

Chapter 5

Indian Higher Education: Happenings, Hurdles, and an ODL Case Study

Nikhila Deep Bhagwat
SNDT Women's University, India

Hemant Rajguru
Y.C.M. Open University, India

ABSTRACT

This chapter gives an overview of Indian Higher Education system with special reference to Open and Distance Learning. It enlists the merits and limitations of Open and Distance Learning system. It also focuses on complexities and weaknesses of Indian Higher Education comparing it with the educational policies in other Asian Countries. The chapter describes the limitations of Higher Education System in India and discusses the reforms and restructuring announced by the ministry of education in India. It further unfolds the success story of Yashwantrao Chavan Maharashtra Open University's 'School of Agricultural Sciences' by explaining in detail the innovative practices in Agricultural ODL.

INTRODUCTION

Education is the process of teaching and training intended to create an all-round development of individuals. It provides the necessary skills and insight to understand and participate in day to day activities of today's world. It helps to build character by enhancing the moral values that contribute to individual development and prepares him for a collective community living.

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‘Every third person in an Indian city today is a youth. In about seven years, the median individual in India will be 29 years, very likely a city-dweller. India is set to experience a dynamic transformation as the population burden of the past turns into a demographic dividend, but the benefits will be tempered with social and spatial inequalities.’ (Shivkumar, 2013) The National Commission on Population projected in 2006 that in year 2011, the youth population in the age- group 15-24 years was expected to increase to 240 million. And in 2021 India is expected to become the youngest country in the world. According to Jaipuria, (2014) the key to harnessing India’s demographic dividend is education. Indian higher education currently the third largest in the world, is likely to surpass the US in the next five years and China in the next 15 years to be the largest system of higher education in the world. Indian higher education has a complex structure riddled with many contradictions, still has great possibilities.

Higher education (HE) is where a person can gain advanced level of knowledge, normally after a person turns 18 years of age. In India anything beyond the 12th grade is considered HE. Higher education courses are usually studied at universities, university colleges and higher education institutions. However, they can be studied at specialist colleges, for example art and music, and some education institutions that offer degrees, diplomas and certificates.

INDIAN HIGHER EDUCATION: AT A GLANCE

India has significant advantages in the knowledge contest of the present times. India has a number-wise large higher education system. It uses English as a primary language for higher education and research. Indian education has a long academic tradition. Indian culture recognises and respects academic excellence. There are a few world-class and specialised institutions that can form the basis of quality culture in higher education. The Central Government takes major responsibility of functioning and finances the higher education. This allows the system to adopt a variety of policies and approaches, which are uniformly applicable in the whole country. The ‘All India Survey on Higher Education’ (AISHE) carried out by ‘Ministry of Human Resource Development’ (2013) revealed the following:

Institutions

There are 601 Universities, 21158 colleges and 6702 private institutions of higher education in India. Out of 601 universities, 238 are affiliated comprising of 83

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