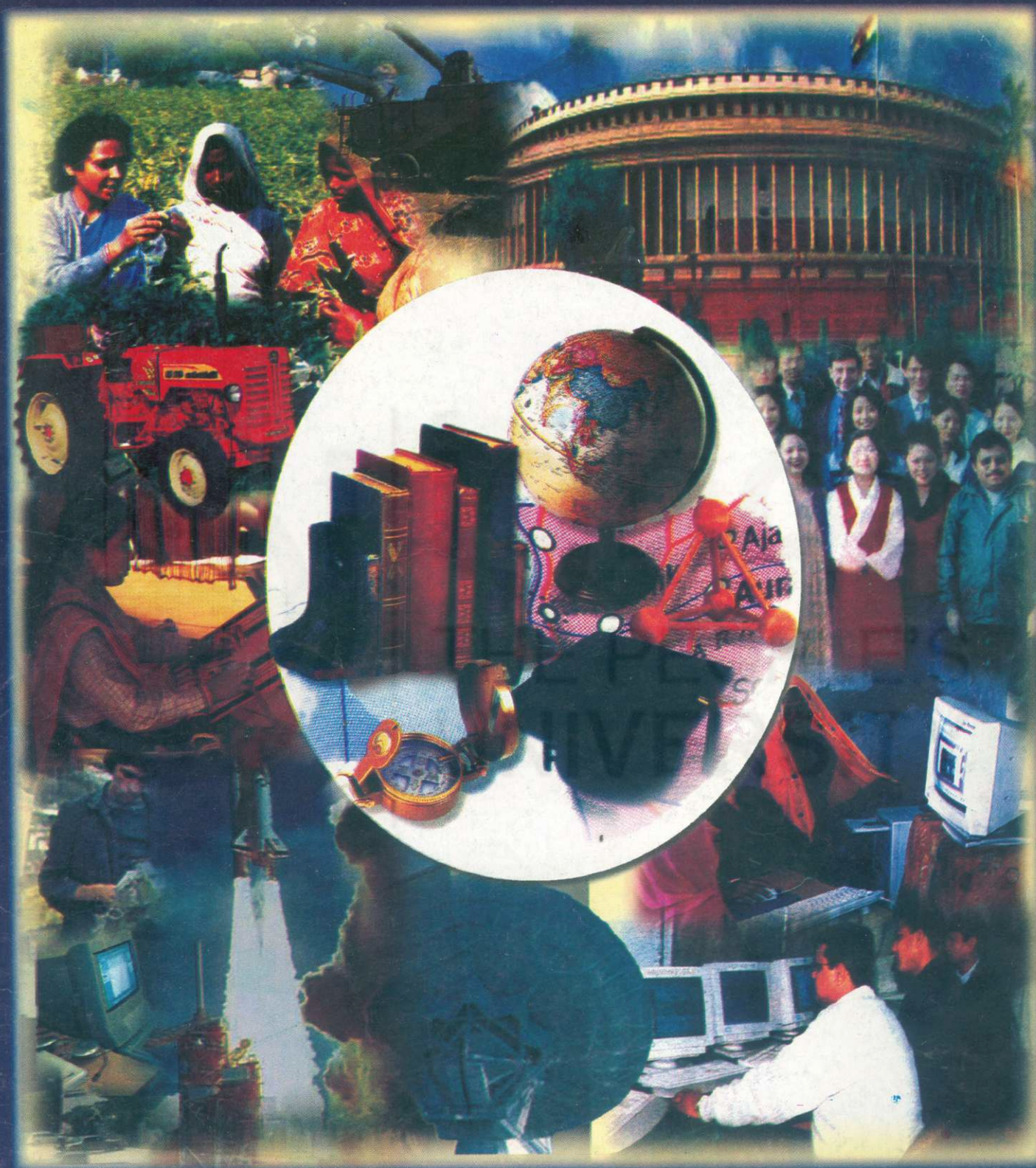




Indira Gandhi National Open University
School of Education

MES-101

Higher Education : Its Context and Linkages



Indian Higher Education :
Concerns and Developments

3

“शिक्षा मानव को बन्धनों से मुक्त करती है और आज के युग में तो यह लोकतंत्रा की भावना का आधार भी है। जन्म तथा अन्य कारणों से उत्पन्न जाति एवं वर्गगत विषमताओं को दूर करते हुए मनुष्य को इन सबसे ऊपर उठाती है।”

- इन्दिरा गाँधी



“Education is a liberating force, and in our age it is also a democratising force, cutting across the barriers of caste and class, smoothing out inequalities imposed by birth and other circumstances.”

- Indira Gandhi



MES-101

Higher Education : Its Content and Linkages

Block

3

Indian Higher Education : Concerns and Developments

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MES-101 *Higher Education : Its Context and Linkages*

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Block 3 *Indian Higher Education: Concerns and Development*

Introduction to the Block

The third Block of the course examined the problems and issues in higher education -both related to the structure within the system and the political and economic context of the system. You may recall in Block I of the course, we examined the differing opinions that exist on the nature of relationship between education and society. On the one end of the spectrum, education was dubbed as the instrument of the ruling classes to preserve the status quo, on the other, it was seen as the most important instrument in social change. The relationship of education and society was however conceded despite a certain degree of ambivalence. Unit 9 attempts to explore these society -education linkages further. Unit 9 while examining certain tensions prevailing in the Indian society, provides a context to articulate the interaction of the university and society more meaningfully amidst these social tensions.

Unit 10 focuses on the emergence of university as a “corporation” the problems and issues it faces in the light of the future it confronts. The World Trade Organisation and the proposal to include education as a tradable commodity rather than a “service” has wide implications not only how we view education but also what to expect from it as beneficiaries. Issues like who will get access, what will be its content of and what will be the role of teachers deserve serious thought in the changing context -Unit 10 examines the range of concerns and their implications.

Unit 11 is the starting point for a discussion on certain global developments impacting higher education and failures of the formal higher education system. We will find that educational objectives are closely linked to the country's development goals, whatever these goals might be. Our analysis here shows that educational objectives in the Indian system have achieved very little, on the other hand, there are some typical problems that have come to be associated with the formal system. The emergence of the Open and Distance Learning system is a response to the rise of globalisation and shortcomings of the formal system.

Unit 12 examines the issues of accreditation and quality assurance which has assumed significance as higher education systems gear themselves to ‘internationalization’ and experience a squeeze in public funding leading to more accountability. The mechanisms in operation presently have been discussed here.

Higher Education and Problems of Contemporary Indian Society

Introduction

What causes conflicts between communities and regions in a society? What are the underlying issues in such conflicts? How can higher education play a role in offsetting some of these problems? This unit attempts to identify answers to these questions by identifying the social fabric of the Indian society, the nature of conflict and the active part of universities in freeing the social tensions that grip regions and communities even in the 21st century. These questions pose new challenges to education and polity with the spread of global culture. Earlier, culture had been the particularizing, localizing force that distinguished societies and people from each other by providing forms of local identities, practices, and modes of everyday life that could serve as a bulwark against any invasion of ideas, identities and forms of life extraneous to the specific local region in question. Education in turn transmitted the skills and materials that enabled individuals to participate in their culture in a creative way. As global culture permeates local ones and new configurations emerge, education increasingly comes under pressure to confront social tensions and conflicts.

Learning outcomes

After going through this unit, you will be able to

- identify the components and identities that comprise the Indian society;
- understand the nature and history of conflict in India;
- discuss the role of universities and higher education to reduce conflict.

Identities in India

Defining “identity”

It is perhaps instructive to begin the discussion with an understanding of the term ‘identity’. Although the term “identity” has a long history - it was not until the twentieth century that it came into popular usage. The term takes two forms - **psychodynamic** and **sociological**. The psycho-historian Erik Erikson saw identity as a process ‘located’ in the core of the individual, and yet also in the core of his or her communal culture, hence making a connection between community and individual. Later on, an understanding that individuals inhabit multiple identities came to the fore - an individual could be a taxpayer, a cricket enthusiast, a believer and so on. These **multiple identities** that individuals inhabit in relation to a range of social practices are themselves linked to larger structures of identity which interact with each other like class, ethnicity, race, gender and sexuality. Of late in the context of globalization, there is a talk of “hybrid identity.”

As can be inferred from the above, there is no clear understanding of the concept of identity. It is used widely and loosely in reference to one’s sense of self, and one’s feelings and ideas about oneself, as for example, in terms ‘gender identity’ or ‘class identity’. It is also sometimes assumed that our identity comes from the expectations attached to the social roles that we occupy, and which we then internalize so that it is formed through the

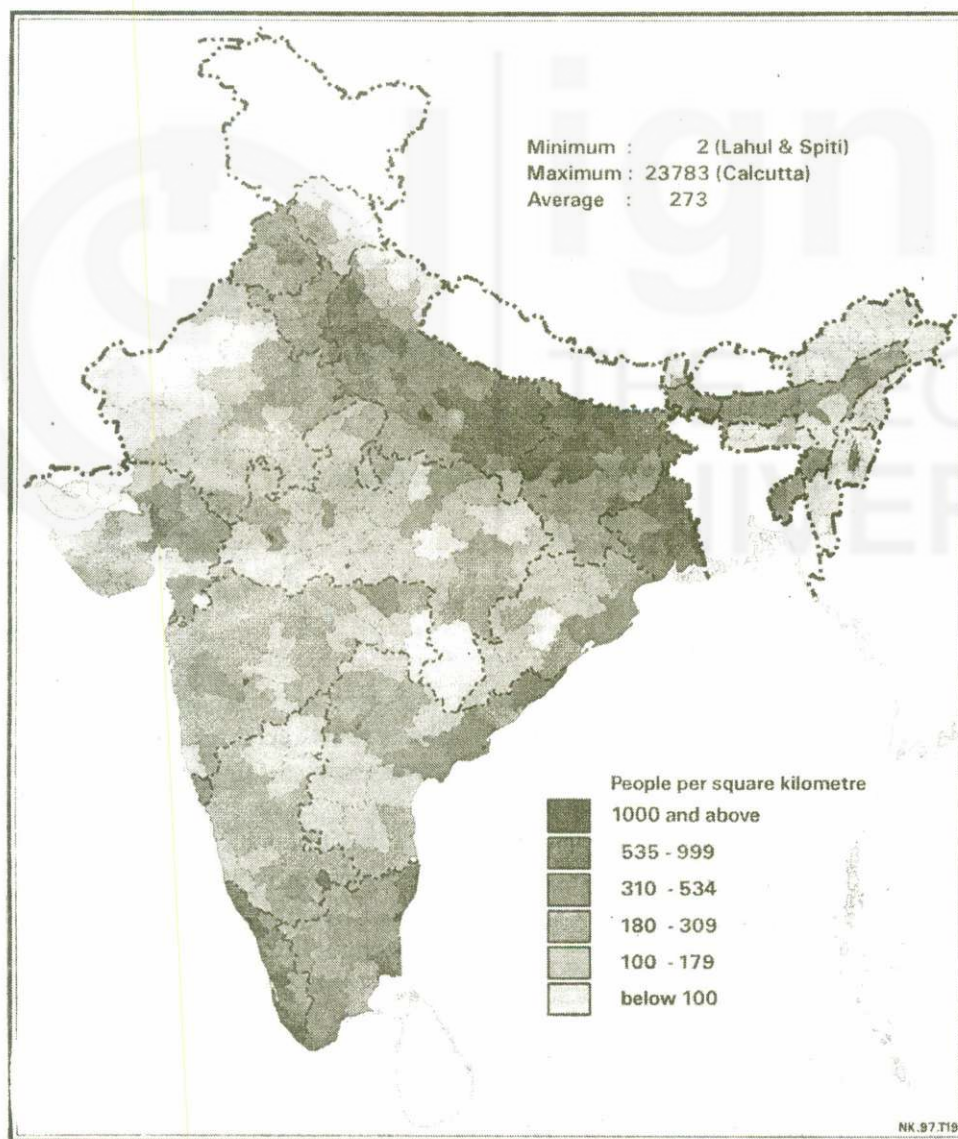
process of socialization. Alternatively, it is elsewhere assumed that we construct our identities more actively out of the materials presented to us during socialization, or in our various roles (Gordon, 2001).

Complex identities of race, culture, language, religion, caste and tribes comprise the Indian subcontinent. This multiplicity and multi-ethnicity lends the subcontinent its heterogeneous or pluralistic character. Pluralism in a society is the presence of more than one identity among its population. It can be multi-ethnic, multi-religions, multi-lingual and other multi-cultural categories. India is the world's most complex and comprehensive pluralistic society, harbouring a vast variety of races, tribes, castes, communities, religions, languages, customs and living styles.

According to Romila Thapar, historian, "Indian society has always been a multi-religious, multicultural society where identities have inevitably been multiple. Such a society is not in itself secular but is conducive to the evolving of a secular society protecting the civil and human rights of all its citizens".

Let us proceed to examine the components of this diverse milieu:

The people of India, 1991



Map 1 : Numbers of people per square kilometre in each district in 1991, *population density*.

Note : No Census in Jammu and Kashmir in 1991.

Scheduled tribes

For each State or Union Territory, tribal communities are identified ('notified') by the President of India in consultation with the Governor. (This identification is valid only within the relevant State or Union Territory.) The first notification was in 1950, since when new notifications have been published from time to time and included in the 1991 Census (*General Note in Primary Census Abstract 1991*).

Scheduled castes

The term 'scheduled castes' refers to historically 'under-privileged', 'deprived', 'depressed' or once 'untouchable' castes. These castes were first categorized as 'scheduled' by the British. In independent India, scheduled caste communities are identified (notified) for each State or Union Territory by the President of India in consultation with the Governor. This identification is valid only within the relevant State or Union Territory.

Religious and linguistic minorities

The Constitution defines "minorities" as communities constituted on the bases of religion or language, even when the language does not have a separate script. Historically, Hindus contribute to more than three-fourths of the population; the religious minorities comprised of Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Jains, Parsis, Anglo-Indians, Jews and Buddhists. According to the Census of 1991, the religion-wise break-up of the population was: Hindus 672.6 million (82.41% of total), Muslims 95.2 million (11.67%), Christians 18.9 million (2.32%), Sikhs 16.3 million (1.99%), Buddhists 6.3 million (0.77%), Jains 3.4 million (0.41%), others 3.5 million (0.43%). The Government has notified five communities, namely, Muslims, Sikhs, Christians, Buddhists and Zoroastrians as minorities at the national level. As per the Census of 1991, together the minority groups constitute 17.17 per cent of total population of the country.

The population is divided on the basis of language and the reorganization of Indian States according to language gives each Indian State an official language. People in these States who speak another language as their mother tongue are considered as language or linguistic minority, for example the Bengalis or Biharis living in the States of Assam and Tripura. Languages recognized by the Indian Constitution are Assamese, Bengali, Gujarati, Hindi, Kannada, Kashmiri, Konkani, Malayalam, Manipuri, Marathi, Nepali, Oriya, Punjabi, Sanskrit, Sindhi, Tamil, Telugu, and Urdu.

Constitutional provision for minorities

The Constitution has made provisions to safeguard the right of religious and language minorities. The Constitution of India, under Article 29, states that the 'minorities with a distinct language, script or culture have the right to conserve the same' and that they 'shall not be denied admission into any' educational institution maintained by the State or receiving aid out of State funds on grounds only of religion, race, caste, language or any of them'. Article 30 states that all minorities, whether based on religion or language, shall have the right to establish and administer educational institutions of their choice. The State shall not, in granting aid to educational institutions, discriminate against any educational institution on the ground that it is under the management of a minority, whether based on religion or language.

Article 350A of the Constitution regarding facilities for instruction in the mother-tongue at the primary stage of education states that "*It shall be the endeavour of every local authority within the State to provide adequate facilities for instruction in the mother-tongue at the primary stage of education to children belonging to linguistic minority groups*". Article 350B states that there shall be a special officer for linguistic minorities to be appointed by the President of India. It shall be the duty of the special officer to investigate all matters relating to the safeguards provided for linguistic minorities under this Constitution and report to the President upon those matters at such intervals as the President may direct, and the President shall cause all such reports to be laid before each House of Parliament, and sent to the Governments of the States concerned.

Scheduled Castes (SCs)

The term Schedule Castes refer to traditionally disadvantaged caste groups that were identified and listed in a schedule. The Indian caste system is a result of property relations and traditional mode of social arrangement by economy and education. Schedule Castes are regarded by the virtue of their economic and social status and form nearly 19 percent

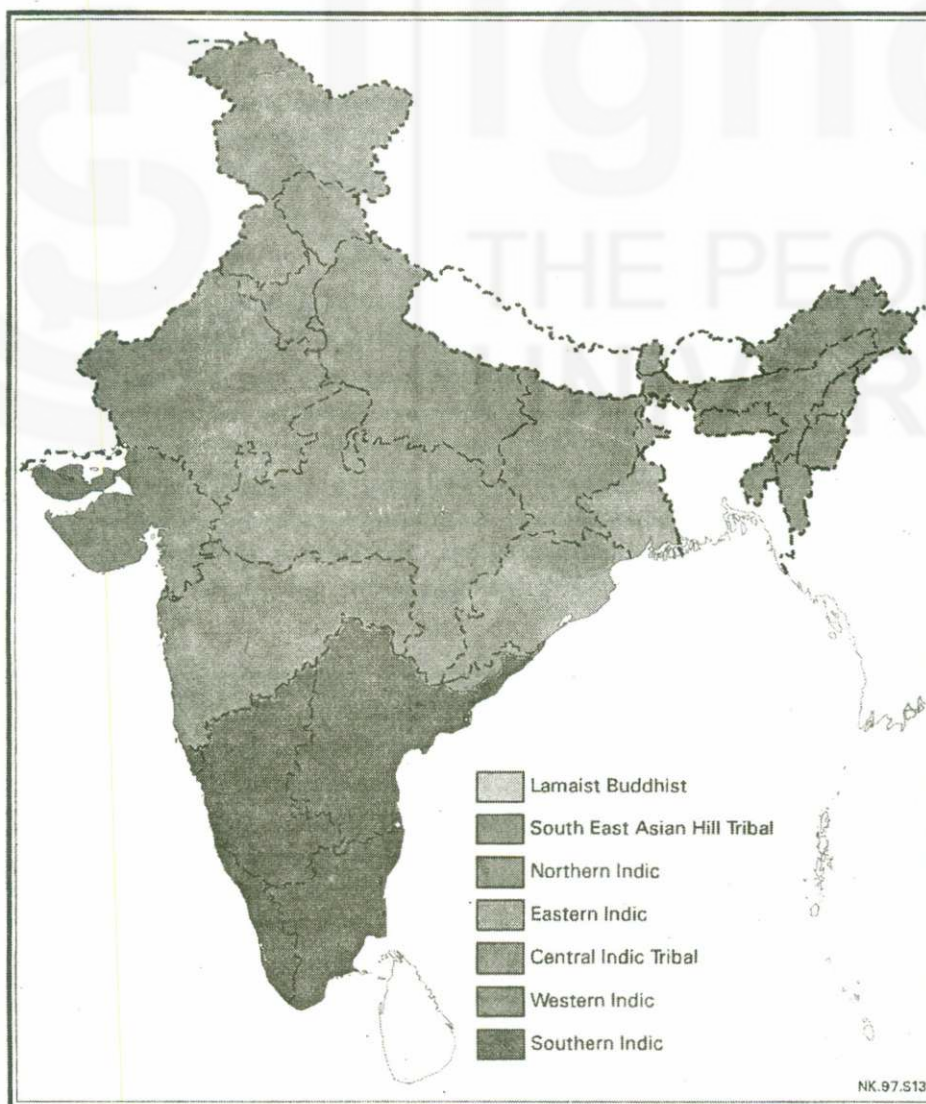
of India's population. The Indian Constitution recognizes another caste minority called Other Backward Castes (OBCs).

Schedule Tribes (STs)

India has the second largest tribal population in the world. Tribals have traditionally been distinct cultural groups that have evolved in isolation from the mainstream cultures. With heterogeneous social, economic, linguistic and religious patterns, these tribes survived in isolation for centuries, until modern development led the mainstream to impinge on their world, rightly or wrongly. The three principal regions where tribals are concentrated in India are: the North-East, the middle region including Bihar, hill areas of Orissa, South-Eastern Madhya Pradesh and part of Northern Andhra, the West of India comprising parts of Eastern Gujarat, Western Madhya Pradesh and Southern Rajasthan. Tribals also inhabit small areas in the mountain, region of Himachal Pradesh and the Nilgiri Hills in Tamil Nadu.

The mortality rates amongst tribals are higher and the literacy rates are lower. Due to the influence of Christian missionaries, the literacy rate in the North-East and among sections of Santhals, Mundas and Oraons is above average yet only a small number among them has entered professions and senior levels of bureaucracy. Recently, the tribal State of Jharkhand has been carved out of Bihar and Chhattisgarh out of Madhya Pradesh.

Cultural regions of India



Religions of India, 1991

Religion	Percentage of total population	Percentage growth (1981-91)	Percentage in towns and cities
Hindus	82.00	22.78	23.96
Muslims	12.12	32.76	35.47
Christians	2.34	16.89	31.34
Sikhs	1.94	25.48	23.29
Buddhists	0.76	35.98	35.38
Jains	0.40	4.42	70.24
Others	0.44	25.12	11.75

Sources : Census of India, 1991

Religions of India, 1991: Men and boys, women and girls

Religion	Thousands of men and boys	Thousands of women and girls	Numbers of women and girls per 1,000 men and boys (sex ratio)
Hindus	357,253	330,394	925
Muslims	52,631	48,965	930
Christians	9,849	9,791	994
Sikhs	8,611	7,649	888
Buddhists	3,272	3,115	952
Jains	1,723	1,630	946
Others	1,878	1,823	971

Sources : Census of India, 1991

Constitutional provisions for scheduled castes and scheduled tribes

The Constitution of India provides for special provisions for the advancement of Schedule Castes and Tribes. Article 46 of the Directive Principles of State Policy is a comprehensive article comprising both the development and regulatory aspects. It reads as follows:

"The State shall promote with special care the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections of the people, and, in particular, of the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes, and shall protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation"

Educational and cultural safeguards are provided to SCs and STs under Article 15(4) which empowers the State to make any special provision for the advancement of any socially and educationally backward classes of citizens or for SCs and STs. This provision has enabled the State to reserve seats for SCs and STs in educational institutions including Technical, Engineering and Medical colleges and in Scientific and specialized courses. Article 330 provides for reservation of seats for SCs / STs in the Lok Sabha. Article 332 provides for reservation of seats for SCs/ STs in the State Vidhan Sabhas (Legislative Assemblies).

Article 334 originally laid down that the provision relating to the reservation of seats for SCs/ STs in the Lok Sabha and the State Vidhan Sabhas (and the representation of the Anglo-Indian community in the Lok Sabha and the State Vidha Sabhas by nomination) would cease to have effect on the expiration of a period of ten years from the commencement of the Constitution. This article has since been amended four times, extending the said period by ten years on each occasion. This provision was to expire in January 2000 but it continues to exist.

Service Safeguards under Article 16(4) empowers the State to make *"any provision for the reservation in appointments or posts in favour of any backward class of citizens which, in the opinion of the State, is not adequately represented in the services under the State"*

According to Article 335, *"The claims of the members of the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes shall be taken into consideration, consistently with the maintenance of efficiency of administration, in the making of appointments to services and posts in connection with the affairs of the Union or of a State"*.

Apart from explicit provisions for education there are a number of laws, both Central and State, which provide for safeguards to SCs/STs. Some of these emanate from the various Constitutional provisions. An illustrative list of such laws is given below:

- The Protection of Civil Rights Act, 1955.
- The Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989.
- The Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act, 1976.
- The Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 1986.
- Acts and regulations in force in different States to prevent alienation of land belonging to SCs / STs . In some States such provision exists in the Land Revenue Code.
- Acts in different States for restoration of alienated land to SCs/ STs.

Educational status of the minorities, SCs and STs

The educational backwardness of minorities is revealed by the NSS data as well as studies done in the field (Rao, 1995, Ahmad 1994). According to Rao (1995:5) in rural India 51 percent of Hindu males were illiterate. But the figure for Muslim males was 58 percent. The difference was more striking for urban India. The percentage of illiteracy in urban India was 25.3 percent for Hindu males and 42 percent for Muslim males. Moreover, the rate of illiteracy in urban India was 42 percent for Hindu females and 60 percent for Muslim females. Another study by Ahmad (1994) also shows that Muslims are backward than Hindus regarding literacy. According to his study, the literacy rate was 32.20 percent and 53.65 percent among Muslims and Hindus respectively in Didwana town of Rajasthan and 31.46 percent and 55.17 percent among Muslims and Hindus respectively in Kishanganj town of Bihar. The study reflects that females lagged far behind males.

The statistical data required to assess the nature of Muslim representation in the educational sphere or to estimate the magnitude of their deprivation is not available in a consolidated form. Much of what we know and can say on the subject is based on fragmentarily collected evidence which is both disparate and sketchy. Nonetheless, it does indicate certain broad tendencies which for our present purposes is useful and illuminating.

Table 1 : Muslims enrolment in educational institutions

<i>Type of institution</i>	<i>No. of Distts. surveyed</i>	<i>% of Muslims surveyed Distts.</i>	<i>Total No. of students</i>	<i>No. of Muslim students</i>	<i>Percentage</i>	<i>Educational index</i>
Elementary Schools	45-Distts 12-States	17.32	98.48 (lakhs)	12.20 (lakhs)	12.39	0.72
Secondary Schools	38-Distts 11-States	18.56	19.64 (lakhs)	2.9 (lakhs)	10.70	0.58.
High Schools	8-Boards	12.00	13.44 (lakhs)	0.54 (lakhs)	4.00	0.33
Class XIII	5-Boards	10.30	2.26	56.45	2.49	0.24
Engg. Colleges	9-Universities	12.44	26.98	92	3.41	0.27
Medical Colleges	12-Medical colleges	9.55	28.45	98	3.44	0.36

Source : Saxena, N.C. (1983:116)

The educational status of the SCs, who constitute a part of the Hindu community and of the STs cannot be regarded as better than that of Muslims in India. In 1981, the literacy rate of SCs and STs was merely 21.38 percent and 16.35 percent respectively. The table throws more light on their educational status.

Table 2 : Literacy rate of Scheduled Castes and Tribes by sex (1991)

Total Population			Scheduled Castes			Scheduled Tribes		
Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
64.13	39.29	52.51	49.91	23.76	37.41	40.65	18.19	29.60

Source : National Institute of Adult Education (1993)

Table 3 : Enrolment at elementary stage (1950-51 to 1993-94)

Stage	1950-51		1993-94	
	Total	Girls	Total	Girls
Primary	19.2	5.4	108.0	46.4
Upper primary	03.1	0.5	39.9	15.7

Source : MHRD (1995:16)

**Table 4 : Gross Enrolment Ratios (GER) in Primary Education
(1950-51 to 1993-94)**

	1950-51	1993-94
Total	42.6	95.0
Boys	60.8	106.2
Girls	24.9	85.0

Source : MHRD (1993) and NCERT (1995)

Government strategies and programmes

Some steps have been taken by the Government, especially in the last decade, to tackle the problem of educational backwardness, if the minorities, especially Muslims. The details of these measures adopted by the Government are found in the Programme of Action (POA) of the NPE 1986 (GOI, 1986 b), POA of the NPE 1992 (the modified version of NPE 1986) (GOI 1992) and the Annual Report of the Department of Education of the Ministry of Human Resource Development (GOI 1996). It may be noted that both the POAs of 1986 and 1992 emphasise the need of special efforts to be made "to bring the educationally backward minorities (which includes Muslims) on par with the rest of the society and to make them participate fully in the national developmental activities" (GOI, 1992 b: 9). For achieving these goals, the POA of 1986 (GOI, 1986 : 115-19) and more so the POA of 1992, (GOI, 1992 b: 9-16) mention short-term, medium term and long term programmes with respect to the minorities. In this context, the UGC started a coaching scheme in 1984 to prepare students from educationally backward minorities to enable them to compete in competitive examination for jobs and for admission to professional course. Currently the scheme is being implemented in 21 universities and 32 colleges setting up of community polytechnics in minority concentration districts as well as preparing policy guidelines for recognition of minority managed institutions are some of the other measures undertaken for educational upliftment of these sections. For knowing the details it would be instructive to read these documents.

Gender identity: Women in India

Despite their infinite value in the development of economy, shaping of society and sustenance of family, women are generally not treated at par in any of the aspects of life. While patriarchal system is undoubtedly the root cause of this subjugation of women, poverty, unemployment and societal attitudes have played no less a role in worsening the plight of the women. The expectation of life at birth for urban women is 66.3 years (1989-93) as compared to 58.1 years of their rural counterparts. The literacy level of urban females stood at 63.94% in 1991 while that of the rural females was 30.35% during the corresponding period. This data throws considerable light on the status in Indian Society.

Constitutional provisions for women

Through the Fundamental Rights and Directive Principles of State Policy, the Constitution of India guarantees certain rights and privileges to women. Article 14 confers on men and women equal rights and opportunities in the political, economic and social spheres. Article 15 prohibits discrimination against any citizen on the grounds of religion, race, caste, sex, etc. More specifically Article 15 (3) contains an enabling provision for the State to make affirmative discrimination in favour of women. Similarly, Article 16 provides for equality of opportunity in matters of public appointments for all citizens. Article 39(a) further mentions that the State shall direct its policy towards securing to all citizens men and women, equally, the right to a means of livelihood, while Article 39(e) ensures equal pay. Finally, renunciation of practices derogatory to the dignity of women are imposed by the Constitution as a fundamental duty of every citizen through Article 51(A)(e).

Women and girls: education for equality

Girls education and women's development has been a national concern since Independence. Several policy measures have been taken to promote and strengthen the education of girls and women. In this connection some of the important Committees and

Table 5 : Percentage of girls' enrolment of the total enrolment by stages

Year	Primary I-V	Middle VI-IX	Secondary /Hr. Secondary 10+2 Intermediate	Higher Education (Degree and and above)
1950-51	28.1	16.1	13.3	10.0
1955-56	30.5	20.8	15.4	14.6
1960-61	32.6	23.9	20.5	16.0
1965-66	36.2	26.7	22.0	20.4
1970-71	37.4	29.3	25.0	20.0
1975-76	38.1	31.3	26.9	23.2
1980-81	38.6	32.9	29.6	26.7
1985-86	40.3	35.6	30.3	33.0
1990-91	41.5	36.7	32.9	33.3
1991-92	41.9	38.2	33.8	32.3
1992-93	42.6	38.8	33.9	33.2
1993-94	42.7	39.1	34.3	33.5
1994-95	42.9	39.3	35.9	34.0
1995-96	43.1	39.5	36.1	37.2
1996-97	43.4	39.8	36.2	38.2
1997-98	43.6	40.1	37.1	34.8
1998-99	43.5	40.5	37.8	38.8
1999-2000	43.6	40.4	38.9	39.9
2000-2001	43.7	40.9	38.6	36.9

Table 6 Enrolment of girls by stages 2002

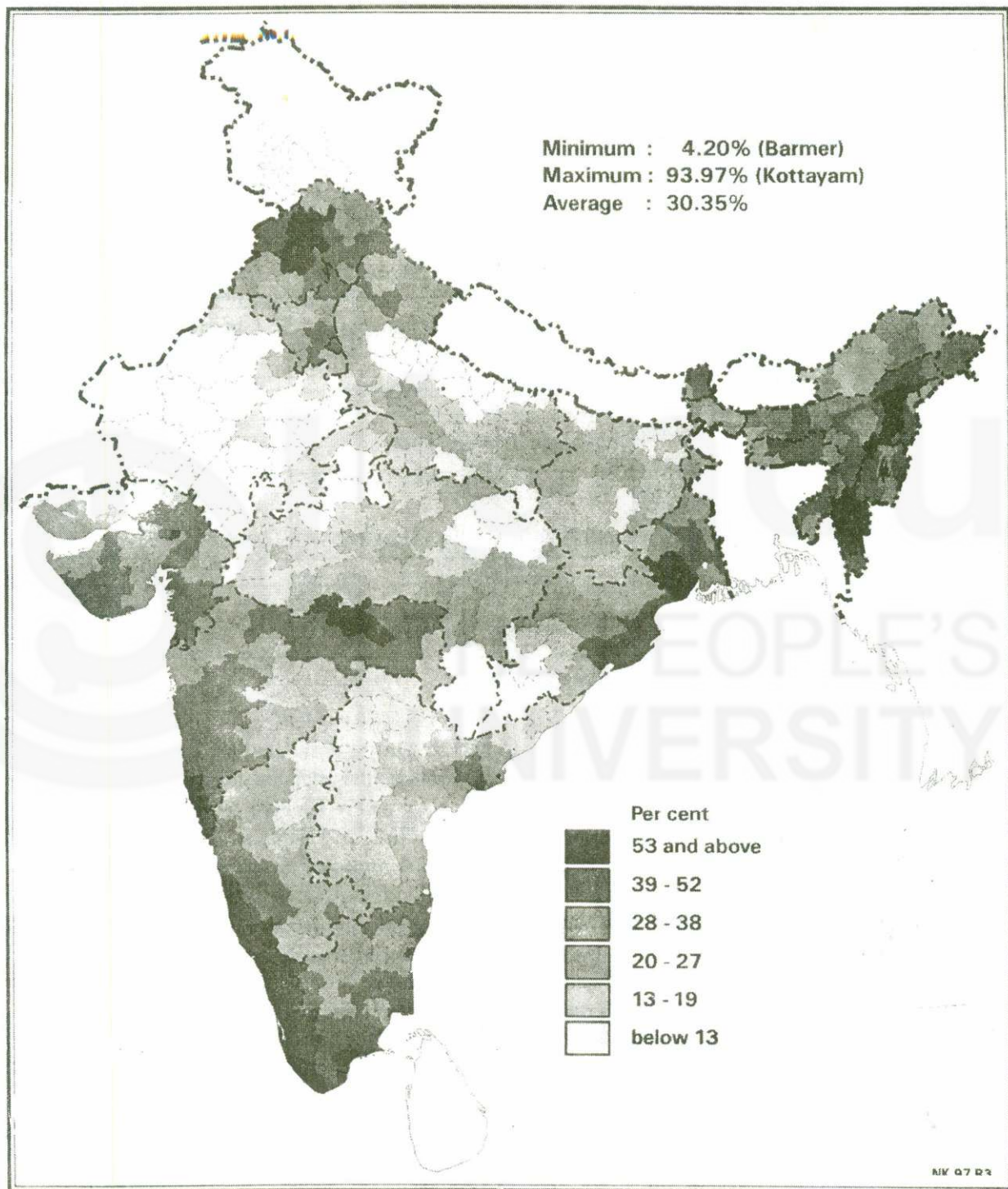
S.No.	Course	Boys	Girls	Total
1.	Ph.D/D.Sc./D.Phil	29149(64.8)	15855(35.2)	45004
2.	M.A	264262(63.4)	152444(36.6)	416706
3.	M.Sc.	70408 (55.5)	56365(44.5)	126773
4.	M.Com	64689(62.3)	39170(37.7)	103859
5.	B.A./B.A.(Hons.)	2690712(61.9)	1657325(37.7)	4348037
6.	B.Sc. /B.Sc.(Hons.)	876722	525346(37.5)	1402068
7.	B.Com/B.Com(Hons)	964952(64.6)	529858(35.4)	1494810
8.	B.E./B.Sc./B.Arch.	324914(77.7)	93279(22.3)	418193
9.	B.Ed./ B.T.	69625(57.2)	52108(42.8)	121733
10.	M.B.B.S.	88396(59.4))	60303(40.6)	148699
11.	Intermediate / Jr. College/ Pre-degree/ Pre-University	1583392(65.4)	838680(34.6)	2422072
12.	Higher Secondary (10+2 New pattern)	149600(60.5)	2935829(39.5)	7429219

Source : Selected Educational Statistics- 2000-2001, 14-18.

Commissions appointed by the Government were the Durga Bai Deshmukh Committee (1958-59), the Hansa Mehta Committee (1962-64), the Bhaktavatsalam Committee (1963) and so on. However, the most significant measure adopted by the Government was the enactment of the National Policy on Education (1986) and the Programme of Action (1992). The Policy proposes a dual track approach designed to promote simultaneously adult literacy and primary education with a focus on girls and other dis-advantaged groups. It postulates integration of gender perspective in all aspects of planning. There is a pronounced policy shift from an **equalization** of educational opportunity to education for women's **empowerment**. It enjoins that the education system should play a positive interventionist role in the empowerment of women, foster the development of new values through revised curricula and textbooks, provide systematic training and orientation of teachers, decision makers and administrators - all through the active involvement of educational institutions. The removal of women's illiteracy and obstacles inhibiting their access to and retention in education are given an overriding priority.

Recently the Government has enacted the National Policy for the Empowerment of Women: 2001. The main thrust of the policy is to bring about an overall advancement in the status of women so that they become active partners in development initiatives of the country. In fact, in the Ninth and Tenth Five Year Plan education of girls and women's empowerment are seen as drive arms of national development. In the Ninth Plan priority is given for expansion of higher education in unserved areas with a focus on improving the coverage of women and disadvantaged groups by using financial assistance as a

Rural women and girls: How many can read and write?



Map 3: Of all rural women and girls aged seven or more in each district, how many could read and write in 1991?

Note : No. Census in Jammu and Kashmir in 1991

Self-assessment

1. How would you define the term "identity"?

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2. Discuss the different identities in India and highlight their distinctive characteristics.

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3. What are the major reasons for the educational backwardness of the following?

i) Religious minorities

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ii) SCs and STs

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iii) Women

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Conflicts in India

So far we have discussed the components of the plural character of Indian society, their place and status in society - Ideally, one would expect pluralism to be a unique character of a society devoid of tensions and confrontation. Let us examine the situation in the Indian context. In the last century, developments propelled by the changing world economy have pointed to the existence of the pluralistic character in the demographic make up of

nations and exposed its conflictual character. Economic globalization has led to homogenization and marginalisation. Among the communities which are feeling the impact of the homogenization, invasion on local traditions and privatization of the social and the communal, there is a strong urge to guard and preserve their identities against these onslaughts. There is also a trend among those who are economically marginalized to consolidate their primordial identities as a defence mechanism.

In Third World countries, years of neglect of various communities, at times their brutal suppression, and the failure of the State to deliver the goods has made pluralism a major source of tension, conflict and violence. In an increasing number of cases, cultural minorities are converting themselves into political minorities in order to seek recognition and protection of their distinctive identities, claim autonomy and self-governance, and demand segregation and even secession.

In India, communalism is the political, economic and social assertiveness of an organized aggregation of individuals identifying themselves with a particular religious group. At the root of the issue is the belief that Hindus, Muslims, Christians and Sikhs form different and distinct communities which are independently and separately structured. Communal ideology promotes the belief that interests of these religious groups are conflicting and within a group they are the same irrespective of their social status, language and region. Communalism emerged during the nineteenth century and intensified during the twentieth century. These tensions or communal conflicts were not limited to Hindus and Muslims but perpetuated between different communities. The primary development of communalism

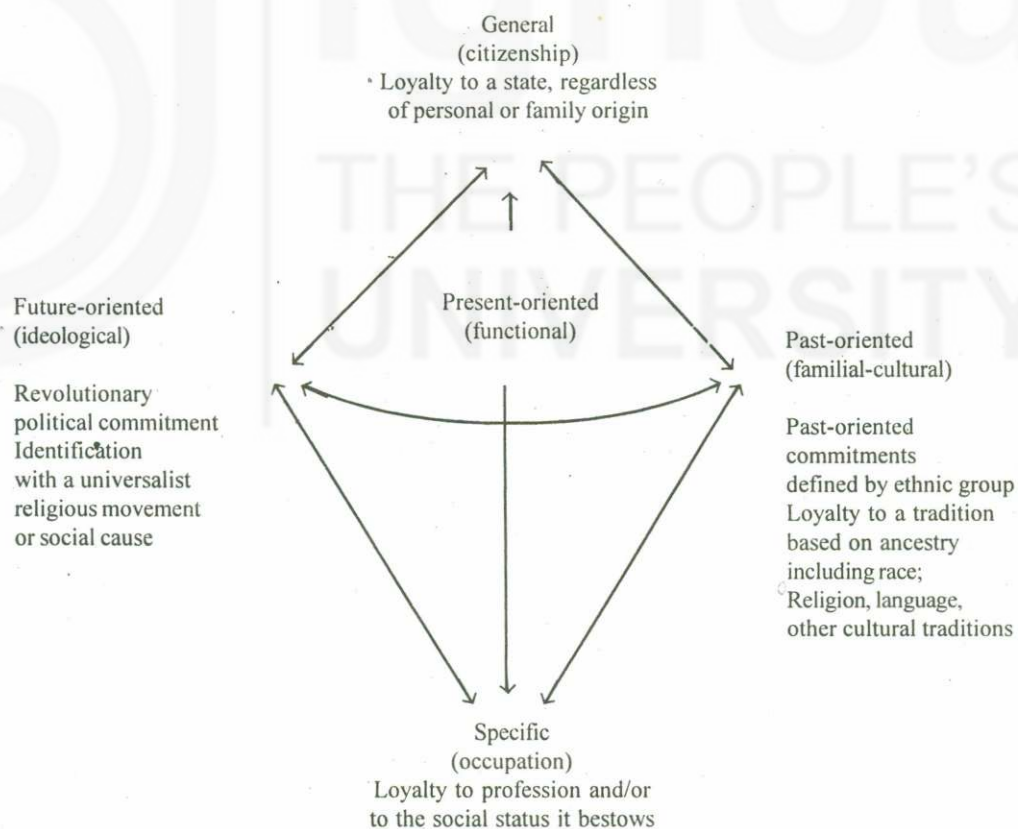


Figure 1 : Priority in belonging : directions of conflict and accommodation between types of group allegiance.

Source : Ros & Voş (eds.) (2000:27)

It is obvious from this figure that present and future-oriented groups are less prone to conflict than past-oriented ones.

during the colonial period had to do with the social and cultural regeneration and the development of social and cultural consciousness. The cultural regeneration in India during the colonial period was community based and within the parameters of religion. According to Prof. K. N. Panikkar, an eminent historian, the study of India-Pakistan partition is very significant to understand communalism in India. It was believed that Partition would end communalism in India, particularly because of the way in which the Constituted Assembly of India between 1948 and 1950 faced the question of Indian nationhood. But unfortunately today it has become a major symbol of communalization of Indian society and is used as a rationale and justification particularly for the sustained tensions between the Hindu and Muslim communities. At the root of the communal conflict and violence in Punjab, Assam and Kashmir since the 1950s were ethnic conflicts and the demand for a separate state. These are examples of the worst manifestation of regionalism and years of strife between those demanding statehood and the law and order machinery of the States.

Regions are associated with common history, language and cultural practices which give rise to 'linguistic regionalism'. Its perceptions takes the form of sentimentalism, protection in education and employment against 'aliens' and migrants, insertion of regional histories, regional symbols and pride into school text books and demand for greater regional autonomy in relation to the Central Government. The demand for linguistic homelands or States is to gain control over resources of government, employment, patronage and education.

Historically, varying groups have had varying access to resources and disparities between them - economic and educational - have continued to increase. This marginalisation of groups has created a scramble for resources and political supremacy. For decades, India has been intermittently tormented by outbursts of religious and class violence, thrusting thousands of ordinary Indians into conflict and communalism.

The last century has also witnessed the rise in the movement within the 'fringe' populations of Indian society - namely the tribals and the Dalits who constitute a substantial portion of India's population. The movement was against the subjugation, humiliation and oppression endured at the hands of the upper caste Hindus.

In the fifty years after Independence, the Dalits were deprived of any substantive benefit from Governmental legislation. Non-governmental agents of social change like social activists have been the more prominent agents for social change. Guerrilla organizations like the Naxalites (Maoist Communists) have tried to effect social change employing methods ranging from the parliamentary to extreme violence. Another recent development has been the rapid growth in popularity and political power of the forces of Hindu fundamentalism, which has encouraged a backlash against Dalits and Tribals.

Societal problems and the role of higher education

In a developing society like India, there is no doubt that universities and institutions imparting higher education in India can play a significant role. In this context, it is pertinent to note the following:

'Historians, archaeologists and men of letters chronicle the past and present in a way which shapes the future and nurtures the roots that bind communities together. Universities - students as well as teachers - everywhere are uniquely motivated to keep alive the values of freedom and universality - of individual dignity as well as the brotherhood of man. Witness the fear that all tyrants have of university campuses and how universities everywhere traditionally transcend purely regional or national loyalties. Universities are in general also the greatest source of change - not just technological change but social and cultural as well. The duct that university years are the most impressionable years where our mental and spiritual horizons are widened by contact with the classics of the past or with grandeur of science or indeed with other minds struggling similarly to break through the constraints of ignorance and learning to learn by analysis, is of no small significance'. (Patel, 2003:139).

Despite the prestigious and privileged place assigned to institutions of higher education, few initiatives in tackling social and political problems have been undertaken. Although, access to higher education has rapidly increased in the last fifty years, its benefit is limited to only specific social classes or groups.

As already discussed in this unit, evidence shows that some communities and groups are under-represented in higher education. It is due to this fact that higher education is viewed as elitist and as a vehicle to perpetuate social inequities. Let us see how university - society interface can take place to tackle social problems.

Creating new knowledge

Universities are in fact a microcosm of the Indian society; the elements of diversity and democracy are common to both. In view of this reality, Universities can no longer be content only with imparting knowledge. Universities have the potential to draw from the stock of knowledge and pave the way to provide solutions for social, cultural and economic development. Considering their vast resources, Universities are in a better position to adapt knowledge to solve specific problems and challenges.

Related to this aspect is the **knowledge construction process** which relates to the extent to which teachers help students to understand, investigate and determine how the implicit cultural assumptions, frames of reference, perspectives and biases within a discipline influence the ways in which knowledge is constructed. It is important for students to understand how knowledge is constructed in all disciplines. Social scientists as well as Physical and Biological scientists, although at the cutting edges of their disciplines, teach their students a body of truth which is not to be questioned or critically analysed. Students need to understand even in Sciences how cultural assumptions, perspectives and frames of reference influence the questions that researchers ask and formulate (Banks, 92).

Content integration

Content integration deals with the way teachers use examples and content from a variety of cultures and groups to illustrate key concepts, principles, generalizations and theories in their subject area or discipline. This fusion, however, should be logical and not contrived. More opportunities exist for the integration of ethnic and cultural content in some subject areas than in others. In the Social Sciences, the Language Arts, Music and Home Economics there are frequent and ample opportunities for teachers to use ethnic and cultural content to illustrate concepts, themes and principles (Ibid; 92)

An equity pedagogy

An equity pedagogy exists when teachers modify their teaching in ways that will facilitate the academic achievement of students from diverse cultural, ethnic and gender groups. Research indicates that low income students as a group, tend to differ from middle class students in some important characteristics related to motivation (Lefcourt, 1976). Low income students tend to be external in their motivational orientations, which means that they tend to attribute their success or failure to outside forces or individuals and not to their own efforts. Middle-income students tend to be internal in their orientations. These characteristics of low income and middle class students have implications for teaching. The motivational characteristics of low income and middle class students is just one example of how teaching can be modified to increase the academic achievement of students from diverse social class, cultural and gender groups. Other strategies include the use of cooperative teaching strategies. (Slain, 1983, Cohen, 1986)

Civilising the human mind

Education has a fundamental significance in development and progress of human society. It is the channel for creating awareness and appreciation for diversity, widening the

understanding of varying groups of people, intensifying sensibilities of cultures and beliefs and inculcating the spirit of enquiry and questioning of accepted truths. In other words, education has the capacity to free the human mind from ignorance and false sense of self-preservation.

An empowering institutional culture

Another important aspect involves restructuring the culture and organization of the institutes so that students from diverse ethnic, language, religion and gender groups will experience equality. This variable must be examined and addressed by the entire teachers, Head / V.C./ Principal and support staff. It involves an examination of the latent and manifest culture and organization to determine the extent to which it fosters or hinders educational equity.

Creating opportunities for livelihood and growth

An important condition of democratization in higher education is the provision for equal opportunities of access for all classes and groups. University education has found popularity as the ladder to achieve status and career satisfaction. In spite of massive expansion, higher education has failed to equalize educational opportunities and increase employability after completion of studies. In following the ideal of providing greater access, there has been a trend towards lowering of academic standards of universities, at times. This is primarily the reason for fragmentation of higher education as far as quality and differences in employment opportunities are concerned. If higher education is unable to keep pace with the demands of a rapidly changing economy and employment sector, it will result in widespread unemployment of the educated. There is a necessity to expand the capacity of institutions in the fields related to natural sciences, social development and technology.

Nation development

The concept of democratization should extend to include a commitment by universities in regard to their own responsibilities towards nation development. This role would include national and social integration with emphasis on needs of low income and marginalized groups.

Research and interdisciplinary approach for problem solving

It is apparent that the research potential of higher education in various aspects of integrated development can be used to help provide solutions for development. The capability of higher education institutions to undertake the process of analysis and reflection and to promote a spirit of critical inquiry needs to be utilized to the maximum.

Activity

Reflect on the learners' composition of your class, what is the nature of diversity present and how do you address it?

Summary

The Indian society presents a bewildering variety of very distinct identities and groups. It is divided into innumerable tribes, clans, castes, sects and denominations, in addition to various linguistic, religious and other minorities. The diverse identities existing in the Indian polity pose challenges, tensions and conflicts. Institutions of higher learning have a responsibility towards building a nation free of communal and regional strife.

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WTO and Higher Education

Introduction

“Contrary to popular belief, there is significant trade in higher educational services: a rough estimate puts the value of this trade at about \$ US30 billion in 1999, equivalent to 3 per cent of total services trade in OECD countries” (EIM, 2002)

Various sectors of the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) is under consideration of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and it would take the center-stage of discussions during the next round of meetings. Nations like India, which are signatories to the WTO have to prepare themselves for the discussions on various sectors including education. The WTO says services including education must be “Least Trade Restrictive” i.e. member nations must be prepared to accept market mechanisms for the sector.

The discussions on GATS has by proxy opened the debate on the processes and practices of institutions of higher learning and the diminishing role of the State in funding education as a welfare activity. In this unit, we analyze how the WTO proposals would affect education in India and other developing countries and also highlight some measures we must take to prepare our institutions for the future.

Learning outcomes

After going through this unit you should be able to

- explain the major provisions made by WTO under education;
- describe the major sectors as listed under GATS and their implications;
- examine the main policy issues and concerns emerging out of viewing education as a ‘tradable commodity’.
- discuss the implication of the above on teachers and teaching;
- analyse the issues that emerge at the micro-level in educational processes as a result of GATs regime.

Providing education globally?

Apart from the argument that education is not a commodity to be traded but a service whose benefits accrue both for national and global development, let us consider the following.

Teaching is definitely the most important activity of academic institutions. Through teaching we reach to students the corpus of knowledge available to us. The teacher through his/her judgement purges out the irrelevant information or the content the clientele is not prepared to receive. Through personal or partly personal interaction and understanding of the clientele, the teacher modifies the content. In the absence of an understanding of the learner’s group, the content of education would not be relevant. After a thorough understanding of the clientele, the teacher also conducts teaching using different modes and technologies. This understanding also involves a thorough knowledge of economic, cultural, political, and social milieu of the learners and also the learning styles and preferences

of the learners. . To be precise, education can be made relevant for a large group with somewhat similar background, but how it can be made relevant for global dissemination needs to be deliberated seriously since it includes not only the knowledge content but more than that.

Education includes both teaching and research. Teachers disseminate in the classrooms the corpus of knowledge available to them in a particular discipline. Besides transferring the available knowledge teachers, are also expected to add to the outcome of the contemporary research of which they themselves become beneficiaries. More often than not, this research is also propelled by teacher student interaction. Bereft of research teachers would be just megaphones who would not be able to make a critique of the content and inculcate the curiosity in the learners which make them future scientists, reformers, thinkers, leaders and so on. Quite often, teaching and research are seen as two separate activities with no link. This lopsided view of education is likely to get a boost if teaching and generation of knowledge are separated spatially and temporally from their specific locales as is being envisaged.

In the following sections, we will discuss what is GATT and how it impinges on the fundamental understanding about what is education and also the teaching-learning process.

The World Trade Organisation (WTO)

Genesis

Before we look at the WTO proposals and details of education provisions, it is necessary to understand the importance and relevance of WTO as an international organization. The WTO came into existence in January 1995 as a result of the Uruguay Round of Negotiations replacing the General Agreement on Tariff and Trade (GATT) created in 1947. With the coming into existence of WTO, "services" were brought under the purview of WTO and the new agreement was known as the General Agreement on Trade and Services (GATS).

The WTO is a body governed by member nations. Most of the nations have already become members or are in the process of becoming members. The major decisions of GATS are taken in the Ministerial Conference which meets at least once every two years. The headquarters of WTO is in Geneva and the General Council takes day-to-day decisions.

Unlike the decisions of the international bodies like the UN, ILO, etc., the decisions of the WTO are enforceable through sanctions which in effect means the WTO has more powers than any other international body. In effect, WTO sanctions can overrule decisions of national governments. It has been expressed that the WTO is a body "policing" "free trade" in the interest of multinational corporations above all other's interests. Just to illustrate, WTO has declared US law protecting sea turtles and dolphins and the EU ban on hormone-treated beef as illegal. As WTO sanctions are coming into force, it is being felt that WTO is overruling the decisions of democratically elected governments and undermining democracy around the globe.

In 1996 the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) was extended to educational services, in particular, higher education. Prior to emergence of WTO there was no multilateral agreement on services because services invariably are place specific and were considered to be non-tradeable. Education accounts for US \$ 2 trillion dollars of the work economy each year. The aim of GATS is to liberalize and increase international trade in education.

GATS works by getting member countries to sign upto particular areas or types of services in which they agree to treat foreign investors the same as domestic interests. For example, education is divided into five categories: primary, secondary, higher, adult and the other.

Countries however, can choose which categories they do not want to trade in and then make reservations to prevent trade of specific things within these.

As said earlier, like other WTO Agreements, GATS rules are legally binding on Governments. Although some GATS rules apply to all services many only apply to those services which each Government agrees to list in the agreement. However, GATS commits Governments to increase, over time, the range of services included in the agreement, without any review of its impacts. On the face of it, GATS professes not to cover government services. Education would normally be considered a **government service** and thus outside the scope of “free trade”. However GATS defines government service as those “**exercised in the control of governmental authority**” and sees government authority as one that is “**supplied neither on a commercial basis nor in competition with other suppliers**”. Because education system in most countries also has commercial tertiary education providers and private universities, these become part of GATS negotiations.

Although higher education has been “internationalized” for a very long time now, globalisation and the extension of the GATS to the education sector have considerably modified the environment in which higher education establishments must function. In a climate characterized by the growing mobility of persons, capital and knowledge, as well as by a sharp increase in the demand for higher education new information and communication technologies are today creating opportunities to broaden the market of education services.

GATS in Education Services

As of now, GATS rules will apply to services like ‘Education’ in the following ways. Under GATS rules, **a government cannot give better treatment** to local companies than to foreign companies. This is known as “national treatment”, i.e., once a service provider from a member country enters another country, under specific commitment, it cannot be discriminated from other (domestic) service providers in the country.

Governments cannot limit the access of companies by limiting their numbers or requiring them to have local content or to train local people. There can be no limits on foreign investment and no requirements on foreign investors to contribute to local development.

To illustrate, Indian policies could be challenged on the following aspects:

- government funding of public services like health and education could be challenged by foreign corporations arguing for access to funding through competitive tendering;
- limits on foreign investment in industries like the media, telecommunications;
- requirements for Indian content in media which promote Indian culture and jobs;
- requirements that foreign investors train local people and use local products.

Secondly, that each member country will have to make a request offer for a particular service to be a part of the agreement. That is to say, it is voluntary in nature. It means, the country can decide which service sector they would like to cover under GATS rule.

Thirdly, a member maintaining practices that restrain competition (and thereby restrict trade in service) is directed to enter into consultation with a view to eliminate them, when requested by another member.

Fourthly, members have to ensure that all measures are administered in reasonable and impartial manner, establish judicial/arbitral/administrative institutions for review to ensure it and not introduce any regulation that affect operation of an agreement

The WTO has identified as of now, **four main modes of trade**, in education that receive legal protection through GATS:

- **Cross-Border supply** (Mode 1) of a service that includes any type of course provided through distance education, internet any type of testing service or educational materials that can cross national boundaries.
- **Consumption Abroad** (Mode 2) mainly involves the education of foreign students.
- **Commercial Presence** (Mode 3) refers to the actual presence of foreign investors in a host country.
- **Presence of Natural Persons** (Mode 4) refers to the ability of people to move between countries to provide educational services.

Education services are identified as of now in five main categories as follows:

- **Primary education**
- **Secondary education**
- **Higher education** including teaching of practical skills and theoretical educational services
- **Adult education** refers to all education services that are not in the regular school and university systems. This includes both general and vocational subjects, literacy programmes and any education services delivered by correspondence or broadcast.
- **Other education** services include anything not mentioned elsewhere, with the exception of recreational matters.

Sectoral Classification List	Relevant CPC No.	Definition/coverage in provisional CPC
C) Higher Education Services	923	Post-secondary technical and vocational education services: Post-secondary, sub-degree technical and vocational education services. Such education services consist of a great variety of subject-matter programmes. They emphasize teaching of practical skills, but also involve substantial theoretical background instruction. Other higher education services: Education services leading to a university degree or equivalent. Such education services are provided by universities or specialized professional school. The programmes not only emphasize theoretical instruction, but also research training aiming to prepare students for participation in original work.
D) Adult Education	924	Adult education services n.e.c. : Education services for adults who are not in the regular school and university stem. Such education services may be provided in day or evening classes by schools or by special institutions for adult education. Included are education services through radio or television broadcasting or by correspondence. The programmes may cover both general and vocational subjects. Service related to literacy programmes for adults are also included. Exclusion : Higher education services provided within the regular education system are classified in subclass 92310 (Post-secondary technical and vocational education services) or 92390 (Other higher education services).

E) Other education services	929	Other education services : Education services at the first and second level in specific subject matters not elsewhere classified, and all other education services that are not definable by level. Exclusions : Education services primarily concerned with recreational matters are classified in class 9641 (Sporting services). Education services provided by governess or tutors employed by private households are classified in subclass 98000 (Private households with employed persons).
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Figure 1 : Education services in the GATS scheduling guidelines and CPC

Source : United Nations, Provisional Central Product Classification, 1991.

GATS apprehensions amongst nations

Education is considered the process through which each nation maintains and transmits from generation to generation its culture and values. As discussed above the emerging situation envisages a considerable “opening up” in the education sector. Most nations have apprehensions about the commitment of a foreign institution in incorporating and inculcating values relevant to the learners’ country and culture. Not only that there are other apprehensions as well :

In whose service?

The service industry is dominated by Northern multinationals. Freeing up the trade in the services sector will benefit business houses and corporations. Infact, these have been the ones driving the GATS negotiations.

Gats negotiations

Negotiations are now underway which aim to extend the 1994 agreement. Governments are under pressure to drastically reorganize the ownership and delivery of services within their countries, and subject them to ‘free trade’ rules.

At the same time, negotiators from the world’s richest countries are pushing for this liberalization process to be speeded up. But the GATS negotiations are extremely complex and technical. This puts many developing countries at a serious negotiating disadvantage, as they lack the necessary capacity and/or technical expertise.

The poor lose out

The GATS liberalization agenda threatens basic service delivery. If multinationals are seeking to make a profit out of water, health and education, those without purchasing power are likely to lose out. Recent water privatization in Puerto Rico has meant that poor communities have gone without water while US military bases and tourist resorts enjoy an unlimited supply. A system governed by people’s ability to pay will not bring desperately needed services to the world’s poorest people which includes education as well.

No going back

Moreover, the irreversibility of GATS will ensure that once governments have opened up particular service sectors to WTO rules, there is no going back. The decision of how to organize service delivery is effectively being removed from the political arena. In future, citizens will not longer have the democratic right to decide whether or not services should be regulated.

Source : (<http://www.eclipse.co.uk>)

Self-assessment

1. Discuss the main features of GATS with regard to education. What is your opinion about education being seen as a tradable commodity?

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Emerging forms of education

As should be clear by now, education - its notion and forms are undergoing a change. Infact, many such new forms are already functional. Before proceeding further let us take a look at this changing scenario in education.

According to Woodhouse (2000), the following major forms of educational activities get manifest in a globalised world and these will get consolidated subsequently.

These are:

- Transnational education
- On-line education
- Distance education-online
- Collaborative education

These forms of educational activities are, however, not exclusive; a single educational activity may take two or more of these forms.

Transnational education

Transnational education refers to a situation where the educational provider and the students opting for education are located in different countries. The educational discourses between the educational providers and students are carried out through multiple means, namely, mail, computer network, teleconferencing, radio or television network, etc.

Some examples of transnational education are:

- **Branch campuses**

An education provider of one country sets up its branch campuses in the country where students seek admission to its programmes.

- **Franchises**

Education providers in one country approve education providers in other countries to provide one or more of their programmes to students of the host countries.

- **Twining**

When institutions in two countries agree to offer joint education programmes to students such an arrangement is called by this name.

● Corporate Universities

Many large corporations offer staff development programmes to their own staff across the world. Sometimes such programmes are linked to some formal universities so that employees of the corporations get credit for their studies.

● Distance Education

Distance education programmes are offered by leading Open and Distance Learning Institutions to students across the world through a variety of means which include correspondence, computer and satellite networking, radio or television broadcast and network of supporting institutions.

On-line education: The 'Virtual University'

The basic concept of virtual university is that there is no physical manifestation of the university or any educational institution. Students and teachers are in distant locations. Both of them are connected to each other for their educational discourse through Internet or on-line connectivity. Furthermore, the staff that develops programmes may not be those who support them, and those who assess them may be different again. Without a campus, the institution has been dubbed 'Virtual' (Butterfield et al. 1999).

Distance education on-line

Many face-to-face universities, which do not provide distance education through print or audio-video inputs, have started offering e-learning courses as part of their effort to develop on-line distance education. Such attempts envisage economies in staff costs. Once a course is created, it can be repeated to indefinite number of students without further staff intervention. Moreover, these courses provide wider students' access and facilitate globalisation of academic programmes.

Collaborative Education

Of late, there have been efforts by some organizations to offer courses that have been created by other institutions. Two models of such collaborative education in the USA are Western Governors University (WGU) and the Southern Region Education Board's Electronic Campus (SREB) (Carnevale, 2000). WGU is a virtual institution that offers courses created by 40 colleges and university started in 1998, it offers a competency-based testing system to its degrees, in competition with existing colleges (Woodhouse, 2000).

Status of foreign service providers of higher education - an analysis

With the above scenario, let us examine how this phenomenon is manifesting itself in India. Since 1990's programmes are being offered by Foreign Universities in India in various forms such as franchise arrangements, twining programmes and through distance mode. Although there is no database on operation of foreign universities in India, an analysis of advertisements issued by the foreign universities or on their behalf in India was carried out. **The analysis carried out by NIEPA revealed the following** which in a way is a pointer to the future trends.

- that the course of studies offered mostly relate to hospitality services, management, medical and information technology;
- sometime concurrent degree programmes i.e. degrees in the same period are offered. The permission of the concurrent degree does not seem to exist in India;

- both part time, and full time, degree programmes and certificate programmes are offered by these universities;
- no conditions of minimum qualification in terms of percentage of marks are insisted upon. Simple 10+2 degree with an interview and test is considered for admission;
- the duration of degree programme in terms of number of years may be less than what is prescribed for such degrees in India;
- fees proposed to be charged is considerably higher as compared to what is being charged by self-financing institutions in India;
- a good number of those offering educational programmes are working through private agencies in India or through their embassies. Some are also working through academic institutions;
- of those who advertised in the newspapers, large number of them are from UK universities followed by Australia, Canada and Austria. Even medical courses are offered by UAE and Mauritius;
- except in a few cases academic ratings of the universities are not indicated in the newspapers ; and
- recently , UK has also offered general B. A., B.Sc. and other undergraduate programmes.

Activity

Reflect on the analysis of the functioning of foreign universities in India. Give your opinion of what you perceive will happen, if and when, India becomes a member of WTO.

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Issues and concerns in the post - GATS scenario

The above situation is certainly not a happy one. Education in the post-GATS scenario is likely to undergo a fundamental shift. Some of the issues and concerns requiring attention and likely to emerge at the macro-level are as follows (Dash, 2003)

- **Erosion of national identity of policy and planning in education**

Issues influencing national policy making in education like social, economic, political and cultural factors are likely to give way to international harmonization of policy frameworks, higher education structures, degree systems and even curricula (Van Damme, 2001), overriding country-specific problems and concerns.

- **Shift in public funding**

Since higher education is increasingly being considered a “private good” GATS will necessitate a basic preparedness to compete, sustain and make profit in the international market. This fund, substantially will be raised through tuition fees charged from learners both at home and abroad. Public funding will be substantially with drawn and replaced by private funds.

- **Outflow of students and capital**

Outflow of students and capital from the developing world to the developed world is likely to take place in the form of admissions abroad as well as enrolment in on-line courses. Simultaneously, an outflow of capital to the developed world will take place. There is however, not much possibility of this trend taking place in the reverse direction, that is, from the developed to the developing world. According to a report, while the number of foreign students in Indian universities has come down from 11,844 in 1989 to 6,988 in 2000, the traffic of Indians seeking education abroad has consistently increased putting a \$ 3 billion annual strain on the country (The Hindustan Times, May 7, 2003).

- **Opportunities, quality or dilemmas for students ?**

While it is being conjectured that free market mechanisms in education will open up opportunities for students, data presents a somewhat contradictory picture. As pointed by Maheshwari (2003) (quoted by Dash 2003:28) of the 1780 American universities, only 50 are marketing themselves in India and of these only eight feature in the top-ten category in their own country. Similarly among the 28 of the 60 British universities that advertise here, only five have been it in the top ten. The same is the case with Australian universities.

Table 1 : Reality bites

Country	University	In India	Top ten
USA	1780	50	08
UK	60	28	05
Australia	41	37	07
New Zealand	08	07	NA

Source Maheshwari (2003)

Implications for teachers

The implications for teachers in this changing scenario entail a complete redefinition of their roles and responsibilities. The following picture of a teacher likely to emerge:

- **Loss of profession**

On one hand due to the limited public resources available teachers are being paid low salaries, working in poor conditions, and there is a deterioration in the morale and motivation of teachers, as well as levels of absenteeism all this has resulted in a fall in their status. On the other hand, following the development of information services and new modes of communication, the teacher has lost his / her monopoly as a supplier of knowledge. Teaching and learning are no longer in the exclusive domain of the teacher but are gradually opening up to other public and private sectors.



Now the professor will give a short talk on scientific temper in the context of cooperative movements in developing countries in relation to international implications and technology of coordination.....
(Courtsey : R.K. Laxman.)

- **Teacher – a professional and a manager**

In order to educate and train an increasingly heterogeneous group of pupils, the teacher will have to be equipped with new ways of acquiring knowledge and different delivery systems and also be prepared to take new tasks like new management styles, varied teaching strategies, adoption of flexi-time, individualization of teaching-learning to meet different requirements of learners, etc.

- **A broker in the information society**

According to Hallak, (2003:549) the teacher will cease to be a speaker and become more of a tutor. The new information technologies will give more independence to the learner and the teacher will provide new kinds of support: she will teach how to deal with information, in short, give the learner the capacity to find information, interpret it and be a responsible information consumer.

Apart from these concerns articulated above, certain specific issues at the ground level need a response and thoughtful consideration. As highlighted in the Background Paper published by NIEPA as part of the country response to WTO regimes some of problems (2001) that are likely to come up are as follows:

- How do we ensure proper development of internationalization of higher education where mutual sharing of knowledge, skills and research takes place within the objective of mutual benefit for national and global development?

- How do we ensure that quality and relevant programmes are offered by foreign universities in India and Indian Universities abroad only by recognized / accredited institutions?
- What should be the mechanism of global and national certification and mutual recognition? What type of agencies should undertake this work?
- What should be the policy regarding the mutual recognition of sub-degree programmes of tertiary education?
- Roles of MHRD, UGC, NAAC, NIEPA, AIU, NGOs and industry organizations in the promotion of accredited transnational education of quality and relevance, need defining.
- What should be the policy regarding recognition of “Cross Border” supply to:
 - a) Setting-up campus by foreign universities in India
 - b) Recognition of franchise:
 - i) part programme in India and part outside India
 - ii) full programme in India and degree of foreign university
 - c) Distance mode and virtual university mode.
- What are the supportive steps that need to be taken for promotion of Indian higher education abroad:
 - a) Information dissemination, change of rules and regulations, visa conditions
 - b) Policy with regard to:
 - i) allowing setting up campuses abroad;
 - ii) allowing more number of seats for foreign students, financial support for infrastructure development.
 - c) Academic Policy with regard to:
 - i) sharing of credits
 - ii) awarding joint degrees
 - iii) recognition of joint degrees

Summary

The explosion in demand for education especially from the less developed countries where we have most people living has attracted attention of various agencies who wish to see education as a tradable commodity rather than as a resource for development of all. International agencies wish to woo the elite classes who have the capacity to pay in international rates. The WTO proposal on education is likely to bombard education with on-line technologies and virtual classrooms on the less developed countries by the business houses and institutions unable to attract enough students and collect sufficient funds from the home countries and affluent nations. Ex-colonial countries are still struggling to come out of the implications of colonial education policies but what is felt is that the GATS on education would start a new era of colonialism.

In a context where education has been perceived as a “public good” for long, it is difficult to think of it in terms of a tradable commodity. The emerging picture, however pessimistic cannot be simply wished away. India can no longer be complacent to the situation. Indian higher education needs to respond perhaps by considering a quote by Gandhiji who said “I don’t want my house to be walled on all sides and my windows stuffed. I want the culture of all lands to be blown about my house as freely as possible. But I refuse to be blown off my feet by any of them”. In the absence of too many options available, the unit while attempting to articulate this shift has raised more questions than provided answers; more speculations on the consequences rather than well documented instances, have been discussed. Any action in this direction will have to be a well thought- out one.

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Emergence of ODL at the Tertiary Level

Introduction

As discussed in the earlier units of this Blocks, today, an important aspect of higher education is the emergence of alternative channels of learning which can address diversified client needs, facilitate continuing professional development, deploy information and communications technology for meeting multi-channel learning styles, and reduce the cost of education and training while maintaining its quality. Global developments, in general, and developments within higher education, in particular, have necessitated the emergence of open and distance learning at the tertiary level, which has further evolved into forms of learning interactive multimedia and web-based learning. This unit discusses the important like changes while critically examining the issues and challenges impacting higher education, including open and distance learning in India.

Learning outcomes

The present unit is intended to give a broad view of the development of distance education in India, against the backdrop of some of the challenges faced by higher education generally. At the end of the unit, you should be able to

- identify and reflect on some of the global changes and their impact on higher education generally;
- analyse the issues and challenges facing higher education in India today;
- discuss the developments in distance education in India and its present status;
- trace and analyse the challenges faced by distance education, and discuss its potential as a system of the future.

Global changes

Changes are taking place globally in all spheres of life, these changes are not only inextricably related to each other but are also influencing each other. For our purpose, we have selected in this section for discussion, some of the important changes in socio-economic and political spheres. These shall provide a base to our discussion on the recent developments in higher education and the emergence of open and distance learning in India.

Global changes

Constant changes in economic, technological and political spheres are taking place which have affected the national policies, regional cooperation and international diplomacy. Economic changes have been the most powerful of all, especially, globalization.

We will discuss these in the following section, beginning with an understanding of what globalization is. Globalization is the product of the emergence of a global economy, expansion

of transnational linkages between economic units creating new forms of collective decision-making, development of intergovernmental and quasi-supranational institutions, intensification of transnational communications(Held, 1991).

What are the characteristics of globalization?

- in **economic terms**, a transition from fordist to post-fordist forms of workplace organization, a rise in internationalized advertising and consumption patterns; a reduction in barriers to the free flow of goods, workers, and investments across national borders; and, correspondingly, new pressures on the roles of worker and consumer in society;
- in **political terms** a certain loss of nation state sovereignty, or at least the erosion of national autonomy, and, correspondingly, a weakening of the notion of the "citizen" as a unified and unifying concept;
- in **cultural terms** a tension between the ways in which globalization brings forth more standardization and cultural homogeneity while also bringing more fragmentation at the local level.

The fallout of the above has been:

- Economic changes in the form of liberalization, marketisation and global economic reforms like GATT have created **economic imbalances** in the developing economies of many nations. This trend has facilitated privatization, internationalization, and increasing role of multinational agencies in various sectors of society and economy including education. The private sector is looking for opportunities in various aspects of the economy, and the equation between demand and supply is changing with coming up of newer consumers with newer demands for consumption goods and services. With reduction in public investment and increasing privatization of production and distribution of goods and services, new equations are being established for national and regional economic centers and cost centers. The trend has adversely affected the disadvantaged communities of society.
- There have been tremendous (technological) developments in the sectors of communications and information technology. The advent of www/Internet has deeply affected the traditional socio-economic culture, and ways of thinking and living. Technology has permeated every sphere of life, including education and training. Technology is being visualized to increase access to education and reform the quality of instructional and support provisions. In many spheres of life, including lifelong education, convergence of means and media is leading to hitherto unthinkable equations, strategies and processes, and therefore, novel provisions for planning, design and delivery of instruction.
- There have been significant political developments in the past few decades. The notables are the disintegration of the erstwhile Soviet Union into a few independent nations, the end of apartheid and beginning of democracy in South Africa, reorganization of democracy in Afghanistan and Iraq, etc. These political changes have necessitated rebuilding of societies bringing in demands for equality, equity and access in education. Newly emerging nations and democratization have placed premium on human resource development and education for all.

You may think of many other global changes that are affecting the international, regional, national and local institutions and life styles. Let us examine how these changes are effecting higher education systems world over.

Self-assessment

1. Discuss the recent major economic changes and their implications especially on a country like India.

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Global changes effecting higher education

We discuss below some of the important changes within higher education that have wider implications for most of the national systems of higher education. The integration of the Indian economy with the world economy as envisaged by the economic reform policies presupposes efficiency and competitiveness in the domestic front as well as in the international arena. The process of globalization is technology driven and knowledge-driven. Globalization involves changes in development paradigms from: social welfare, equity, and nationstate philosophy, to one that which emphasizes economic efficiency, market economy, a weak state and global economy. Following the introduction of these policies, a fiscal squeeze is experienced in social sector investments in India like education. These policies are also found to have caused significant reduction in rates of growth of budget expenditure on education (Tilak, 2001). Ironically, however, the very success of economic reform policies critically depends upon the competence of the human capital. It is important to reflect on these issues to be able to see the developments in higher education and distance education in a proper perspective.

- First, higher education has been under pressure, from both funding agencies and various other stakeholders, to be efficient, responsive, flexible and vibrant. In many countries, there has not been a commensurate increase in expenditure on education with every increase in GNP (gross national product). Within educational expenditure, that for higher and further education is decreasing, and post secondary institutions are being asked to generate resources from other than government sources, and especially from increase in student fees.
- Second, globalization has been very imposing on higher education. Not only new partnerships, alliances and consortia are emerging, but also individual institutions are under pressure to cater to the needs of diversified student groups and thereby broad base and internationalize curriculum and instruction. Globalization also demands that educational resources be pooled to avoid duplication and for purposes of efficiency, with provision for local variations in curricular inputs for meeting local needs of the community.
- Third, technologisation or electronification of higher education has put undue pressure on institutions to create provision for and base curricular designs on new technologies. This has also been argued from the point of view that varied learning styles of diversified groups of learners, and especially the gap between the mainstream and first generation learners, could be taken care of by inputs from a variety of media through provisions for multi-channel learning. The latest development of web-based / online learning has created a new paradigm in instructional design and instructional management, and has created new provisions of costing and the possibility of economy of scale.

- Fourth, with increasing diversity in student population and concomitant curricular provisions, the issues of quality assurance and accreditation are assuming greater significance. While institutional, departmental and individual faculty performance (as also the instructional process) are being evaluated and related to funding provisions, institutions are under increasing pressure to let themselves go through processes of accreditation. International benchmarks are being put up for conforming to such standards, and also institutions are required to satisfy various accrediting bodies / councils for different programmes of study separately.
- Fifth, there is also unexpected pressure on postsecondary institutions to expand provision to accommodate an ever increasing student population. While physical infrastructure and facilities are very difficult to expand, alternative channels of learning are put in place to make a balance between scale and quality.
- Sixth, community education is emerging as an important dimension of lifelong education, and alternative educational provisions, beyond the “extension” programmes of higher education institutions, are being explored to meet this growing need. Education, training and research are being called for to serve the needs of the local community.
- Seventh, with increasing job mobility, specialization and simultaneously the need for multi-skilling, as also due to the need for constant updation, continuing professional development has assumed greater significance especially in business and industry, and other professional areas.

Self-assessment

2. *In the context of recent global changes discuss the implications on the system of higher education?*

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Higher education in India: issues and challenges

The above brief discussion on developments in higher education provides a perspective within which we locate developments in higher education in India including the emergence of the ODL. The structure of higher education in India is given in Figure 1, from which you will notice the amount of time one needs to spend on different levels of education in the country. Such an education system had its origin in the *gurukula* system of the ancient times, and has evolved through the internationally recognized centres of learning at Nalanda and Takshila, and further reforms during the British rule. Starting with 18 universities and 591 colleges at the time of Independence in 1947, these have increased to above 300 and 14,000 respectively. The increase in the number of universities during 2003 is also due to the opening up of above six scores of universities in the newly created State of Chhatisgarh with approval received from the State government. In India, we have the second largest system of higher education with over 9 million students and 3.5 million teachers. While more than 88% of students study in undergraduate programmes, 5% and 3.5% study in Engineering and Technology, and Medicine respectively; and about 1.5% in Agriculture. About 36% of students are women, and the percentage of students from disadvantaged communities has not gone beyond class 12. (This issue has been discussed in the first unit of the Block in greater detail.

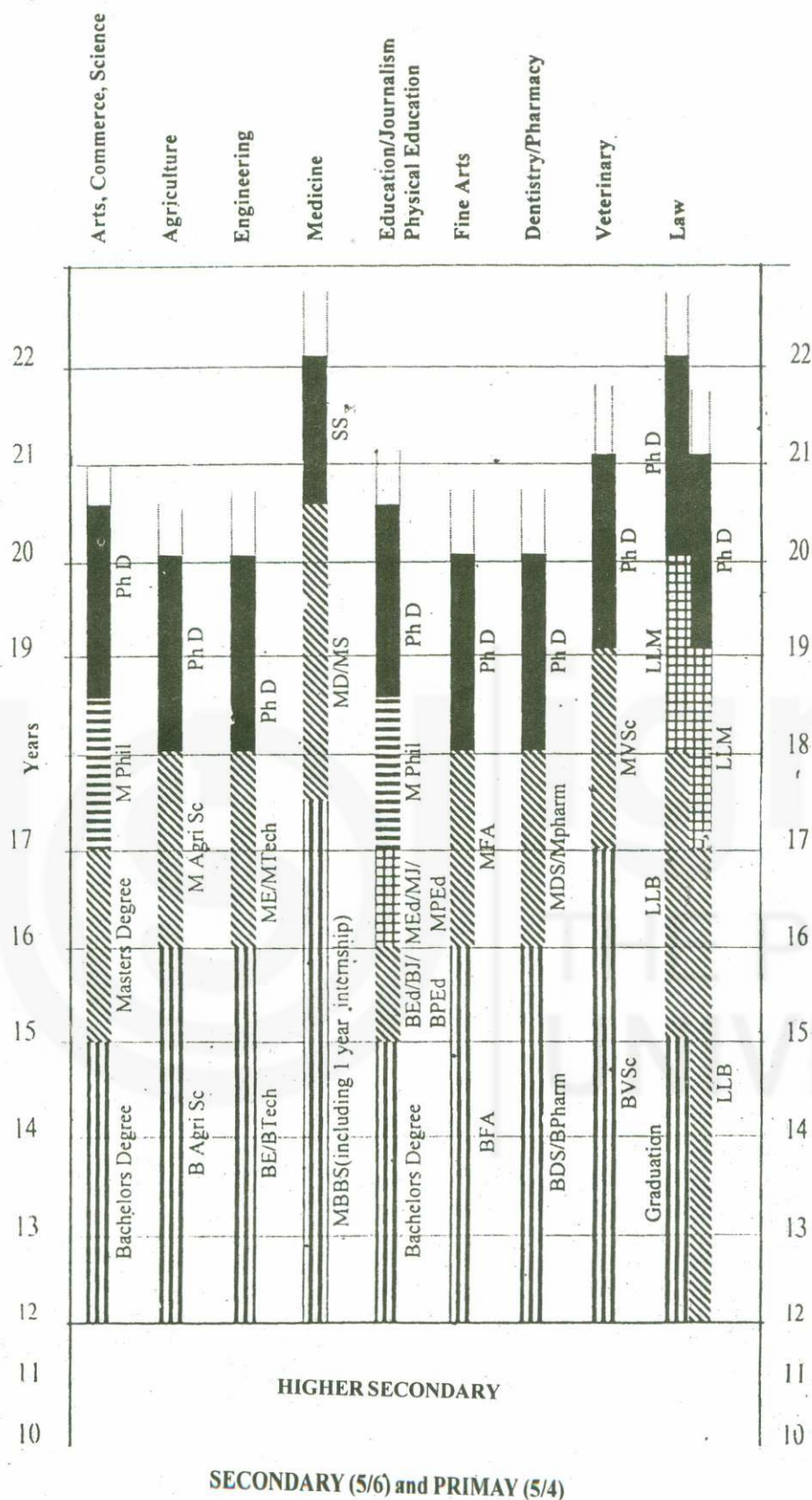


Figure 1 : Structure of higher education in India

Source: Powar, K. B. (1999) *Organization and Structure of Indian Universities*, New Delhi: AIU.

It may also be noted that at present about 3.4% of GNP is devoted to education (and the 6% of GNP for education promised by various Central governments has not been implemented); and that the 25% of all educational expenditure devoted to higher education

in the Fourth Plan has come down to about 8% in the Ninth Plan. With increasing financial allocation for primary and adult education, the size of the purse for higher education is decreasing; and universities are under tremendous pressure to adopt financial stringency and efficiency. The existing structure of higher education has been able to cater to the educational needs of about 6% of the population in the relevant age group of 17-23 years.

Given the magnitude of the system and its operation, higher education in India is embroiled with host of issues and emerging challenges. A few significant ones are enumerated below for placing the growth and development of Open and Distance Learning (ODL) in a perspective.

- First, the **pressure** on institutions of higher learning is tremendous, and all the Central, State and “deemed to be” universities, and institutions of national importance, have not been able to meet the need for increasing aspiration for education. Increasingly, private initiative for higher education is being called for; though the Private Universities Bill is still lying in the Parliament awaiting clearance. A large number of private institutes have come up and increasing number of such institutions are being accorded the status of “deemed to be” universities by the University Grants Commission. Apart from the private institutions, the Central government is proposing to expand the provisions for distance learning so as to accommodate at least half of the future demand for higher learning through this mode. While the distance learning system caters to about 20% of all higher education students, it is expected to increase the intake to about 40% in the Tenth Plan.
- Second, **funding** has been a major issue. With decreasing resource allocation for higher education, universities are required to mobilise additional resources from either increasing student fees, and / or tapping other sources like expansion of university-industry linkages and offering distance learning programmes.
- Third, **quality** and **accreditation** are other issues as well as challenges. Quality assurance requires human, infrastructure, pedagogic, financial and other resources to be utilized not only to the optimum level but also to conform to agreed upon standards so that the inputs, processes and outputs are under constant scrutiny for improvement in respective areas. The National Assessment and Accreditation Council of the UGC and the National Board of Accreditation of the AICTE are responsible for institutional and programme evaluation, and for providing accredited status to institutions of higher learning. Universities are also required to conform to the standards set by various other Councils like Medical Council of India, Indian Nursing Council, National Council for Teacher Education, as also the Distance Education Council of Indira Gandhi National Open University.
- Fourth, **globalisation** and global pressure for “reform” (including reengineering, restructuring and transforming) have led universities to rethink about the curriculum, instructional strategy involving more ICT-enabled education, expansion of training and Continuous Professional Development (CPD) or “lifelong learning” provisions, international students needs, and quality benchmarking. This involves competition and formation of strategic alliances. While many of the universities are getting into more of strategic planning only a few have adopted holistic planning initiatives which involve system-wide implementation of especially ICT enabled teaching, training, research, extension, management, services and evaluation.
- Fifth, curriculum upgrading, updating and diversification is still a central issue in universities. While most have not even updated and transformed in the pattern suggested by the University Grants Commission through their Curriculum Development Cells, there is also an increasing need to **diversify curriculum** and **course structures** to meet emerging specialized need for education and training. Extension has remained an elusive aspect of curriculum and so has quality

research. Though many of the central agencies like the UGC, ICSSR, CSIR, ICMR, ICAR and others have significant funding for discipline research, the quality of doctoral programmes has not increased significantly. It is not surprising, then, that Phillip Altbach, an eminent educationist has remarked that Indian higher education has pockets of excellence in a sea of mediocrity. Further, though many Indian expatriates have brought name and fame in both teaching and research in Western universities, universities at home have not been able to keep pace with emerging research needs and demands especially in the sectors of quality information technology and management.

- Sixth, **continuing professional development** in various professions, and professional development of college and university teachers are areas of significant concern to educational planners and administrators. Many of the universities do not have programmes tailored made for continuing professional development and training needs of various economic and development sectors. Moreover even the Academic Staff Colleges have been inadequate to cater to the CPD needs of the university and college teachers. Primary and secondary education teacher training, especially training of the untrained teachers, is yet another challenge to the conventional system as such.
- Seventh, higher and further education, while in gainful employment, is still a rare phenomenon. Further, most of the campuses face the problem of student and employee unrest.

Activity 1

At this stage, you may like to reflect on the above issues, and such others that you may think of, and collate your views on how higher education can be geared towards further reforms, and what role distance education can play in dealing with some of the challenges. Space is given below for jotting down your views.

Emergence of distance education

Distance education, in the form of correspondence education, was recommended as a reformatory measure by the three delegations sent by the Government of India during 1967-71 to the erstwhile USSR. The recommendations of the delegations were extremely useful to those involved in establishing the complementary mode of correspondence/distance education. However, the initiation of correspondence courses at the University of Delhi in 1962 with 1112 students at the undergraduate level and the subsequent developments in this stream of education was hardly intended, as a policy, to address many of the issues and challenges noted above for Indian higher education. Correspondence education was intended to provide further opportunities to those who had either missed formal education or could not afford it, or even could not have required grades to get admitted to it. The other covert objectives included generation of additional resources to fund the conventional education and research, as also to partially offset campus unrest. You may wonder if such were the objectives of initiating ODL system in other parts of the world! Social access and equity were the other objectives of setting up the Open and Distance Learning systems.

Subsequent to the initiation of correspondence courses in the University of Delhi, many universities, especially in the northern part of the country, started correspondence courses. Though the Fifth Five Year Plan (1974-79) had envisaged that about 25% of students in the relevant age-group will study higher education through correspondence, the enrolment in 1976-79 was only 2.58% of total higher education enrolment. The establishment of an open university (which converged distance learning with open access policy) in the State of Andhra Pradesh did not change access quantitatively in higher education, though the system ushered in a new era of openness and flexibility. In 1988-89, the enrolment rose to above 10%, which stands at about 20% today. The establishment of the Indira Gandhi National Open University in 1985 (which offered programmes in 1987) ushered in an era of quality higher education and training at a distance while pursuing the policy of access and equity. Also, ICT was aggressively used on a large scale for the first time in higher education in the country. Though many of the correspondence course institutes had diversified course offer, IGNOU offered largely unconventional programmes at certificate and diploma level, besides programmes for human resource development, continuing professional development in various developmental and extension and community development programmes. However, its reformative Bachelors Degree Programme still stands out at the forefront of its policy of 'higher education for all'.

In the year 2003, there are 12 open universities and 104 CCIs of dual mode universities which offer programmes at a distance and cater to about 20% of higher education students. Data on 10 open universities for 2002 relating to various aspects are presented in Table 1: those for the newly created open universities in Tamil Nadu and Orissa are not available.

The programmes of the national open university include largely unconventional areas including human rights, women empowerment, maternal and child health, as also human resource development and continuing education programmes at certificate, diploma, undergraduate, postgraduate and doctoral levels. For detailed course structure and statistical data, you may like to consult the related document brought out by the Distance Education Council of IGNOU in 2003, and the student handbook on distance education brought out by the Association of Indian Universities. In 2003, there were 86 programmes, 870 courses, and 1.1 million students scattered over 26 countries.

Table 1 : Status of open universities. (2002)

	IGNOU	BRAOU	KOU	NOU	YCMOU	MPBOU	BAPOU	KSOU	NSOU	UPRTOU
Programmes	76	22	23	8	75	10	10	33	5	41
Courses	854	307	225	9	286	89	89	285	18	126
Students ('000)	299	96	9	2	112	11	11	35	5	5
On Rolls ('000)	751	510	14	3.3	590	45	45	106	4	5
RCs	47	14	6	—	8	2	2	2	—	—
SCs	1008	136	43	5	1500	61	61	75	36	40
ACs	21,000	4645	2250	281	4925	803	803	690	690	318
Audio	1109	1905	200	12	298	197	197	815	24	—
Video	1246	341	11	—	212	—	—	310	25	2
Staff	1892	496	364	7	344	84	84	339	43	80

IGNOU=Indira Gandhi National Open University; BRAOU= Dr. B. R. Ambedkar Open University; KOU=Kota Open University; NOU=Nalanda Open University; YCMOU= Yashwantrao Chavan Maharashtra Open University; MPBOU=MP Bhoj Open University;

BAOU= Babasaheb Ambedkar Open University; KSOU= Karnataka State Open University; NSOU=Netaji Subhash Open University; UPRTOU= UP Rajarshi Tandon Open University.

It may be noted that while many of the colleges in the country are non-viable due to lack of required number of students and resources (and, therefore, are not eligible for developmental grant from the UGC), there are many CCIs and a few OUs which do not have enrolment strength of even 1000. On the other hand, if we like to consider the issues of cost of education and funding of education, on an average, distance education in India is almost one-fifth in terms of unit cost of conventional higher education. To consider the example of IGNOU, while it was subsidized fully at its establishment by the Central government, it now earns above 60% of its recurring expenditure from student fees and other sources. Similarly BRAOU (earlier called APOU) gets only 22% of its expenditure from the State government of Andhra Pradesh; and YCMOU (as per the mandate that after 5 years of its establishment shall generate its recurring expenses on its own) has achieved full self sufficiency for its recurring expenditure today, though it obtains developmental grants from a few sources including the Distance Education Council. On the other hand, the conventional university distance education programmes show considerable variance. For instance, while Madurai Kamraj University generates about 48% income on its own, SNDT Women's University generates about 95% from student fees. This clearly shows that while UGC has a rudimentary funding policy for universities and colleges, the Central government is yet to have a fair policy for funding for distance education in the country.

There are a few other facts worth taking note of since these are unique to the distance education system in India:

- i) First, since IGNOU has been created as a national university by the Indian Parliament, it receives direct funding from the Ministry of Human Resource Development, and does not fall under the purview of UGC for funding, coordination and accreditation.
- ii) Second, IGNOU had been given the additional responsibility to fund, promote, coordinate, assure quality and accredit the distance education systems in the country through its Distance Education Council (DEC).
- iii) Third, the Government of India has placed the only uplinking facility (other than the government itself) through a satellite transponder at IGNOU for uplinking and broadcasting of educational, training and extension programmes of IGNOU, other distance education institutions, UGC, NCERT and other sectors of education and training through its six television channels. Also, it provides international teleconferencing facility for distance education and training. Similarly, unlike any other institution, it operates FM radio stations (now 7 to be increased to 45) for regional programming and broadcasting.

IGNOU's Distance Education Council (DEC) has facilitated funding, quality assurance and accreditation of State Open Universities and dual-mode conventional university distance education programmes. Further, many SOUs and CCIs have used IGNOU's study materials to fulfill the latter's mandate for networking and collaboration. IGNOU has been a pioneer of multiple-media education in the country; its web-based / online programmes are well received; and the Government of India's EDUSAT (a full-fledged educational satellite) was to be tried out by IGNOU for making it fully operational.

Self-assessment

3. *Trace the emergence of the ODL system in India in the light of social and other problems facing the higher education system.*

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Challenges before open and distance learning systems

IGNOU has taken a few initiatives which have wider implications for distance education system in particular and higher education in general. A few of these are outlined below, and you may like to discuss and reflect if such initiatives have the potential to further reform higher education in the country.

- The distance education programmes have a strong foundation of curriculum and instructional design, with significant media mix to meet varied learning styles of diversified learners. The modular and credit-based programmes are more flexible, goal oriented, learner-friendly and both market and development oriented.
- IGNOU had initiated and still practices the policy of credit transfer and credit exemption. This, though needs to be extended to accreditation of prior learning, and wider implementation of credit transfer, credit sharing and joint degree programmes.
- Use of ICT, on a large scale has strengthened the case for wider access to education, especially in remote and rural areas. The initiatives in the north-east region of the country, through community informatic centers and also in the whole country through telelearning centers further strengthen the cause. This is an area which needs further orientation to community, reducing the digital divide, and addressing the issue of equity.
- Staff and human resource development on a continuing basis has been major strength of the ODL. It needs further strengthening of continuing professional development, and widening the net to include conventional education, business and industry, and the developmental sectors.
- The initiatives towards collaboration, partnership and networking have the potentially to induce convergence of existing systems and gear it towards a seamless system of education and training at all levels. The conventional dichotomy of conventional and distance education is a passé, and what is needed is a wider and sustained effort towards further convergence, sharing and collaboration.
- Internationalisation of Indian education is a reality. While all universities in the country put together have about 11,000 international students on campus, IGNOU has above one third of this size. However, the issue is not that of number, as much as of the offer of programmes through one window with a wider and flexible basket.

In spite of significant initiatives by many open universities and conventional distance education programmes, the system faces a few significant challenges which need to be addressed. This also calls for joint initiatives with conventional education, government and non-government sectors, and even selective private initiatives.

- Research (i.e. R&D) is the weakest link in the distance education system. While discipline based research need not be a bitter pill for distance teaching institutions (infact, it should be the contrary), distance teachers need, by necessity, to be engaged in researching discipline distance teaching. While, on the one hand, it shall have wider discipline and inter-disciplinary knowledge base originating from DTIs, it will also reform instructional methods and services to facilitate effective student learning.
- Educational access and equity still remain challenges for distance education. Whether the policies of access and equity have resulted in widening and meeting the challenge? Whether ICT have bridged the digital divide and facilitated student learning? Whether the present instructional design and media mix have contributed to effective student learning? Whether the present provisions are flexible enough to cater for individual self pacing and progress in credit accumulation? These are important questions which need further exploration, reflection and joint action.
- Language has been a major challenge in distance learning. While all the regional languages need to be brought into the center stage, further capacity building and development of study skills for instruction in English and Hindi need to be strengthened.
- Further experimentation is needed on interactive multimedia and online learning. Different models and strategies need to be developed and tried out. It is not enough to merely have provision for networking of media; rather it is all the more significant to empower teachers to effectively teach through and learners to effectively learn from various print and non-print media.
- Common and acceptable benchmarks are required for both conventional and distance education on the basis of common and specialized parameters. This shall facilitate further collaboration, exchange, mutual benefit and convergence.
- So far, there has been expansion of the system at the cost of its consolidation. Can the system further expand in scale and size without consolidation? We now need to look back and consolidate our innovations, pool them together, and converge. This shall provide considered base to proceed further more progressively, intelligently and economically to cater for qualitative and learner-friendly educational provisions.

Summary

We discussed in this unit the important political, socio-economic, and technological changes taking place globally, as also the changes impacting higher education systems worldwide. Against this backdrop, we highlighted the significant challenges that higher education in India is facing, and the contexts for emergence of open and distance learning in the country. This complementary system has expanded progressively and brought in wider media networking and internationalization of Indian education. In the process, IGNOU has emerged as a unique institution in the world to act both as a university as also as funding and accrediting body, together with its unique responsibilities to widen access to higher education. However, it faces the challenges of significant R & D initiatives, faculty and learner media capacity building, deployment of new web-based technology, quality and learner-friendly learner support, balancing expansion with consolidation, reforms and sustainable innovations, and convergence towards a seamless system of education. There is an urgent need to address these tasks in order to meet the challenges of tomorrow.

Suggested readings

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Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education

Introduction

The need for quality assurance and accreditation has been established especially in the context of globalization and financial constraints impinging on higher education. This unit provides an introduction to the twin and integrated issues of quality assurance and **accreditation** in higher education. There are over 250 university level institutions and over 12000 colleges, which offer various types and levels of programmes. These institutions widely differ in terms of the mandate to offer programmes and courses, student enrolment, infrastructure, delivery systems, sources of funds and governance. They are established by the Center and the State governments and, therefore, the power to award degrees/diplomas/certificates is vested in them by the respective governments. The universities and colleges are autonomous and self-governing institutions. They are responsible for the quality and standards of their programmes. Each institution has its own internal procedures for assuring and enhancing quality of its provision, and for satisfying itself that appropriate standards are maintained. These are carried out through the procedures for the design of programmes, the approval of programmes, and the monitoring and evaluation of programmes. Most institutions carry out both regular monitoring and periodic review of programmes. However, the extent to which these functions are effectively performed require validation by an external agency to ensure that all the stakeholders are duly satisfied. The major beneficiaries of (Higher Education Institutes) HEIs' activities, mainly the government, employers and students, pay for the costs of education. Therefore, they seek value for money and accountability. Further, as the quality of HEIs and their core activities are critical from the view point of both overseeing the overall educational systems as well as for providing competent manpower for accelerating the pace of national development, there are genuine concerns for quality assurance and accreditation (QAA).

Learning outcomes

By the end of this unit, you will be able to

- to underscore the significance of quality assurance and accreditation, particularly in the context of recent developments in higher education and globalization of education;
- to define the concepts of quality assurance and accreditation in higher education;
- to describe the approach and methodology of quality assurance and accreditation as pursued by the institutions and apex bodies in India;
- to discuss the benefits of quality assurance and accreditation that are realized by the stakeholders;
- to present an account of recent progress and to identify the major challenges to quality assurance.

The quality concern

In the recent times, several **developments** have taken place which have changed the perceived requirements for quality assurance in higher education. These include:

Expansion and diversification of higher education

The national efforts to ensure education for all have resulted in widening of the bases of elementary and secondary education. As a consequence, there has been a dramatic growth in higher education demand and provision over the past decades. This is also in response to growing and changing manpower requirements of the world of work, which require higher levels of technical and professional competence of the work force to be able to function in the knowledge intensive economy. Tertiary education of some form has now become a mass phenomena, as an increasingly large number of students are likely to participate in this endeavour over their life time. That higher education activities are a visible part of the society and its contribution to national development and well being are now being widely recognized by governments world-over.

The increasing volume of activity and diversity of the student population has led many institutions to review and diversify not only their course offerings, but many aspects of internal re-organization and teaching-learning process. The extent to which the relevant initiatives by institutions suitably respond to the changing requirements of the society and economy, needs to be assessed to ensure institutional accountability to the funding agencies and other stakeholders.

Demand for greater transparency and accountability

In the wake of globalization and in line with international trends, HEIs are required to strengthen their reporting and accountability procedures. As there is general paucity of funds, limited resources are to be allocated among the different sectors on the basis of cost-effectiveness of their programmes, for which enough evidence is required to be produced. These developments have sharpened interest in the nature and value of the service universities provide to the community through teaching, research and extension related functions. While the pressure for greater accountability has continued to rise, there has been a strong trend towards reducing the balance of permanent academic positions, mainly as a cost-cutting device. The number of short-term academic and administrative positions is increasing, which has long term implications for academic and administrative careers and for quality of university teaching and research.

Impact of technology

Major developments in information technology have led to changes in study requirements, teaching and learning arrangements and in areas such as research organisation, and university administrative practice. There is an increased focus on multi-media strategies for promoting teaching and learning, which call for review of the traditional arrangements for quality assurance.

Emergence of non-traditional providers of higher education

The advent of non-traditional providers of higher education - for example, the emergence of open and virtual universities, the growth of private institutions, the growth of multi campus and trans-national institutions and franchising - has fragmented the higher education sector. Thus, quality assurance mechanisms which have stood the test of time for a system of essentially national, government funded self accrediting, traditional and distance education institutions, need to be reviewed to take account of this rapid diversification of provision, and to ensure that the new arrangements are of adequate standard.

Global competitiveness

Most higher education institutions have proved themselves highly effective and entrepreneurial in expanding their student intakes both from within and beyond national borders. As there is an explicit policy for taking higher education abroad, this has become a major factor in India's external accounts through fee- paying foreign students and the sale and promotion of services. Universities from many other countries are also in the market for enrolling students and providing services. In a sense, there is thus import as well as export of educational services. India now faces an international environment in which success would depend on the quality of tertiary level of teaching and research.

Many countries have therefore moved to develop national system of QAA and India is no exception. The prospective international students, faced by a plethora of possibilities for studies, may well feel such a hallmarking process of external validation tips the balance in favour of enrolling in accredited institutions.

In fairness to HEIs as a whole, many believe that India would do well to establish a comparable, national system of external validation. Accordingly, steps have been taken to assist the higher education sector through development of **performance indicators** and **benchmarking** systems. These developments give rise to questions about the specific aspect of universities that bear comparative analysis including the value of measures relating to different categories of institutions. Such exercises lend perspectives on the extent to which the institutions are successful in improving internal and external efficiency.

In this context, in a period of rapid growth and change, attention is being paid to such matters as selection procedures for admission, curricula, students' attrition rates, length of study, staff qualification, financing and costs of study and research capability. It is in the interest of higher education to be able to present evidence systematically on the ways in which these and like matters are being addressed.

Weakness of existing system of quality assurance

The existing system of quality assurance in higher education operates at a variety of levels and comprises both long standing elements and recent developments towards national approach. The current practices and its weaknesses may be described below:

Current practice

The basic plan for quality assurance framework lies in the establishment of HEIs, mainly universities as self-accrediting institutions through legislation and regulation, and the accreditation of other higher education courses by the statutory bodies. Academic Boards and Governing Councils have major responsibilities for the quality of educational provision including academic standards.

A number of external mechanisms for reviewing aspects of internal university activities are of long standing among the universities. These include the use of external examiners for higher tasks done by research and some honours degrees, the role of professional bodies and associations in accrediting professional courses such as Medicine, Law, Management, Engineering and Architecture, peer review mechanisms in relation to research funding and the use by the universities of a wide variety of internal/external review and reporting procedures for faculties, departments, centers and whole institutions.

Major shortcomings

There are however several weaknesses in current mechanisms. These are: (i) lack of a clear mechanism for ensuring comparable standards of judgments in different states and for different institutions; (ii) The criteria for recognition as a university such as the Central, State, 'deemed' to be universities, institutions of national importance, etc. widely differ and therefore it needs to be reviewed; (iii) lack of transparency in the existing system of independent external verification of standards and quality of universities or self-accrediting institutions.

Self-assessment

1. *Discuss the recent changes that have propelled the move for Quality Assurance and Accreditation in higher education?*

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Principles of quality assurance

A common approach based on the following principles needs to be evolved such that: (a) The system should be transparent and it should encourage rather than constrain diversity and be sensitive to distinct mission of each institution; (b) External quality assurance process should be consistent with the existing practices such as to complement institutional process rather than duplicating or replacing them; (c) Criteria and processes should be adoptable to a change in global environment and change in communication processes; and (d) It should facilitate progressive improvement in standards. It should provide for rigorous external verification of quality assurance strategies through peer review.

Quality assurance should cover the academic affairs of institutions, relating to courses, staff qualification, research, academic administration and decision making mechanisms, and services and facilities in support of academic processes. It is necessary that the system be able to deal with several different classes of institutions, which currently operate in the country, which encompass non-university institutions, accredited by the Councils.

In this backdrop, the framework of quality assurance and accreditation, as evolved by the institutions and regulatory bodies become important to realize the mandate of HEIs.

What is quality assurance and accreditation ?

Quality assurance refers to the policies, attitudes, actions and procedures necessary to ensure that quality is being maintained and enhanced. Accreditation refers to an evaluation of whether an institution qualifies for a certificate status. The status may have implications for the institution itself (eg. permission to operate) and/or its students (eg. eligibility for grants) and/or its graduates qualified for certain employment.

In fact, the underlying purpose of accreditation is to determine the extent to which institutions are discharging their responsibilities for realizing their goals and for the quality of education provided to enable the students to attain standards. Thus, accreditation is the process of examining institutional procedure for assuring quality and assessing the arrangements for effective implementation of strategies for achieving stated objectives.

There are two major purposes which accreditation serves: one is quality assurance; determining standard of quality and performance for minimum acceptability in the interest of public; and the other is quality improvement: providing the service that is designed to improve institutions and programmes through an external review process.

Current criteria and procedures for QAA

The principle elements of our existing system for accreditation and quality assurance in higher education are as follows:

Universities are established by the State under legislation with authority to accredit their own programmes and are primarily responsible for their quality assurance.

The Center and the State governments have responsibility for establishment of institutions or for approving new applications from institutions wishing to operate as universities within a well defined jurisdiction. And the proposals from other service providers wishing to offer higher education programmes are evaluated by the peer group, constituted by the statutory bodies to ensure that the proposed institutions are comparable to those of existing public universities. The Government bodies like **University Grants Commission (UGC)** and **All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE)** have evolved norms and guidelines for establishment and operationalisation of higher education institutions. The information collected and analysed by these bodies can be used to inform quality improvement and assurance decision. The qualifications framework provides clear descriptions of awards offered in higher education, and the apex bodies maintain registers of approved programmes and providers.

Universities have internal processes to assess new course proposals and promote staff development, and most have entered into relationship with other universities to facilitate staff exchanges, collaboration in research, and benchmarking of standards of course delivery.

Standard course approval mechanisms involve consultation with relevant industry or professional bodies, and formal consideration and approval by academic boards. Normally, courses are reviewed for re-accreditation on a five year basis.

A variety of arrangements are in place for assessments and improvement of teaching and staff publication and research records are reported and scrutinized. Promotion criteria normally focus on quality of teaching, research activity and community service contributions.

For various reasons, it has become a common practice to arrange programme reviews carried out by external assessors to compare the quality of academic activities with other leading institutions. The quality assurance mechanism, as evolved by external reviewers, depend on one or a combination of a number of methodologies, the most important of which are self studies or self-evaluation, peer review by panels of experts, use of relevant statistical information and performance indicators and service of key groups, such as students, graduates and employers. At the national level, the most common forms of assessment are horizontal review of disciplines and vertical evaluation of institutions.

Activity

1. Discuss the procedure for approval of programmes/courses adopted by your college/institution. Do reflect and state how it effects quality.

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National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) and issues of QAA

The approach and methodology evolved by the **National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC)** incorporates all these essential elements of quality assurance and accreditation, as we shall discuss here in below. At the outset, the major aims and objectives of NAAC may be described.

NAAC is an autonomous institution, established by the UGC in 1994. The primary objective of NAAC is to assess and accredit institutions of higher learning with an objective of helping them to work continuously to improve the quality of education. The process of accreditation is as under :

“NAAC has formulated a three-stage process for assessment and accreditation as given below:

- Preparation of the self-study report by the institution to be submitted to NAAC;
- Validation of the self-study report by peers visiting the institution; and
- The final decision of NAAC based on the self-study report and the recommendations of the team of peers.

Stage 1: Preparation of the self-study report

The first and the most important step in the process of assessment and accreditation is the preparation of the self-study report by the institution along the guidelines formulated by NAAC. The institution has to prepare the self-study report in two parts, where part-I is the organization of data and part-II is the self-analysis based on part-I. This will be an internal exercise by the institution expected to be done with honest introspection. It aims at providing an opportunity for the institution to measure its effectiveness and efficiency, and to identify areas of its strengths and weaknesses. NAAC believes that an institution that really understands itself - its strengths and weaknesses, its potentials and limitations - is likely to be more successful in carrying out its educational mission than those without such self-awareness. Self-study is thus envisaged as the backbone of the process of assessment and accreditation.

It is through the self-study report that NAAC understands the institution. In fact, the self-study informs and orients the peer team to assess the institution during the visit. Hence the institution needs to present the factual details of all the aspects of its functioning, viz., the inputs, processes and the product generated, in a meaningful way. As the entire exercise would be based on this document, it should be prepared with utmost care. The self-study report gives details, which will help make the exercise effective.

Stage II: Visit to the institution

On receiving the self-study report from the institution, NAAC will decide on the panel of peers and inform the institution. If the institution has any reservation against any of the members, it can record its objection, without suggesting alternatives. Choosing from among the other panel members, NAAC will constitute the peer team. The team will visit the institution and look for patterns of evidences to validate the self-study report. The peers will interact with the various constituents of the institution and also check documentary evidence to understand the functioning of the institution. At the end of the visit the Chairperson of the team will present a detailed report on the quality of education offered by the institution to the head of the institution and a copy of the report with the acceptance of the head of the institutions will be forwarded to NAAC.

Stage III: Final decision of NAAC

The Executive Committee of NAAC will review the report and take a decision about the grade of the institution. The grade will be valid for a period of five years.

Units of Assessment

To assess and grade the institutions of higher education following the three step process mentioned above and make the outcome as objective as possible, NAAC has developed an instrument. Though the methodology and the broad framework of the instrument are the same, there is a slight difference in the focus of the instrument depending on the Unit of Assessment. There are two types of accreditation - institutional and departmental. With reference to the **type of accreditation**, the following are defined as **units of assessment**:

Institutional Accreditation

University: University Central Governance structure along with all the under graduate and postgraduate departments.

College: Any College - affiliated, autonomous or constituent - with all its departments of studies.

Departmental Accreditation

Department: Any department/school/center of the university (e.g. Department of Physics, Economics etc.,)

Separate instruments (Manuals) have been developed to suit units of higher education such as the Universities, Autonomous Colleges, Medical Institutions, Distance Education Institutions, Department Accreditation and Self-appraisal of Teacher Education Institutions.

Criteria for assessment

Any assessment and subsequent accreditation should be made with reference to a set of criteria. NAAC has identified the following seven criteria to serve as the basis of its assessment procedures:

- Curricular Aspects
- Teaching-learning and Evaluation
- Research, Consultancy and Extension
- Infrastructure and Learning Resources
- Student Support and Progression
- Organisation and Management
- Healthy Practices

The highlights of the criteria are as given below:

Curricular aspects

This aspect deals with the mission of the institution, its relevance and translation to the programmes offered. The goals and objectives of the institution, should define its distinctive character and address the needs of the society and students, it seeks to serve. It has to reflect both the tradition of the institution and its vision for the future. It requires information on how the curriculum design of the institution offers diversity and flexibility to learners. It also seeks information on the practices of the institution in initiating and redesigning courses that are relevant to the regional and national needs.

Teaching-learning and evaluation

This criterion deals with the efforts of the institution in providing appropriate teaching-learning experiences to learners. It also looks at the adequacy and competency of the faculty who handle the various programmes of study as well as the efficiency of the evaluation methodology of the institution.

Research, consultancy and extension

This part of the format seeks information on the activities of the institution with reference to research, consultancy and extension. It also deals with the facilitating aspects of the institution to promote the same and their outcome.

Infrastructure and learning resources

This aspect requires data on the adequacy and optimal use of the facilities available in the institution to maintain the quality of the academic and other aspects of the campus life. It also seeks information on how every constituent of the institution - students, teachers and staff, benefit from these facilities.

Student support and progression

The highlights of this criterion are the efforts of the institution to provide the necessary assistance for good student experiences in the campus and to facilitate their progression. It also seeks information on the student and alumni profiles.

Organisation and management

This criterion requires data on the policies and practices of the institution in the matter of planning, human power requirement, recruitment, training, performance appraisal and finance management.

Healthy practices

This criterion should focus on the **innovative** and **unique practices** of the institution that add to its academic ambience. Healthy practices vary from institution to institution. These are some examples:

- Educational innovations
- Working with specific mission and goals
- Master plan for the institutional growth
- Feedback from stakeholders for improvement of the institutional functions
- Innovations in management and communication
- Quality enhancement strategies

The self-study report should conform to the criteria chosen for assessment. If the inputs from the institution under these criteria are collated, it should give adequate details on all the features of an institution such as its policies, practices, programmes, resources and performance. This would facilitate the institution to appraise itself of its standing besides helping the assessors to make a proper assessment.” (NAAC Handbook)

The Grading System

The weightages attached to different parameters for different types of institutions are as under:

Table 1 : Parameters and weightages adopted by NAAC

S.No.	Criteria	University	Affiliated/ continuing colleges	Autonomous Colleges
1.	Curricular aspects	15	10	15
2.	Teaching-learning and evaluation	25	40	30
3.	Research consultancy and extension	15	5	10
4.	Infrastructure and learning resources	15	15	15
5.	Student support and progression	10	15	10
6.	Organization and management	10	10	10
7.	Healthy Practices	10	10	10

On the bases of these weightages, if the overall score is more than 55 per cent, the institution gets the “Accredited Status” and any score less than that will lead to “Not Accredited” status. The accredited institutions are graded on a nine point scale with the following rate values.

Grade	Institutional Score (Upper limit exclusive)
A++	95-100
A+	90-95
A	85-90
B++	80-85
B+	75-80
B	70-75
C++	65-70
C+	60-65
C	55-60

Figure 1 : Grading system adopted by NAAC

The grade is also supplemented by a qualitative report by the team that would highlight the strength and weakness of the institution under various criteria. Institutions which do not attain the minimum 55% point for accreditation, are also intimated and notified indicating that the institution is "ASSESSED AND FOUND NOT QUALIFIED FOR ACCREDITATION". The range of marks of each letter grade, and actual total marks obtained as well as criteria-wise marks are intimated to the institutions and notified.

The approach of NBA (AICTE)

The approach adopted by National Board of Accreditation (AICTE) for accreditation of technical, professional and management institutions is similar to that of NAAC, discussed above. A distinct feature of NBA's procedure is that it judges the institutions on the basis of both the norms and guidelines which NBA has evolved for different types of institutions as well as the institutional performance. The criteria for assessing institutional performance and the weightages attached to the undergraduate and post-graduate programmes are as under:

Table 2 : Parameters and weightages adopted by NBA

Criteria	Weightages	
	Under-graduate	Post-graduate
Human Resources Faculty	200	200
Students	100	100
Finance and Physical Resource	100	100
Mission & Goals	100	70
Research & Development	30	150
Industry-Institute Interaction	70	100
Supplementary Process	50	50
Teaching Learning Processes	350	250

The extent to which an institution meets the infrastructure requirements, as stipulated by NBA for different types of institutions and levels of programmes, and qualitative assessment by the peer groups determine the grade awarded by the NBA.

Self-assessment

2. *Discuss the criteria for institutional assessment adopted by NAAC highlighting its positive as well as negative fall-outs on institutions*

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Recent progress and the benefits of QAA

There has been a dramatic progress in establishment of HEIs both under the public and private sectors. HEIs offer a variety of programmes through on and off-campus, adopt different strategies of teaching and learning, enroll heterogeneous groups of learners in diverse discipline and engage themselves in multifarious activities of teaching, research and extension services. The concern for quality assurance has therefore acquired paramount significance. The National Policy on Education (1986) and the Programme of Action (1986) responded to this concern by initiating action. Accordingly, the colleges and universities were encouraged to make a voluntary self-assessment of their performance. A Council, the policies stated, would then assess and accredit performance primarily on the basis of the self-assessment. This led to the establishment of NAAC in 1994, the major function of which, as mentioned above, are: (a) to act as a catalytic agent to motivate HEIs to achieve excellence in all spheres of academic activity; and (b) to promote the idea of accountability among the academics.

Since its establishment, the Council has made significant headway in evolving the procedures and criteria for assessment and accreditation of universities and colleges. In response to the UGC and MHRD notification that **all the colleges and universities have to submit self-study report for the process of assessment and accreditation before December 2003**, a large number of institutions have taken appropriate initiative in this direction. As many as 418 colleges and 94 universities have already been granted accredited status. By the end of the year 2003, these figures are expected to be doubled.

Likewise, nearly six thousand technical and professional institutions, mainly under private management have been accredited by the NBA of AICTE. It is mandatory for such institutions to undergo the process of accreditation.

The benefits of QAA

The following major benefits, as identified by NAAC, are derived from the process of quality assessment and accreditation.

- Helps the institution to know its strengths, weaknesses, opportunities through an informed review.
- Helps in identifying internal areas of planning and resource allocation.
- Enhances collegiality on the campus.
- The outcome of the process provides the funding agencies with objective and systematic database for performance funding.
- Initiates institution into innovative and modern methods of pedagogy.

- Gives the institution a new sense of direction and identity.
- Provides the society with reliable information on the quality of education offered by the institution.
- Employers have access to information on standards in recruitment.
- Promotes intra-institutional and inter-institutional interactions.

In view of these benefits, academics by and large concede that the pressures of mass higher education and financial constraints have changed the conditions of higher education sufficiently that formal externally validated methods of quality control must be a central component of higher education systems. There is, however, another school of thought which fears that HEIs may lose their monopoly to validate learning through accreditation done externally, and their present role as guardians of intellectual standards could be easily usurped. Further, starved of resources, their capacity to innovate could be squeezed out of them. As they are players in an academic market place which is increasingly global in its competitiveness, differences in the status and resources of universities could amplify well beyond those which currently exist. Other than these concerns, there are intense debates on approaches to quality assurance and accreditation or what procedure should be followed to ensure transparency and objectivity in the mechanism of quality assurance, so that the above benefits are effectively realized.

Activity

2. Do you consider the system of assessment and accreditation a threat or a boon for the higher education system in the changing times? Substantiate your answer.

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Challenges ahead

The issue of how to measure educational quality will continue to pose daunting challenges on account of both the procedural aspects as well the fundamental educational issues. The recent developments, mainly globalization of education and the extensive use of educational technology have made the issue of quality measurement even more complex. The quality assurance systems have to constantly modify their procedures to address a growing variety of open and distance learning opportunities, which is stimulated by the use of information technologies. The review procedures developed for conventional system are hardly sufficient for electronic delivery methods, which has a wider reach. It would therefore require a greater clarity as to how electronic delivery can be objectively evaluated.

A large number of institutions are offering distance education programmes. They use multimedia strategies, enroll higher number of students of heterogeneous backgrounds and differ considerably in their capacities to use electronic media and delivery infrastructure. This development has serious implications for quality assurance agencies. It would require effective monitoring of distance education providers that offer courses at different learning centers and through different modes and that without ensuring adequate infrastructure as stipulated by apex bodies.

A similar concern arises in the context of international student mobility due to globalization of education. When students enroll in other countries or foreign universities offering programmes in the students' home country, the study plans must be evaluated to establish equivalence of their degree programmes. While there may be a mutual understanding between some countries and institutions for student transfer and credit recognition, there is much to be desired in so far as acceptable methods of maintenance and determination of standards are concerned. Quality assurance of programmes that are based on electronic delivery methods is further complicated by the fact that learning need not occur at the same time or place of instruction. How is this learning monitored when the instructor does not have a face to face contact with a student, and how well can learning be assessed by remote methods that are not buttressed by direct contact? With international study, learning occurs at a different time and place and the sponsoring institutions has limited control over the circumstances in which it takes place. When there are differences in instructional settings, including cultural and linguistic differences, the outcomes of instructional process, mainly in terms of what the student learns, are difficult to assess and monitor. This will continue to remain a challenge for quality assurance.

The emergence of private higher education institutions, which offer courses on profit taking basis and offer instruction in multiple sites and without permanent staff and other facilities, poses a greater problem for quality assurance agencies. In such type of institutions, the relationship between the capacity to offer quality programmes and the scale of delivery of services is hard to establish. Because of internationalization of education, the solutions to the major issues and problems concerning quality assurance should be sought through cooperation among institutions and countries. Therefore, global effort is needed to deal with the challenge to quality assurance.

Summary

Quality assurance and accreditation in higher education is defined as systematic management and assessment of procedures adopted by higher education institution or system to monitor performance and to ensure achievement of quality improvement. Quality assurance aims to give stakeholders confidence about the management of quality and the outcome achieved.

The provision for education is mainly the responsibility of the Government, which is interested in educational quality assessment because: (i) the Government has Constitutional obligation to assure quality of education; (ii) accountability in use of public resources is to be assured; and (iii) provision of quality education for all the eligible aspirants is a political decision, which enjoys a strong social support. The institutions established and managed by private sector not only emulate the norms and standards set by the apex bodies and other public sector institutions but also endeavour to excel in them. In the context of **globalization**, without assuring quality of relevant programmes, it is not possible to ensure credit transfer and students' mobility, prepare a cadre of manpower, which can ensure efficient use of resources, improve productivity and competitiveness of economy. It is imperative therefore to identify the characteristics of quality, evolve strategies for fostering it, identify the factors affecting it, examine the relationship between quality and resources, and explore the measures of monitoring changes over time. To do this, a common framework is needed for gathering qualitative and quantitative data and for analyzing them, to assess quality and to assure the stakeholders of their quality.

As the responsibility of maintenance of standards of higher education is vested with UGC. The UGC has established NAAC for assessment and accreditation of universities and colleges. A three stage procedure is followed, which involves: (i) preparation of the self-study report by the institutions based on the defined parameters; (ii) validation of the self-study report by a team of peers through on-site visit and interaction with the functionaries of the institutions; and (iii) the final decision on assessment and accreditation by the NAAC.

Following this approach, a large number of institutions have already been accredited. National Board of Accreditation of AICTE follows a similar approach and procedure for accreditation of technical, professional and management institutions established by the public and private sectors.

The outcomes of accreditation exercises undertaken by the agencies like NAAC and NBA have significant impact on improvement of quality of higher education, the strengths and shortcomings of the institutions are detected for initiating appropriate action. The stakeholders - the government, students and employers - duly benefit from information and analysis of institutional performance. In the globalised environment, the emergence of trans-national institutions and use of electronic media for delivery of programmes through distance mode, pose a greater challenge to quality assurance agencies for (i) clarifying issues pertaining to the procedures for quality assurance and (ii) evolving acceptable criteria for assessment of learning attainments.

A joint effort between the institutions and the accrediting bodies would be needed to ensure good coordination and communication, so that they can adhere to an ethical code of good practice and be objective, fair and rigorous in the task of accomplishing quality assessment and accreditation.

Unit-end activities

1. Discuss the global changes that have led to the emergence of accreditation and assessment as an essential requirement in higher education.

Suggested readings

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NOTES



It would be of interest for you to know that, for the purposes of career advancement, the UGC has recognized the PGDHE as being equivalent to one orientation programme for teachers from all disciplines except education and equivalent to two refresher courses for teachers from the discipline of education.

