically and mentally handicapped in India. The NPE lays down in detail the steps envisaged o improve access and participation.

Also, government aims at increasing the number of universities by 2015. They want government to provide quality education; vocational training, specialized courses which are practical and relevant to the needs of the market. However, some students did emphasis the need of good number of institutions particularly in remote areas to enhance participation. It is noteworthy that the ways government conceptualized higher education overlook the financial support required to allow poor students and other meritorious students to join higher education

- What are the underlying conceptions about higher education roles in these policies?

Individuals participate in higher education for two main reasons: *consumption* according to this perspective the main motivation is the curiosity and to enhance the knowledge (immediate benefits). The second reason is the *long-term investment*, according to which the motivation is the future benefits, such as higher earnings, lesser risk of unemployment and longer professional activities (monetary benefits). The research under human capital theory shows that the education has positive effects on the skills and knowledge of the individual, thus increases the individual earning capacity in the labour market (Mora and Vila, 2003).

Higher education is viewed as important tool to strengthen economic and socio-cultural development of a country, to enhance innovation, economic growth, wealth and social welfare. It is considered to be important as it helps to refine the thinking of an individual. This further is an important factor contributing to the national cohesion. Also, higher education brings everyone from different cultural, social backgrounds to the same level, therefore, fosters equality amongst people. Moreover, higher education allows personal

development of the individual; by developing his/her critical thinking, better employability, independence of mind and spirit.

- How do students perceive these policies?

a) Do they influence students' decisions to go to the higher education?

b) Are students' perceptions about the role of higher education in society similar to those revealed in NPE?

Reservation is perceived as something unnecessary; it is not relevant for the majority of the students who decide to enrol in higher education. Most of the students are of the view that Increase the number of institutions. Moreover, there are some students who believe that reservation reduces the number of seats and could cause more brain-drain. Rich SC's and ST's getting priority over poor students is unfair. The country needs respond to the needs of the students to increase the participation rate. It also needs to update the system, offer more practical knowledge and also need to retain talent to sustain the development.

The analysis of the interviews show that majority of the students chose to enter in higher education for personal reasons, none of them showed any motivation from the government policies.

Students believe that the number of scholarships should increase to allow deserving students and also to attract students to enrol in higher education. It will allow to avoid the human capital spillovers and to provide equal opportunities to all to participate in higher education. Students from financially weak background may be discouraged by the high tuition fees or are debt averse in both the cases it will discourage them to get enrolled in the institutions of their choice or to participate in higher education at all. Therefore, government should explore different possibilities to generate funds for higher education and give more autonomy to the universities to take decisions fees, student support and other benefits to encourage more students to participate in higher education. Also, government should provide interest free loans as the interest charged by the private banks are too high, which makes investment in higher education an expensive affaire. India need to learn from other countries.

There is a wide gap between the student and government policies and reforms. At present, the government policy does not favour student choice rather it limits it to fewer opportunities. With the lack of quality institutions, talented faculty and outdated course structure it is difficult to envisage the rapid increase in participation. Government needs to shift its attention from the very few areas of excellence to the areas which need overhauling without compromising the academic standards. India has experienced a phenomenal growth in higher education. The higher education system is not well-equipped to meet the demands, nor does it have enough places in the universities to fulfil the needs of all the students who want to enroll in higher education. In addition, the quality of higher education requires extensive improvement. Therefore, government needs to act diligently and create more opportunities for the youth. And, creating more universities is not the only solution rather it will make the system even more bulky and unmanageable.

Government should provide clear and comprehensive information on higher education and its advantages to sensitize people on its importance and also, detailed information on the institutions will make students aware to make better choices. Efficiency of the market highly depends on the choices the customers make. Therefore, to make these choices customers need to be in the position by which it implies that having information about what is offered in the market (Jongbloed, 2006).

Finally, government should plan to give more autonomy to the higher education institutions. In addition it should introduce marketization policies to strengthen student choice and improve quality, and other various services provided by the higher education providers. Marketization is aimed at making the institutions responsive towards the needs the students and pay attention on the innovation in teaching and research. Moreover, the marketization policies intend to increase competition between the higher education institutions and introduce performance related rewards schemes. This will, as a result, increase efficiency of the higher education sector in general and will make institutions and students aware of the consequences of their decisions related to costs (Jongbloed, 2003).

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Appendices I: Institutional data about Indian higher education

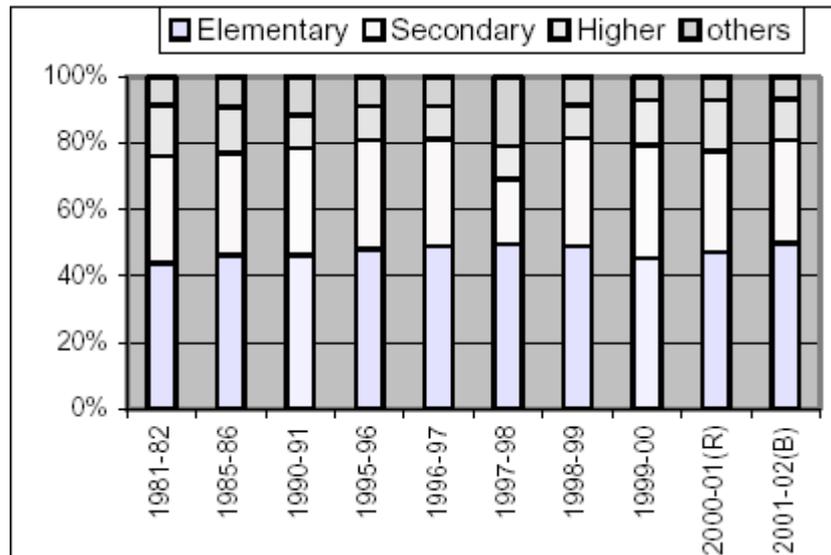
Table 8:
SHARE OF EDUCATION EXPENDITURES* IN GDP AND REVENUE EXPENDITURE

	1981-82	1985-86	1990-91	1995-96	1999-00	2001-02(B)
% of GDP in						
Total education	2.49	3.00	3.59	3.60	4.22	4.18
Elementary	1.09	1.39	1.58	1.44	1.58	1.66
Secondary	0.81	0.92	1.10	0.98	0.94	0.98
Higher	0.38	0.42	0.36	0.37	0.47	0.43
% of Revenue Expenditure in						
Total education	9.09	11.11	9.23	13.34	17.01	14.46
Elementary	3.98	5.14	4.06	5.32	5.44	5.34
Secondary	2.94	3.42	2.82	3.61	3.80	3.40
Higher	1.39	1.56	0.94	1.35	1.88	1.49

Based on new series of GDP with base 93-94 = 100.

Source: Analysis of Budgeted Expenditure on Education, various issues

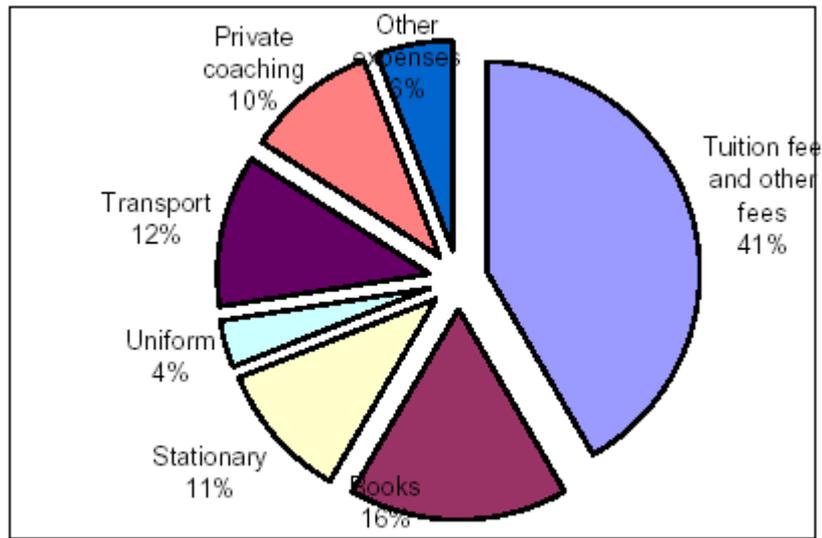
Chart 1
INTRA-SECTORAL ALLOCATION OF RESOURCES IN EDUCATION



Source: Based on Analysis of Budget Expenditure, various issues

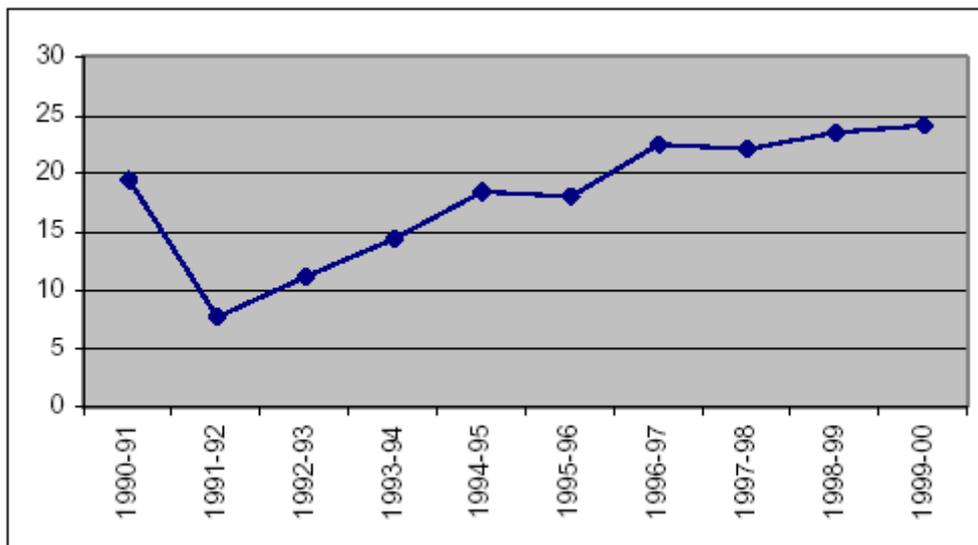
* Public expenditure on education includes total revenue expenditure on education by the department of education and other departments. The expenditure on education under capital account is negligible in the education sector.

Chart 2
 SHARE OF COMPONENTS OF HOUSEHOLD EXPENDITURE ON HIGHER EDUCATION



Source: Based on NSSO (1998), p. A117.

Chart 3
 FEE INCOME AS PERCENT OF RECURRING EXPENDITURE IN VARIOUS UNIVERSITIES



Source: Tilak and Rani (2002)

Table 9

Higher Education Expenses Borne by Parents and Students
First Degree, Academic Year 2001-2002

	<i>Public</i>			<i>Private</i>		
	<i>Central University</i>	<i>State University</i>	<i>University College</i>	<i>Gov't College</i>	<i>College</i>	
<i>Instructional Expenses</i>	Special "One- 40 Time" or "Up \$3 Front" Fees	200 \$17	350 \$12	200 \$17	200 \$17	
	Tuition	240 \$20	1,000 \$85	440 \$37	440 \$37	440 \$37
	Other Fees	105 \$9	625 \$50	800 \$68	586 \$50	586 \$50
	Books & Other Educational Expenses	865 \$73	521 \$44	447 \$38	224 \$19	605 \$51
	Subtotal Expenses of Instruction	1250 of \$106	2346 \$199	2037 \$173	1450 \$123	1831 \$155
<i>Student Living Expenses</i>	Lodging	440 \$37	2000 \$170	1960 \$166	100 \$8	3000 \$255
	Food	6500 \$552	6000 \$509	6500 \$552	7500 \$637	12000 \$1019
	Transportation	1366 \$116	1060 \$90	500 \$42	420 \$36	460 \$39
	Other Personal Expenses	291 \$25	212 \$18	164 \$14	73 \$6	226 \$19
	Subtotal Expenses of Student Living	8597 of \$730	9272 \$787	9124 \$775	8093 \$687	15686 \$1332
Total Cost to Parent & Student	9847 \$836	11618 \$986	11161 \$947	9543 \$810	17517 \$1487	

Note: The table was compiled in large part by M.R. Narayana, Professor of Economics, Institute for Social and Economic Change, Bangalore.

[National currency (Rupees) converted to \$US by [2001]
purchasing Power parity estimate \$1 =India rupees 11.78 [3]

Appendices II:

Box 1

Document summary form

DOCUMENT FORM

Website: www.education.nic.in

Name or description of document:

National Policy on Education (1986) -as modified in 1992

Significance or importance of document:

It provides the information on the governments' notion of higher education and the roles it assumes to make the higher education services available to all.

Also, it provides in detail the steps taken to enhance participation in higher education.

Summary of contents:

Higher education is viewed as important instrument to strengthen economic and socio-cultural development. Also, higher education brings everyone from different cultural, social backgrounds to the same level, therefore, fosters equality amongst people. Moreover, higher education allows personal development of the individual; by developing his/her critical thinking, better employability, independence of mind and spirit.

The role of provider characterises as the main and foremost role of the government. Government is responsible for providing funds, developing regulations, curricula and programs leaving no or very little autonomy to the institutions. The government takes care, from the beginning, of the conceptualization of the principles and regulations for higher education, till the end, its implementation.

Government emphasises the one main role of the education in India which is to implement equality in the system and in the society at large with the aim to eradicate illiteracy from all sections of the society. It offers various services, facilities. It is conscious of the cultural, lingual differences of the people and therefore, aims at overcoming these differences with the help of education. Special attention is given to the deprived sections of the society; women, SC's, ST's and other minority groups, physically and mentally handicapped in India. The NPE lays down in detail the steps envisaged to improve access and participation.

It recognised the need of vocational and technical training to sustain the ongoing development and discusses the issues related to how find resources to fund education.

