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ANALYSIS**

**TOPIC**

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**Making Higher Education in India  
World-Class**

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## MAKING HIGHER EDUCATION IN INDIA WORLD-CLASS

### Context

- **The University Grants Commission (UGC)** has recently unveiled regulations to facilitate the **entry of Foreign Higher Educational Institutions (FHEIs) in India.**

### About

- India has surpassed China with a greater number of universities featured in the prestigious **QS World University Rankings**.
- FHEIs' entry can be likened to India's 1991 market reforms, when the government dismantled barriers to trade and foreign investment and promised a level-playing field for all players.
- Technically, universities like Oxford, Cambridge, or Harvard can now open campuses in India.
  - ♦ But it will ultimately depend on whether those universities find the Indian market attractive enough to invest in a branch campus in the country.

### Higher Educational Institutes in India ( All-India Survey of Higher Education (AISHE), 2021-22)

- The total number of Universities / University level institutions registered is 1,168, Colleges 45,473 and Standalone Institutions 12,002.
- **341 Universities/University** level institutions have been established since 2014-15.
- **17 Universities** (of which 14 are State Public Universities) and 4,470 Colleges are exclusively for women.
- A total of **seven Indian institutions** feature in the **top 100 ranks** of QS World University Rankings.
- The **Indian Institute of Technology Bombay (IIT Bombay)** grabbed the top spot in India with the **40th position** followed by **IIT-Delhi at the 46th position** and **IIT-Madras at the 53rd position.**

### Major Flaws in Higher Education in India

- **Limited Access:** Despite efforts to improve access to higher education, many students in India still face barriers such as financial constraints, lack of infrastructure, and limited availability of quality institutions, particularly in rural areas.
- **Quality Disparities:** There is a significant gap in the quality of education between top-tier institutions and others.
  - ♦ The premier institutes like the IITs (Indian Institutes of Technology) and IIMs (Indian Institutes of Management) are world-renowned, but the majority of colleges and universities struggle with outdated curriculum, inadequate faculty, and insufficient resources.
- **Outdated Curriculum:** The curriculum in many institutions often lags behind industry requirements and global standards. There is a need for regular updates to ensure graduates are equipped with relevant skills for the job market.
- **Youth Migration:** In 2022, nearly 4.5 lakh Indian students went abroad for studies, this means a huge outflow of capital from India and this also shows that there is a huge interest among Indian students to study in foreign universities.
- **Lack of Research and Innovation:** Indian universities typically prioritize rote learning over research and innovation. There is a need to foster a culture of research and provide adequate funding and infrastructure to support it.
- **Teacher Shortage and Quality:** There is a shortage of qualified faculty in many disciplines, leading to a reliance on temporary and underqualified teachers.
  - ♦ Additionally, the quality of teaching varies widely, affecting the learning outcomes of students.
- **Employability Gap:** Despite having a large pool of graduates, there is a significant gap between the skills possessed by graduates and the skills demanded by employers.
  - ♦ This results in high rates of unemployment and underemployment among graduates.

- **Overemphasis on Degrees:** The focus on obtaining degrees rather than acquiring practical skills often leads to a disconnect between education and employment.
  - ◆ Many students pursue higher education solely for the credential rather than for the knowledge and skills gained.

### Government Initiatives to Improve Higher Education in India

- **National Education Policy (NEP) 2020:** The NEP 2020 is a comprehensive reform document aimed at transforming the entire education system, including higher education, to meet the needs of the 21st century.
  - ◆ It focuses on aspects such as holistic and multidisciplinary education, flexibility in curriculum, promotion of research and innovation, and increased access and equity.
- **Rashtriya Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA):** Launched in 2013, RUSA aims to improve the overall quality of state higher educational institutions by providing strategic funding, infrastructure development, faculty improvement, and governance reforms.
- **SWAYAM (Study Webs of Active-Learning for Young Aspiring Minds):** SWAYAM is an online platform that offers free courses from high school to postgraduate level across various disciplines.
  - ◆ It provides access to quality education resources to students, especially those in remote areas, and promotes lifelong learning.
- **Institutions of Eminence (IoE) Scheme:** Under this scheme, certain higher education institutions are identified as “Institutions of Eminence” with the aim of granting them greater autonomy and financial assistance to achieve world-class status.
  - ◆ These institutions are expected to compete globally and attract top faculty and students.
- **National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF):** NIRF was launched to rank higher education institutions in India based on various parameters such as teaching, learning, research, outreach, and inclusivity.
  - ◆ This initiative aims to promote healthy competition among institutions and encourage them to improve their overall quality.
- **National Research Foundation:** NRF aims to get colleges and universities involved in scientific research. Less than one per cent of the nearly 40,000 institutions of higher learning in the country were currently engaged in research.
  - ◆ NRF plans to address this lacuna by encouraging active researchers, whether serving or retired, to take up NRF professorships at universities and colleges to start or improve their research cells in collaboration with the existing faculty.

### Way Ahead

- Merely having more universities than China will not suffice. The core purpose of our higher education system must seek excellence.
- A robust and thriving research culture is the backbone of higher educational institutes to become world-class.
- India’s higher education system is at the cusp of a transformative change. The sustained efforts and effective implementation are essential to ensure meaningful progress and positive outcomes.

### Mains Practice Question

- Q. Critically analyze the potential impact of allowing Foreign Higher Educational Institutions (FHEIs) to establish campuses in India on the country’s higher education system. Discuss the major flaws currently present in India’s higher education.**

