

**PROSPECTS AND CHALLENGES BEFORE CHRISTIAN  
HIGHER EDUCATION IN  
A MULTI RELIGIOUS NATION**

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**INTRODUCTION**

Higher education generally means the education provided at college or university. Higher education worldwide is in transition, affected by globalization, advent of mass access, changing relationships between the university and the state, and invasion new technologies, among others. World class universities are committed to creation and dissemination of knowledge in a range of disciplines and fields; serving national needs; and furthering the international public good. Today higher education has entered an unprecedented period of globalization with what has come to be known as 'knowledge economy' forcing people to move into other worlds and cultures. Increased global migration and student mobility has consequently resulted in a greater diversity in education. Nations are pumping in enormous sums of their capital into the development and expansion of tertiary learning and research .

India is a secular country where people of different races, languages, cultures and castes live together. The Indian constitution guarantees Cultural and Educational Rights under articles 29 and 30 and also for minorities whether based on religion or language, are given full rights to establish and administer educational institutions of their choice . Article 29(1) states "No citizen shall 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."<sup>1</sup> A large number of students come to India from countries like Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Eritrea,

Ethiopia, Fiji, France, Germany, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Japan, Jordan, Kenya, Lebanon, Madagascar, Malaysia, Mauritius, Myanmar, Nepal, Somalia, Sri Lanka, Surinam, Syria, Thailand, UK, US, Vietnam and Zimbabwe etc for their higher studies.

India is today recognized as a world centre for higher education amongst foreign students as the country has an unparalleled variety of academic courses. India is the third largest higher education market in the world producing 37 lakh graduates every year.<sup>2</sup>

According to the latest Indian census, approximately 27% of Indian population today is in the age group of 18-30. <sup>3</sup> The Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in institutions of higher education in India at present (2015) is about 19% <sup>4</sup> which is much below the 26 per cent average GER. There still remains a significant distance to catch up with tertiary education enrolment levels of developed nations, a challenge that has to be overcome in order to continue to reap a demographic dividend from India's comparatively young population.

TABLE 1

Enrolment of Indian Students at various levels of Higher Education

Level	Number of Students('000)	Percentage
Graduate (Bachelor's)	18,156	86%
Post-Graduate (Master's)	2,532	12%

Research (Doctoral)	182	1%
Diploma/Certificate	274	1%
Total	21,144	100%

Source: <http://jagannathuniversityncr.ac.in/blog/higher-education-and-demographic-dividend-of-india/> (April 15, 2016)

TABLE 2

***Number and Percentage of Indian Students in different Programs***

Undergraduate Programs	Number of Students ('000)	Percentage
Arts	7,632	36%
Science	4,021	19%
Commerce & Management	3,781	18%
Engineering & Technology	3,562	17%
Education	791	4%
Medicine	723	3%
Law	356	2%
Others	278	1%
Total	21,144	100%

Source: <http://jagannathuniversityncr.ac.in/blog/higher-education-and-demographic-dividend-of-india/>

Therefore institutions providing higher education should create the spirit of tolerance to respect and recognize the beliefs or practices of others and other religions who differ from our own. A Christian school is uniquely equipped to provide positive relationships for its students. Christian Higher Education ( such as Christian colleges and universities ) should play the role in the community, not just talking about academic affairs but it also take care of harmonizing the social relationship. The calling of Christian higher education is to reflect the life of Christ and to shine the light of truth

## CHRISTIAN HIGHER EDUCATION

India cannot deny the contributions Christian missionaries made in the Education and Health sector. Education in India before the arrival of Christian Missionaries was a privilege only to the elite upper class Indian men. Christian Missionaries considered imparting the knowledge to society through education is a gateway for uplifting a society. They believed education to be the fundamental of women empowerment and opened schools and colleges for girls amidst so much of cultural struggles.

Christian Missionaries started mission hospitals throughout the Nation. In the earlier times, men doctors were not allowed to treat women. In order to address this issue, Christian Missionaries recruited women doctors to treat women patients. CMC is one of the medical missions started by a Woman Missionary Doctor for treating Women. Today, CMC is one of the best hospitals of the world.

The present Christian education system targeting the economical transformation failed to propagate the spiritual and social well-being. A transformation through Christian education should bring spiritual fruits, social equality and economic sufficiency.

## I CHALLENGES OF CHRISTIAN HIGHER EDUCATION IN INDIA

### **1. Promoting Tolerance and Humanism**

In a country of multi religion, Christian higher education should enable the students to live together as human beings and also create the conducive atmosphere in respect of other religious persons and thereby paving the way towards Christ .The calling of Christian higher education is to reflect the life of Christ and to shine the light of truth

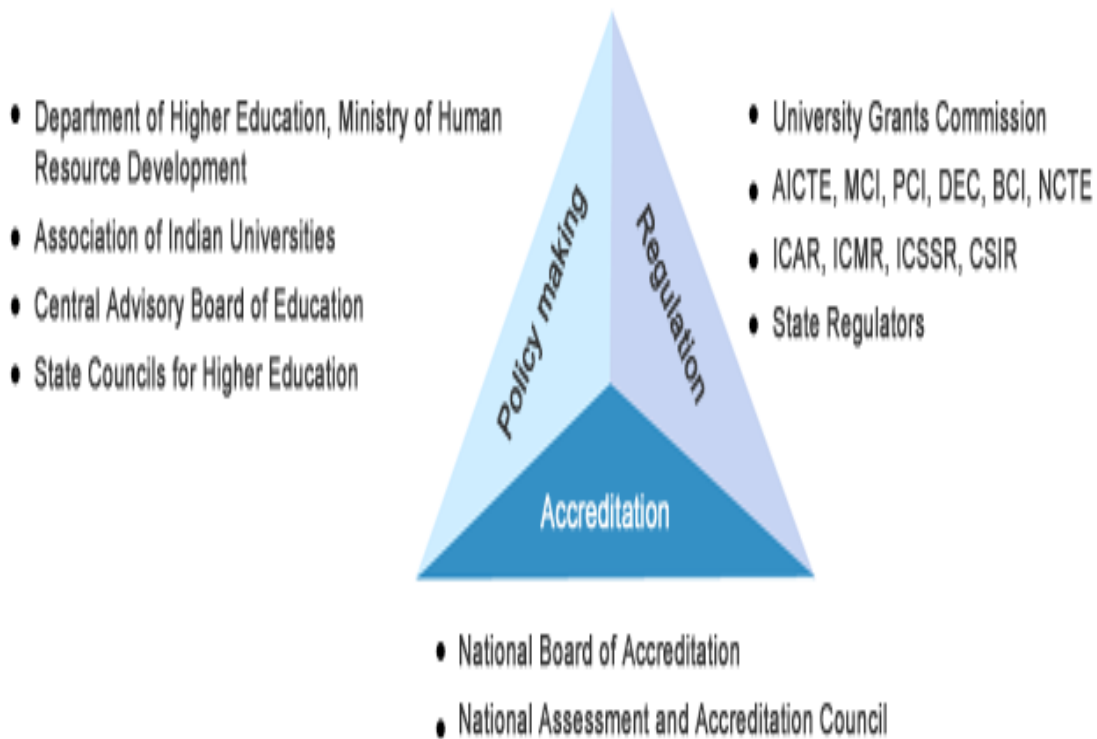
### **2. Regulatory Structure in Indian Higher Education**

A regulatory body, in the context of education, is an external organization that has been empowered by legislation to oversee and control the educational process and outputs relevant to it.

Higher education in India is coordinated by several agencies. While most of general higher education falls within the jurisdiction of the UGC, professional institutions are coordinated by different bodies.<sup>5</sup> The AICTE is responsible for coordinating technical and management education institution.

The higher education sector in India has a three-tier structure comprising the university, college and course. This forms a vital link with the regulatory structure, and with accreditation agencies.

# Regulatory Framework Of Higher Education In India



## Regulatory Challenges

- i) Overlapping regulations at different layers
- ii) Rigid, Unfair, Non Transparent operational procedures of various regulatory bodies
- iii) Regulatory bodies function without proper understanding of the emerging market structure of higher education in India
- iv) Regulatory bodies citing various reasons, are not supporting the functioning and growth of Higher Education Institutions
- v) Large size of universities is due to poor regulation (even 7 to 8 hundred in some cases)- under the umbrella of one university. Poor administration and guidance

- vi) No autonomy in curriculum designing, evaluation pattern, conducting exams, awarding marks (for non autonomous colleges)
- vii) Policy decisions are made without considering the interest of students
- viii) Poor infrastructure facilities
- ix) Lack of funds
- x) Government allotment to Higher education is very low.

2016-17 : Rs.28,840 crores ( Rs 2,88,400 million )

### Regulatory Challenges and Autonomous institutions

Autonomous colleges have very good prospects since they enjoy autonomy in innovating new curricula, curriculum designing, formulating evaluation pattern, framing new syllabi ,conducting exams, awarding marks and so on. Hence they have an atmosphere quite conducive for international collaborations, academic mobility and innovations. This paves ways for opening its doors to international students for joint academic ventures.

### Facing the Challenges

Other institutions should take efforts in getting autonomous status. Autonomous Institutions should move towards "Potential for Excellency". Christian Educational Institutions should take advantage of the credibility and reputation and prepare a future road map to self sustain and to grow keeping in view of the fast growing population and the need.

## **3. Faculty Crunch**

To run any educational institute a qualified teacher is a bare minimum necessity. Today most of the educational institutions in the country are facing a serious faculty crunch. Many graduate and post graduate departments in colleges and universities are functioning with less than 50 per cent of the total sanctioned faculty strength. Despite multiple institutions monitoring the quality of higher education in India, Universities are working with half the capacity of the faculty required. The present Pupil Teacher Ratio (PTR) in higher education is around 1:23, the recommended value as per University Grants Commission guidelines is 1:12 for postgraduate students and 1:15 for undergraduates. <sup>6</sup>

A task force on faculty shortage set up by the Ministry of Education has estimated the current faculty shortage in the country at 54 per cent. <sup>7</sup> A further 1,00,000 teachers will be required each year in colleges in the coming decade if the shortage is not addressed as the country's higher education system expands. Acute shortage of quality faculty is an enormous stumbling block in the transformation of higher education in India ultimately results in dilution of quality. The regulatory body which insists about the student faculty ratio is not serious about filling up the vacancies

#### **4. Commercialization of Education**

At present education has been commercialized to an extent that it lost its values and respect. Today many Educational institutions have no place for the poor and the marginalized. Private universities and the colleges running self financing courses making education very expensive and taking it beyond the reach of middle and lower class students. Most of these colleges remain more interested in making profit than providing quality education to students.

This growing tendency of commercialization is a challenge to the Christian educational institutions. They should balance between commercialization and providing education as service by way of Offering Profit making courses for affordable students. So the profit earned is to be used for un affordable students and also for the growth of the institution

## **5. Employability of Students**

On an average more than 50 lakh students graduate every year in India, a three, four or five years of degree after 12th standard from all the streams.<sup>8</sup> More than 75%+ students are entering the job market and “Nearly 47 per cent graduates in India unemployable (thehindu.com)”. The root cause being the job-specific skills and the second general skills are lacking among students. Our education system is more academic oriented and does not include skill oriented courses. It gives more thrust on acquiring bookish knowledge rather than understanding and using its application.

### **Challenges**

- ▶ Produce the students to be easily sold in the job market
- ▶ Curriculum should be designed in such a way and also keep closer link with industries so as to make the students employable in the job market Academia and Industry
- ▶ More number of Christian institutions to be started to solve the problems of mismatch (How Christian Missionaries done earlier)

## **6. Indian Universities Moving Towards Global Ranking**

No Indian University of educational institution was listed in the top 200.<sup>9</sup> At present, the world-class institutions in India are mainly limited. Most of the Indian colleges and universities lack in high-end research facilities. Under-investment in libraries, information technology, laboratories and classrooms makes it very difficult to provide top quality instruction or engage in cutting-edge research.

The first step in the challenge before Christian colleges is to become deemed universities and to become universities with a goal to reach a place in global ranking list.

## II CHALLENGES BEFORE LADY DOAK COLLEGE

### **1. Offering many self financed Courses**

The self-financing courses which are considered as job-oriented programmes not only provide better choices for students but also cater to the demands and needs of industries and business establishments. Therefore Being a Christian institution many unique programs under self financed stream are offered to fill the gap between demand and supply.

Inadequate infrastructure and difficulty in appointment of qualified teachers are the major challenges.

Retired faculty members are utilized in teaching in order to sustain the quality of education . Regular motivation to self financed teachers since their salary package is very less compared to the aided teachers

### **2. Faculty Turnover**

Faculty Turnover Ratio will be high within 3 to 5 years due to retirement of aided teachers. Enhancing the commitment of junior faculty members and Sustain the quality of education are the challenges.

### **3. Examination Reforms**

**Lady Doak College** being an autonomous institution designs the course content, adopts its own evaluation pattern in formative and summative components depending on the nature, duration of courses and number of credits. Autonomy is enjoyed in conducting examination and valuation of papers. Special provision is given to sports students using autonomy. Transparency system is an added value for the institution as far as examination system is concerned.

The challenges are:

- i) Complete online examination
- ii) Shifting from end semester exam to more number of continuous assessments
- iii) Shifting from Marking system to Grading system
- iv) Moving from standard evaluation pattern to different evaluation pattern depending on the nature of courses

### **4. Real Choice Based Credit System**

Though our institution claims to have introduced this system, in reality not much of freedom is given to the students. The rules regarding the number of students in each class and the number of hours per week for the students or for the teachers have not changed from the old affiliated system due to

Government regulation on work load. Students are compelled to take two years of language course of their mother tongue as per TANSCHÉ norms. Students are compelled to be inside the classroom for the entire five hours a day schedule leaving no scope for independent study.

The facility to transfer the credits from one institution to another within our country as well as to other foreign universities under CBSE is not provided to the students. Really it is a challenge .

## **5. International Students**

Students from various countries namely Sri Lanka, Nigeria, Malaysia, Singapore and Kenya are pursuing their studies in our institution. It is a prospect that higher education is offered to these students from different religion, culture, language .

The challenge ahead of us is designing special courses ,encouraging teachers to consider new methods of instruction that are more consistent with their previous learning experiences so as to bring an international perspective to the classroom, special evaluation pattern and exam pattern. Moreover accommodating these students in a separate hostel with all facilities, providing special food, Safeguarding Indian culture and the Christian faith without disturbing their faith and culture is an additional challenge

## **Conclusion**

In spite of all the challenges, Christian higher education has many opportunities before. Christian colleges have ample openings to serve humanity by making the best use of the opportunities before them. Networking of Christian institutions worldwide is sure to bring about many changes. As it caters not only to the poor through its institutions in remote areas but also has some top institutions in academic standards, staff quality

and campus facilities. Christian educational institutions should aim at enabling the students to raise questions concerning the meaning of life and the significance of reality as revealed in our Christian faith. Actual change in their ideals, attitudes, values and patterns of behaviour will be the indicators that faith has been internalized and has taken root in their life.

Universities and colleges have also a profound responsibility to ensure that they supply young citizens from around the world with the deep understanding, and the intellectual tools, which they need to become wise leaders of commerce, industry and politics .

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