

DESIGNING EFFECTIVE HIGHER EDUCATION POLICY IN INDIA: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Dr. Biswajit Bandyopadhyay
Ph.D Researcher,
Ex-Fellow, IPRA, Shimla,
& IIPA, New Delhi (Life Member)

Abstract

Purpose – In the twenty first century, higher education is a powerful tool in socio-economic development and overall progress of the country. The goal number 4 of Sustainable Development Goals on education clearly highlighted to ensure the quality of education, inclusive education and equal opportunities for all by 2030. India is the third largest educational hub next to China and United States in connection with number of students and educational institutions. However, despite the growing number of educational institutions, international rating agencies have not placed the Indian universities amongst top 150 universities in the world ranking. The research question arises; How far the education policies designed by the various governments in defining and implementing for inclusive growth in the educational sector? What kind of challenges are facing in the higher education system of India? How Indian universities can be transformed as a world class educational institution? The present study aims to highlight the key challenges, point out the opportunities in higher education and to create the Indian universities as world class higher educational institutions across the country.

Design/Methodology/Approach - The study mainly descriptive in nature. The analysis is based on secondary sources from national and international literature. Secondary data has also collected from websites, various surveys, research papers, articles, journals and government reports.

Findings - It is found from the study that a large number of universities and colleges in India has been established during the last seven decades after independence, yet the higher education is not equally accessible to all. In order to sustain that rate of growth in educational sector, there is an urgent need to develop the quality and standards of education with the increasing number of educational institutions and allocation of more financial resources. Further, there is a lack of

female participation in GER at higher education level, non-availability of good infrastructure in colleges and universities, inadequate teaching experts, quality of research, innovations and library facilities. Further, the management of universities and colleges is facing challenges of over-centralization, bureaucratic and political interference and lack of accountability, transparency and professionalisms.

Research limitations/implications - Since the present study is conducted to examine the present scenario of higher education in policy-making process, it may not applicable to other countries education system. The findings of the study, therefore, may not have universal validity. Further, due to lack of primary data, the study is mainly depends on secondary data. Hence, the accuracy of the analysis depends upon the accuracy of the data reported by secondary sources.

Originality/Value - The results of the study would help the policy makers to design effective, robust and resilient educational policy to strengthen higher education system in India. Academics can use these results to build models that would further expand to build the Indian universities as a world class educational institution in sustainable development frameworks.

Key Words-Education Policy, Higher Education, Indian University, Sustainable Development, World Ranking.

Introduction

Education has been envisaged as a precursor not only to national development but also a better quality of life. It is essential not only from the economic point of view but for human development which is crucial for each individual. More than seven decades after independence, a large part of population are not able to enjoy equal access to education especially higher education. Inclusive education is a process of inclusive development in the education system to reach out to all learners to achieve education for all. To ensure better inputs to the system, the Government of India has taken initiatives to constitute commissions and committees for re-structure the education policies from time to time. A large number of universities and institutions have been established for higher learning. Despite the growing number of educational institutions, international rating agencies have not placed the Indian universities amongst top 150 universities in the QS World University Ranking (2019).

The first National Education Policy adopted in 1968 has emphasized the need for radical reconstruction of the education policies, improvement of quality of education at all levels, inculcation of scientific temper and focus on moral values. The National Policy of Education formulated in the year 1986 had stipulated revision of policy in every five years. The latest in the series of education policies include revised National Education Policy and Programme of Action in 1992. As a matter of fact, it is to be noted that the Union Human Resource Ministry has formulated 'Draft National Education Policy, 2019' to keep pace with various development in all stages of education.

Review of Literature

Howlett (2019) in his study has focused on several aspects of formulation and implementation of public policies in governance systems. He has examined the various tools, mechanism and instruments to resolve the policy problems. In public policy formulation process, he has stressed the need to consider logic of policy design and principles behind the selection of policy.

Corney, Froumin, Leshukov & Marginson (2018) in their study has evaluated the role of federalism for shaping higher education in nine federal countries around the world. The authors

have developed a comparative analysis between national and regional relationships in higher education in terms of legal, economic and other aspects. They have analyzed that how countries' educational system has evolved their functions in highly varied cultural contexts.

Stewart (2012) has focused that United States was the world leader in education in 20th century. Now, the other countries around the world have learned from United States and performing better result in education excellence of higher education. The author has designed to promote for better education to the students in rapidly changing globalized and innovative-based world.

Rao (2009) has found in his study that recent changes in the policies and programmes of other sectors have made both direct and indirect influence on the education sector. The author has stressed the need on equal distribution of knowledge to one and all for the development of human beings.

Talyor (2012) has stressed the need for scientific research to increase intelligence and creativity, improve academic performance, better health, decrease anxiety, higher moral reasoning, increase self-actualization and better job performance which will benefit to make the individual successful in all avenues of life.

United Nations (2015) has framed Sustainable Development Goals in which there are 17 goals and 169 targets. Goal number 4 of SDGs on education has clearly mentioned to develop the quality of education, inclusive education and equal opportunities to access education for all sections of people by 2030.

According to Sen and Dreze (1999), education plays an important role in the process of socio-economic and cultural development of a nation. Education leads to a great deal of empowerment and transformation of the society. According to authors, female education has proved to solve the problem of gender disparity and discrimination.

All India Survey on Higher Education (2017), has prepared an official statistics on a large number of parameters based on data received from various higher educational institutions in India. According to survey report, the gathering relevant statistical data would facilitate the central and state government in devising future policies. The report has focused on the present

scenario of education system and it will be helpful to formulate the planning for development of education.

The Ministry of Human Development has framed revised Draft National Education Policy (2019) to overcome the challenges facing on education sector in India. The policy has highlighted on quality of education and equal opportunity for all from pre-school to higher education. According to the HRD Ministry, the draft national education policy will meet the present need to improve the quality of education, research, innovation and the lack of manpower in education system in India.

Objectives of Study

1. To study the education policies formulated by the governments for development of Indian education system.
2. To examine the challenges facing in higher education system for designing and implementation of higher education policy.
3. To suggest remedial measures to develop the higher education system and to create Indian Universities as world class higher educational institutions.

Research Methodology

The study is mainly descriptive in nature. The analysis is based on secondary sources from national and international literature. Secondary data has also been collected from books, websites, various surveys, research papers, articles, journals. Further, due to lack of primary data, the study is mainly dependent on secondary data. Hence, the accuracy of the analysis depends upon the accuracy of the data reported by secondary sources.

Role of Designing Policy in Public Policy-Making Process

Public policy is a significant component of any political system. It plays an important role in resolving societal problems. Policies are primarily framed by the government to satisfy public

needs and demands. The well-planned policies is to shape the society in achieving socio-economic development and maintaining national unity and integrity.

Policy design is mainly based on policy formulation through collection and application of knowledge to the development and implementation of policies to achieve policy goals. In designing public policy effectiveness serves as basic goals, which can build other goals as effectiveness or equity (Peters et al., 2018). However, mainly due to many uncertainties policy makers face in designing polices which can attain their goals not only in the present but also into the future. Thus, designing pubic policy is a complex process in practice for various reasons due to lack of resources, the existence of corrupt and inefficient bureaucrats and other policy actors, improper goals and poor implementation and evaluation. Transforming policy ambitions into practice is a critical problem because of high degree of uncertainty in policy-making process (Howlett, 2019a). Hence, formulation of successful policies depends upon to overcome technical and political problems and need adequate resources (Hiller & Leaman, 1974). In recent years, the policy-making environment is changing rapidly and not confined in single purposes such as health, education and civil society, but now it is concerned at all levels in public administration and multiple sectors (Angelides & Caiden, 1994). Hence, the policy science has emerged as a significant area of study to address the public issues. However, its nature and character is primarily from western, especially American. Developing countries have a different socio-economic and political environment. Their problems and issues are different from those of the Western countries. Hence, these model and approaches in the policy science invented by the Western nations can not be universally applicable in the third world countries. Generally, the societal problems can be solved in a rational model but governments are unable to formulate rational fashion. In the political system different group interests and elite class preferences reflected more than rationalism. Some decision-making theorists and perhaps most decision makers believe that rational policy making is impossible. In this connection, Simon (1955) has argued that policy-maker do not really ‘optimize’ but rather ‘satisfy’. According to him, a ‘good’ decision will do even if it is not the best decision. He has suggested that in the process of decision-making the intelligence, design and choice activities are the three essential phases that support systems in an organization to improve policy formulation (Simon, 1997). Hence, a rational decision depends on having clear and well defined objectives and goals as well as sufficient authority to coordinate action. In democratic system, majoritarian (elected leader or

group of ministers) are generally associated in executive and legislature, can play a crucial role for policy making process in parliamentary or presidential form of government (Richardson, 2018). Thus, designing public policy making is a response to the societal problems, but it is conditioned by the environment in which it is framed. Therefore, public policy as an activity and area of study continues to hold relevance as long as one finds the process of governance.

Development and Growth of Education Policy in India

The educational scenario in the last few decades is highly influenced by the impact of globalization. Education is a state subject. However, as a result of 76th constitutional amendment it has become joint responsibility both the Centre and the State Governments. Now, the subject education is under concurrent list and the central government can legislate in the field of education in certain areas. After independence, a large number of educational institutions for higher learning have been established and several commissions and committees have been established for development of educational system and its proper implementations of education policy across the country. Radhakrishnan Commission was the first major commission established in 1949 primarily to suggest reforms in higher education. Though, the National Policy of Education 1968 was introduced with positive attitude but many of its recommendations could not fully implemented due to several reasons like lack of funds and improper programme of action for implementation. The National Policy on Education (NPE) 1986 was formulated with a view to prepare students for the 21st century to face the challenges associated with global development, emerging technologies and cross-cultural complexities. For the first time, to ensure proper implementation of NPE 1986, the policy makers laid emphasis on the development of a detailed Programme of Action to facilitate implementation of recommendation of the policy in a time-bound manner. It is noteworthy that National Policy of Education 1986 is based on important recommendations from Kothari Commission 1966. Thus, the main recommendations such as equal educational opportunities for all, social justice, and development has remained as the backbone of the NPE 1986 and revised 1992 policy as well. The Twelfth five year plan has also focused on equal opportunities and quality of higher education. Recently, the Human Resource Development Ministry has framed Draft National Education Policy 2019, to meet the

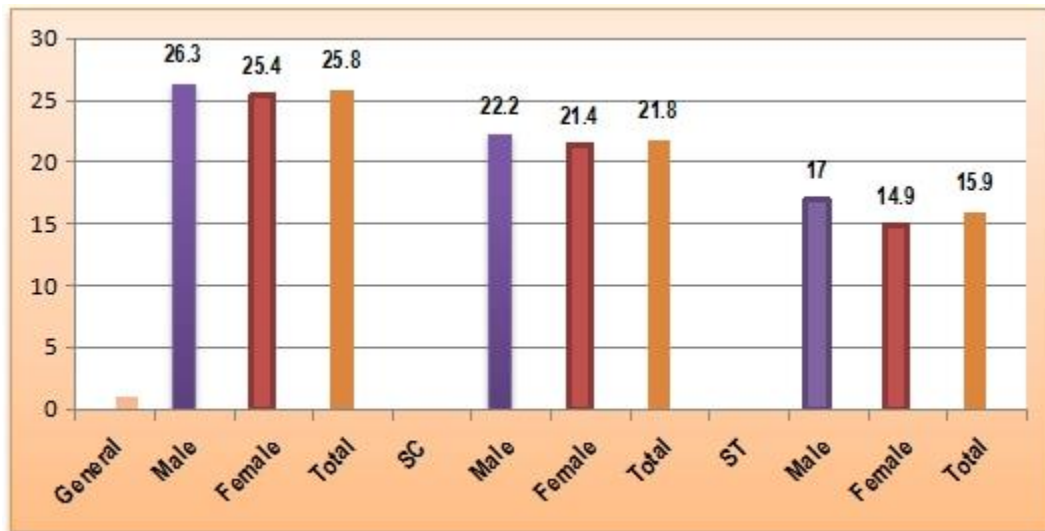
demands among public for improving the quality of education, research and innovation to make India a knowledge superpower.

Challenges in Higher Education in India: Analysis, Discussions and Results

Since independence, a number of important committees, commissions and education policies have been framed by the Indian policy makers in the process of nation-building. However, higher education is facing a number of challenges. The University Grant Commission has stressed the need to improve the quality of higher education and eliminate regional and social inequality in the eleventh five year plan. The provision was kept to open 16 central and 374 model colleges in low GER districts. In spite of expansion of higher educational institutions, there are inequalities in GER among different categories. The enrolment of girl students at higher education is low as compared to boys and the gaps are visible across social categories placed as shown as figure no. 1.

Figure No. 1: Gross Enrolment Rate (GER) at Higher Education

level in different Categories 2017-2018 (per cent)

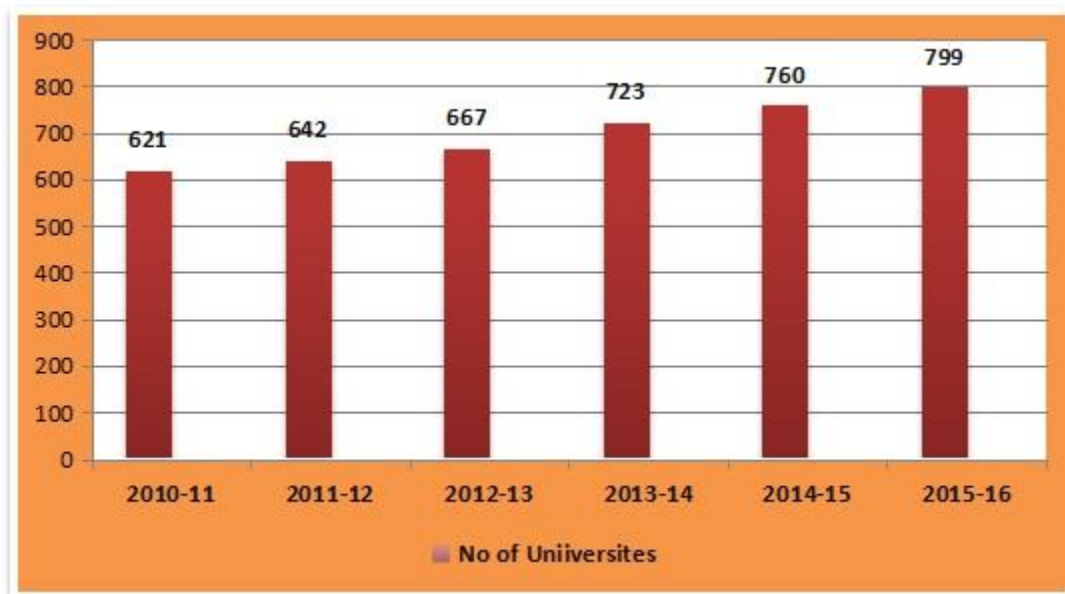


Source: Economic Survey 2018-2019 (Vol.2)

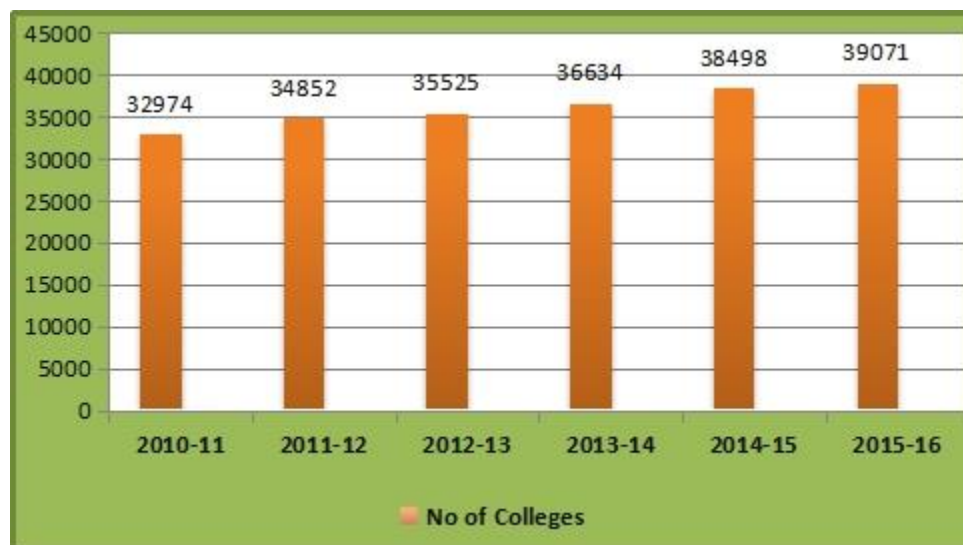
It is evident from figure no.1 that total GER in general category calculated as 25.8% whereas male student enrolment rate (26.3%) is higher as compared to girl students (25.4%). This trends is also visible in category-wise distribution, where GER of girl students is also low in Schedule Caste and Schedule Tribe i.e. 21.4% and 14.9% respectively in 2017-18. Hence, with the increasing more number of girl students at school level, educational inequality in higher education will be removed from country.

Further, in colonial period there were serious inequalities in higher education system. Higher education was concentrated mostly in urban areas and belongs to the upper castes. It was very difficult to find a rural schedule caste or schedule tribe women who is studying in a college. After independence, the number of universities and colleges have increased but they are unable to accommodate all students those passing out from secondary schools. As per AISHE (2016-17) report, the number of university has increased from 621 to 799 and colleges from 32974 to 39071 during the period 2010-11 to 2015-16 are placed in figure no.2 and 3.

Figure No. 2: No of University Established during period 2010-11 to 2015-16



Source: Source: All India Survey on Higher Education (2016-17)

Figure No. 3: No of Colleges Established during period**2010-11 to 2015-16**

Source: Source: All India Survey on Higher Education (2016-17) Report

India has always been a land of scholars and learners. In ancient times, India was highlighted all over the world for the universities - Taxlia, Nalanda, Vikramshila and its scholars. During the British period, the development of education was concentrated to fulfill the needs of colonial powers. After independence, the growth in student enrolment ratio of higher education which is quite low as compared to the other developed and developing nations Without increasing more enrolment at school level, higher education institutions is insufficient to the growing demand in the country. Though the governments have focused to achieve the equity, quality, reforms and promote excellence in higher education however, in twelfth five year plan the challenges are still remains to access higher education for all. At present, public universities are largely concentrated in the conventional disciplines whereas private universities the student enrolment is overwhelmingly in the market-driven disciplines. The total number of students enrolled in various courses in universities and colleges from 2011-12 to 2015-16 as shown in table no.1 and figure no. 4.

Table No.1: Number of Students Enrolled in Different Courses of Higher Education from 2011-12 to 2015-16

Year	Ph.D	M.Phil	Post Graduate	Under Graduate	PG Diploma	Diploma	Certificate	Integrated	Total
2011-12	81430	34154	3367190	23174950	196159	2071609	184717	74122	29184331
2012-13	95425	30374	3448151	23890309	194072	2207551	191871	94664	30152417
2013-14	107890	31380	38222192	25500325	276502	2285576	187340	125002	32336234
2014-15	117301	33371	3853438	27172346	215372	2507694	170245	141870	34211637
2015-16	126451	42523	3917156	27420450	229559	2549160	144060	155422	34584781
CAGR		4.5	3.1	3.4	3.2	4.2	-4.9	16.5	3.5

Source: All India Survey on Higher Education (2016-17)

**Figure No.4: Number of Students Enrolled in Various Courses of
Higher Education (2011-12 to 2015-16)**



Source: All India Survey on Higher Education (2016-17)

Table no.1 and figure no.4 shows that the enrolment rate in different courses have not grown significantly during the five years as per expectation. The growth of student has increased from 2,91,84,331 in 2011-12 to 3,45,84,781 in 2015-16. The Compound Annual Growth Rate calculated as 3.5 during 5 years but in integrated courses, the CAGR is 16.5 as shown in table no.1.

Poor infrastructure is another big challenge to the higher educational system in India. In rural areas, there is lack of good colleges and schools for the students. Most of the colleges and universities have insufficient in basic infrastructures like furniture, teachers, library and hostel facilities. It is commonly visible that students are dropping out after primary schools due to inadequate secondary and higher educational institutions. It is generally found that the drop-out rate is very high for male students due to financial constraints and lack of interest in education. According to Economic Survey, the transition rate from secondary school to senior secondary and further to higher education is also very low (Economic Survey, 2018-19).

Development of quality of education is closely associated with availability of qualified and experienced teachers. It is revealed from government reports that approximate five lakh teacher posts are still lying vacant in education sectors. Presently, university and colleges are functioning with a large number ad-hoc or part time faculty all over India causes degrading the quality of higher education. Further, as per government data, the student-teacher ratio in higher education is very low (24:1) as compare to Brazil and China (19:1), Sweden (12:1), Britain (16:1), Russia (10:1) and Canada (9:1) (Economic Times, 2019). The syllabus of most universities and colleges are not updated frequently as per the changing scenario in the globalized world. With increasing commitment to primary and secondary education, there is a concomitant decrease in the financial support to education sector in India. In fact, funding of education in general, including higher education, has not reached even 4% of GDP, despite repeated promises by the governments of 6% allocation. The overall trends in budgetary expenditure on education sector from the financial year 2013-2014 to 2018-19 shown in table no.2.

Table No. 2: Trends in Expenditure on Education Sector (Combined Centre and States) during Financial Year 2013-14 to 2018-19 (Rs. in crore)

	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019
	3,48,267	3,53,589	3,91,881	4,34,974	4,92,544	5,66,770
As percentage in GDP	3.1	2.8	2.8	2.8	2.9	3.0
As percentage of total expenditure	11.6	10.8	10.4	10.2	10.3	10.6

Source: Economy Survey 2018-19 (Vol.2)

It is revealed from table 2 that total expenditure in education sector is 5,66,770 crore which comes as only 3% of GDP. In the year 2013-14, the expenditure in education sector was more than 3 percent. The total expenditure on education has now been decreased from 11.6% in 2013-14 to 10.6% in 2018-19. Hence, the universities and colleges are under pressure to meet their proper functioning due to lack of funding from governments.

Private sector is playing an important role to better access in higher education. However, the private universities and colleges have more intention of profiteering by violating the stipulated norms, rules and regulations. The fee structure in private universities and colleges are too high as compared to the public universities, hence the common man are unable to afford them. These have also adversely affected in the quality of education and the delivery of public services in higher education in India.

Higher educational institutions established in the rural areas are not sufficient to fulfill their present needs, which is a serious disparity among rural people in general. Still large number of colleges and universities are unable to fulfill the minimum requirements as laid down by the University Grants Commission Guidelines (2010) amended from time to time, so that the Indian universities are not in a position to mark its place among the top 150 universities in the world ranking.

Recommendations for Re-designing Higher Education Policy in India

In the globalizing era, the higher education in India is at crossroads. Hence, there is an urgent need for proper mapping of higher educational institutions wherein the far-flung and remote areas are given due consideration for establishing sponsored institutions/programmes. Efforts should be made to establish more institutions of higher learning to seek autonomy and accreditation in order to promote innovations in terms of offering need-based and skill-oriented course. The quality of education needs to be developed by adding to the curriculum aspects of ethics, human values, environmental safeguards and social justice, etc. Before joining university and college, all faculty members must be possess adequate qualifications and six monthly training to be imparted. Further, student-teacher ratio must be improved to an ideal level, periodic refresher courses/training programmers to all teachers for the rank of Assistant Professor to Professor is also necessary to ensure adherence of the performance standards. A strong interface between Academic Staff Colleges and the Corporate Sectors/other institutions should be established for training to the newly recruited faculty and to help them adapt to the social and technological changes. Intensive-linked continuing and lifelong education of faculty

members needs to be promoted. A strong faculty exchange programme may be promoted in collaboration with corporate sectors and other institutions in India and abroad.

All institutions of higher learning must be adequately strengthened for IT compliance so that the academics and administrative activities are connected through computer networking. Formal arrangement must be designed for sharing infrastructures between educational institutions. The central and state governments must provide sufficient autonomy and funding for all institutions with an effective monitoring system to ensure appropriate infrastructure, facilities and aids to impart quality of education. Existing government higher educational institutions may be adequately funded and further growth of higher and professional education may be taken care of by private sectors. Higher learning institutions should be encouraged to start a large number of self-financing and self-sustaining programmes with adequate financial support for deserving students with ensure equity. The system of higher education has been politicized and more politicized at the state level is widely acknowledged. The role of the University Grants Commission in funding higher education is confined to central universities only. Thus, the principles of equity, adequacy, excellence and steady growth in research and innovations should guide more allocation of financial resources to higher education sector by the union government as well as state governments.

The Government of India has framed 'Draft National Education Policy 2019' for development of educational sector at all stages. However, before placing at Parliament in the form of a bill, it is strongly recommended the draft education policy is to be placed on the website to solicit comments from all stakeholders and final decision only be taken on the basis of report/feedback from all the section of stakeholders at state, regional and local level. Hence, an in-depth discussion and deliberation would provide valuable inputs for designing effective higher education policy and its proper implementation at all levels.

Conclusions

Higher education should be used as a powerful tool for economic development and overall progress of the country. The developed and developing countries tries to improve their educational system, promote their socio-cultural identity and to meet the challenges of the times.

To promote inclusive development in our country there is urgent need to promote inclusive education. Thus, it is clear from above mentioned facts that inclusive education is only option which can bridge the educational gaps among all groups and can also provide equal opportunities to all. Higher education in India has expanded very rapidly during the last seven decades after independence, but it not equally accessible to all. In view of the emerging globalized world, higher education policy has to be re-designed according to the changing needs of times which provides an opportunity of equal growth in the area of education for all sectors of the country with emphasis on quality of research and innovations.

References

- All India Survey on Higher Education. (2017). All India Survey on Higher Education Report (2016-17). Retrieved from https://mhrd.gov.in/sites/upload_files/mhrd/files/statistics-new/AISHE2015-16.pdf, Accessed on November 2, 2019.
- Angelides, C., & Caiden, G. (1994). Adjusting Policy-thinking to Global Pragmatics and Future Problematic. *Public Administration and Development*. 14 (3): 223-239.
- Corney, M., Froumin, I., Leshukov, O., & Marginson, S. (2018). *Higher Education in Federal Countries: A Comparative Study*. Los Angeles: Sage Publications.
- Economic Survey. (2019). Economic Survey (2018-19) - Social Infrastructure, Employment and Human Development. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Economic Times. (2019). India's Higher Education Student-Teacher Ratio lower than Brazil and China. Retrieved from <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/services/education/indias-higher-education-student-teacher-ratio-lower-than-brazil-china/articleshow/70212827.cms>, Accessed on November 5, 2019.
- Hiller, B. & Leaman, A. (1974). How is Design Possible: A Sketch for a Theory? *Design Research and Methods*. 8(1): 40-50.
- Howlett, M. (2019). *Designing Public Policies: Principles and Instruments*. New York: Routledge.
- Howlett, M. (2019a). When does policy design occur? Policy designing as policy formulation. In M.

- Howlett (Ed.). *Designing Public Policies: Principles and Instruments*: New York: Routledge, 95-110.
- National Draft Education Policy. (2019). Draft National Education Policy 2019. Retrieved from <https://innovate.mygov.in/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/mygov15596510111.pdf>, Accessed on November, 7, 2019.
- Peters, B. G., Capano, G., Howlett, M., Mukherjee, I., Chou, M.H., & Ravinet, P. (2018). *Designing for Public Policy Effectiveness*. UK: Cambridge University Press.
- QS World University Rankings. (2019). Who Rules? The Top 500 Universities in the World 2019. Retrieved from http://info.qs.com/rs/335-VIN-535/images/qswur_2019_top_500_supplement.pdf.
- Accessed on December 15, 2019.
- Rao, K.S. (2009). *Educational Policies in India: Analysis and Review of Promise and Performance*. New Delhi: National University of Educational planning and Administration.
- Richardson, J.J. (2018). *British Policy Making and the Need for a Post Brexit Policy Style*. London: Palgrave.
- Sen, A., & Draze, Z. (1999). *India: Economic Development and Social Opportunity*. UK: Oxford Publication.
- Simon, H.A. (1955). A Behavioural Model of Rational Choice. *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*. 69(1): 99-118.
- Simon, H.A. (1997). *Administrative Behaviour: A Study of Decision-Making Process in Administrative Organizations*. New York: The Free Press.
- Stewart, V. (2012). *A World Class Education: Learning from International Models of Experience and Innovation*. USA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum and Development (ASCD).
- Taylor, J. (2012). *Basics in Educational Research*. USA: NYX Academics LLC.
- Twelfth Five Year Plan (2012-2017). ‘Social Sectors’. Retrieved from https://mhrd.gov.in/sites/upload_files/mhrd/files/document-reports/XIIFYP_SocialSector.pdf, Accessed on November 15, 2019.
- University Grants Commission. (2010). UGC Regulations on minimum Qualifications for Appointment of Teachers and other Academic Staff in Universities and Colleges and Measures

for Maintenance of Standard in Higher Education, 2010. Retrieved from <https://www.ugc.ac.in/oldpdf/regulations/englishgazette.pdf>, Accessed on November 20, 2019.

- United Nations. (2015). Transforming our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Retrieved from <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/21252030%20Agenda%20for%20Sustainable%20Development%20web.pdf>, Accessed on November 14, 2019.