

“Envisioning India as a Global Hub for Higher Education”



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India has a very old and rich heritage of providing quality higher education. Takshashila and Nalanda had been global centers of higher education in Ancient India which attracted students from around the globe. India has also been the home of some of the earliest discoveries in the areas of mathematics, healthcare and science. Presently India has one of the largest education systems in the world. There is an urgent need to develop a fine blueprint, bring suitable reforms and make efforts towards making India a global hub of higher education. It would not only attract international students, but also prevent a large number of Indian students to go abroad for higher studies.

The University is a place where new ideas germinate, strike roots and grow tall and sturdy. It is a unique space, which covers the entire universe of knowledge. It is a place where creative minds converge, interact with each other and construct visions of new realities by fostering a culture of excellence. Our former President of India, **Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam** has given great emphasis on excellence. He said that “Excellence in thinking and action is the foundation for any mission. Excellence is not by accident. It is a process, where an individual or organization or nation continuously strives to better oneself.” The hall mark of academic excellence is the high standards of teaching, an environment conducive to learning and a culture of single minded pursuit of knowledge and passion for achievement of excellence. These attributes can be imbibed through discipline and determination.

Let us have a closer look at the present global hubs of higher education, particularly universities of USA and UK which are attracting most of the international students across the world. The top ranked universities in different world rankings have a very high global reputation for teaching and research. Although the world rankings emphasise more on global participation in terms of enrolment of students, faculty and research contributions. These universities have some common features which I wish to highlight here:-

- They spend a large amount of money on research, teaching, infrastructure and support services. They have ample financial resources and the **annual budget** of top six universities of the Times Higher Education 2015-16 world university ranking range from **1.3 to 4.5 billion dollars**, which in Indian currency amounts to **9,000 to 30,000 Crore Rupees, per annum**.
- These universities are research intensive which is reflected by the large number of Nobel Prizes, Field Medals and other medals , Research Awards and Grants, Publications in high impact journals, Patents etc received by them.
- These universities are characterized by highest levels of quality and excellence in teaching by offering a wide range of conventional, as well as, contemporary - new and innovative interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary courses adopting blended teaching methods.
- They have large campuses, world class - state of the art infrastructure, facilities, and systems to support teaching, research and holistic development of the students.
- Another important distinction is that most of these universities are private funded universities.

We are also witnessing competition in Higher Education from other Asian countries. In the recent past many Asian countries, particularly Singapore, China (including Hong Kong) and Japan, have also emerged as new global centres of higher education. They are not only attracting Asian students from neighbouring countries, but also students from all over the world. We have to act faster to establish our leadership in Higher Education at the global level.

Ladies and Gentlemen, the journey is long and we have to address many challenges in our path towards making India a global hub for higher education. We have to realize our weaknesses and develop strategies for overcoming them.

The dream of creating global centres of higher education can be achieved through strong political will, private sector support, strategic interventions in the right directions, and committed efforts towards quality and excellence. I would like to draw your kind attention to some of the critical issues for urgent action:-

- Many Public and Private Universities are already excelling on some of the parameters defined for best global universities. There is still a need to develop them as centres of excellence for promotion of world class research. This would involve a large sum of investments by the Government and the private sector and supportive regulatory framework. Investments in Education will bring long term returns to the society, build reputation and credibility. The Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India has taken several initiatives to improve the higher education scenario at the national and global level. New Education Policy is being formulated and many schemes and reforms are in the process. The National Institutional Ranking Framework (nirf) launched by MHRD is a milestone in the history of higher education.
- Quality of teachers, teaching and research has to be improved. Quality enhancement measures and accreditation of institutions by national and international agencies will further contribute towards improving the country's image on global educational scenario. This will provide a base for attracting students, faculty and researchers from other countries to India.
- Good governance and student support system will encourage global facilitation of higher education. In order to be an important player in the global arena, Indian higher education needs to adopt a truly global outlook. It involves international collaborations for teaching, research and training along with faculty-student exchange programmes. Our curriculum also needs to be matched with the global standards.
- Faculty members are the pillars of higher education institution. We need to attract, develop, and retain highly qualified and experienced academic and research staff of international standards.

Ladies and Gentlemen, in the journey of making India a Global Hub for Higher Education, Indian Universities should not sacrifice core Indian values and ethics which may not be primary concern for many existing global universities. In this connection I would like to highlight that Mahatma Gandhi has firmly believed in value-oriented education and said that, "I do not want my house to be walled in on all sides and my windows to be stuffed. I want the cultures of all the lands to be blown about my house as freely as possible. But I refuse to be blown off my feet by any."

We want the universities to act as the fountainhead of knowledge creation and dissemination to meet the emerging global challenges. They have to discover fresh perspectives and assume new responsibilities to meet the imperatives of holistic human and social development. The objective of holistic education for holistic human being will need to be underlined as of highest importance as we march towards becoming a global hub.

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