

## WORLD UNIVERSITY RANKINGS: CHALLENGES FOR HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM IN INDIA

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### *Abstract*

*Education is critical to India's future growth and has been a centre of learning for centuries. India has a massive network of colleges, central and state public universities with around 36.6 million students enrolled in under graduate and post-graduate level programs. Despite of a huge infrastructure, there are gaps in quality and in attaining world-class excellence across the spectrum. It can be noted that not a single Indian university finds a place in the global top 100. The paper is an attempt to answer: Why that is our Universities struggle to break into top rankings of universities?*

*The present study aims to highlight facts and suggested increase in public financing for research and innovations, enhance the infrastructure in terms of physical settings and equipments and above all needs a greater attention to its existing talented teachers and researchers to save them from hopeless future in Indian Universities.*

**Keywords:** *Indian University, Public Finance, Faculty*

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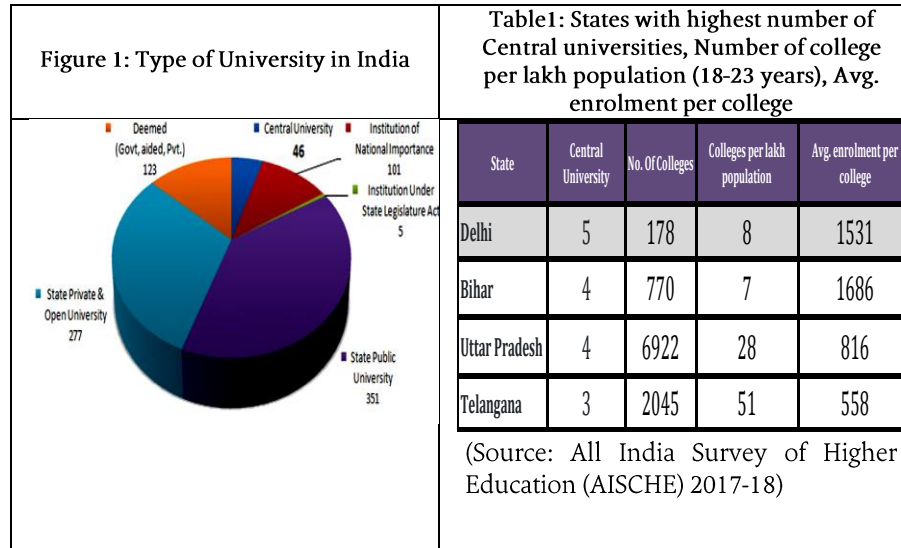
### **Introduction**

India is one of the world's top five economies and largest in the working age (15-64 years) population which is around 86 crores. Education is critical to India's future growth and has been a centre of learning for centuries. India has a massive network of 903 universities and 39,050 colleges (affiliated and constituent institutions of Central and State Public Universities). Total enrolment in higher education is around 36.6 million out of which about 79.2% of the students are enrolled in undergraduate and 11.2% in Post-graduate level programmes. National Capital, Delhi

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with 5 Central Universities, 178 colleges (affiliated and constituent) enrolls about 7.5 lakh students in a year, and is at third position in enrolment of students in the country. The data is sufficient to claim the significance of education sector to India’s future growth.



Despite of a huge infrastructure over 900 universities, 36.6 million students, there are gaps in quality and in attaining world-class excellence across the spectrum. It can be noted that not a single Indian university finds a place in the global top 100. The highest rank achieved at 420<sup>th</sup> position by IISC, Bangalore (National rank 1) according to Centre for World’s University Ranking 2018-19. Delhi University which ranked at No.7 in the country found 726<sup>th</sup> position in the global ranking of Indian Universities. These ranks primarily focus on the quantity and quality of research papers published in top-tier with impact factor and number of citations. Why that is our Universities struggle to break into top rankings of universities?

Table 2: CWUR World Rankings 2018-19

World Rank	Institution	Location	National Rank	Quality of Education	Alumni Employment	Quality of Faculty	Research Output	Quality Publications	Influence	Citations	Score
1	Harvard University	USA	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	100
2	Stanford University	USA	2	10	3	2	10	4	3	2	96.7
3	Massachusetts Institute of Technology	USA	3	3	11	3	30	15	2	6	95.1
420	Indian Institute of Science	India	1	-	573	-	342	336	718	405	74.7
726	University of Delhi	India	7	293	146	-	569	724	839	> 1000	71.7

### Question of Money:

Decline in Higher Education funding appears to key issue in the existing substandard infrastructure, filling vacant posts and pooling talented teachers to the institutions.

Table 2: Public Expenditure on Higher education (In 'crores)

	Actual 2016-17	Revised 2017-18	Budget 2018-19
Total Higher Education	29026.33	34862.46	35010.29
% change	--	20.1%	0.4%
Central University (CUs)	63.55.93	7261.42	6445.23
% change	--	14.2%	-11.2%
University Grants Commission	4471.92	4922.74	4722.75
% change	--	10.1%	-4.1%
Research & Innovation	215.25	319.33	350.23
% change	--	48.4%	9.7%

(Source: Union budget 2018-19: Department of Higher Education)

Budgetary allocations are strategic in nature and specific to changing conditions of the economy. So, comparison like 2018-19 allocation is about 0.4% more (not considering inflation) than the previous year may have a mathematical significance, but not much socio-economic significance.

Government expenditure on education, as a percentage of the GDP, has been decreasing consistently even through public investment in social infrastructure is considered critical to economic progress. The economic

survey of the year 2017-18 shows that the states and the union government together have been investing less than 3 per cent of the country's GDP in education.

Six years ago, that in 2012-13, education expenditure was 3.1% of the GDP, it fell in 2014-15 to 2.8% and registered a further drop to 2.4% in 2015-16. Although there have been some signs of recovery since 2016-17 (2.6%). This is lower than the UK, US and South Africa--countries that spent 5.68%, 5.22% and 6.05% respectively, of GDP on education.

Comparisons with developed countries' spend on education, as a percentage of GDP, are also not warranted. Developed nations, on an average, spend 6% of GDP on education.

### **Vacancies affect quality of Research and Teaching**

**Teachers** apart from teaching duties play a leading role in conducting academic research and improving the national and world rank. But it is a fact to note that we treat our academicians and people aspiring to become academicians with contempt. Consequently, we actively discourage expert academicians from pursuing an academic career and demoralise existing academicians.

Vacancies have been affecting the quality of teaching and research, professors. Filled vacancies with Permanent teachers have the "time and responsibility" for research since they are not concerned with job security. But nowadays, the entire system is made up of contract/ad hoc teachers with a contract period of four-six months despite of permanent vacancies. These ad hoc appointments should not be confused with people being out on probation to evaluate their performance before offering a tenured or permanent employment. Even if one were to perform superlatively as an ad hoc faculty, it is quite possible that the university may ask the person to leave on the expiry of the term. There are horrifying instances of ad hoc faculty members not being paid salaries during university vacations. DU alone has more than 50 per cent of its total teaching staff as ad hoc faculty members, who don't have a sense of belonging to the institution. Teachers with very strong academic credentials, with eight to

ten years of teaching experience with significant research publications are compelled to lead a very uncertain and insecure professional life. Since permanent appointments have not taken place for a long time in many of the colleges, their future is in lurch. Moreover, they are overage for other jobs. Even UGC and other bodies do not recognize them as full time permanent teachers and do not sanction them research projects/travel grant for research presentations. “Infected Ad hoc teachers, not the permanent faculty running the show in Delhi University Colleges. Right from teaching, conducting exams and evaluating answer-scripts, the varsity is very much dependent on the services of the ad hoc teachers. The delay in appointing permanent teachers has compounded the problem. A close look at the situation reveals that most of these colleges have violated UGC regulations, which state that teachers should be appointed on contract basis only when it is absolutely necessary and their number should not exceed 10% of the total number of faculty positions in a college or University”.

“No appointments were made in the colleges and departments of Delhi University from October 2010 till 2013. In 2010, API, point based system was introduced by the University Grants Commission (UGC). The panel notified new rules in 2013 and during 2010-13 there was a virtual freeze in appointment. Therefore, though the recruitment process was restarted in January 2014, but most positions in Indian Universities continue to be vacant and teachers appointed against these posts continued to work on ad hoc or guest lecturer basis”.

### **Concluding Remarks**

“India has a third largest higher educational system but no Indian institution could place itself in top 100 of the global universities. The quantitative explosion in higher educational institutions has not been matched by the quality of the institute and resulting in a major hurdle to finding a place in top of the world universities. India needs a rescue operation from its dissatisfaction; the onus is on the government to rescue the careers of young population from a hopeless future. Recent declaration by the government to designate six institutions as “Institution of Eminence” is not sufficient to address the underlying problems of higher

education in India. Focus on only six as selected group of institutions and individuals and enabling them to be rated a little higher, does nothing for the many. India instead world class institutions for selected brands, needs a world class higher education system”.

To make the Indian higher education a world class, India needs to increase public financing for research and innovations, enhance the infrastructure in terms of physical settings and equipments and above all needs a greater attention to its existing talented teachers and researchers to save them from hopeless future in Indian Universities. Faculty shortages and growing number of ad hoc/temporary and guest faculties have become worse over time; and requires an urgent notice of the government.

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