FICCI-EY Index to foster healthy competition & promote collaboration among states in Higher Education to achieve Vision 2030 goals

NEW DELHI, 3 November 2015: By 2030, India will be amongst the youngest nations in the world with nearly 150 million people in the college-going age group. By 2030, the already existing challenges for Indian higher education – access, equity and quality – will only be greatly exacerbated unless we significantly transform our higher education model. In this context, the 2013 EY-FICCI report on "Higher Education in India: Vision 2030", tried to articulate an ambitious vision for higher education reform and lay out a roadmap to achieving it. However, the scale and complexity of the individual states, calls for a state specific approach to achieving this vision for India. All states need to adopt a transformative and innovative approach across all levers of higher education: from curricula and pedagogy to the use of technology to partnerships, governance and funding, to become globally relevant and competitive.

The states and UTs have shown varied success in providing equitable access, and varied higher education outcomes in terms of quality, relevance & excellence:

- Most UTs do not have universities and have less than 20 higher education institutes per lakh population whereas, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana have more than 60 institutes per lakh population.
- UTs like Puducherry, Chandigarh & Delhi have higher GER, good research output but have highest disparity between SC, ST and minority enrolments.
- Delhi, Tamil Nadu, Punjab offer better infrastructure for improving quality outcomes as opposed to states such as Meghalaya, Nagaland.
- Research Institutes with most number of publications are concentrated in a handful of states such as Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, Karnataka and UP, and, 15 states in India do not have a single top ranked higher education institution.

Given the disparate current state, a one-size-fit-all approach towards transforming higher education is not feasible. There is a need for the states to discover their own strengths and weaknesses; recognize their natural strategies; and devise their sub-national action plans for their journey towards the Vision 2030.

Briefing newspersons here today on the sidelines of the 11th FICCI Higher Education Summit 2015, Mr. Mohandas Pai, Chairman, FICCI Higher Education Committee; Professor Rajan Saxena, Co-Chair FICCI Higher Education Committee; Dr. Indira J Parikh, Co-Chair FICCI Higher Education Committee; Mr. Nikhil Rajpal, Education Sector Leader and Partner, Ernst & Young LLP ; Mr Anand Sudarshan, Director-Sylvant Advisors and Ms. Shobha Mishra Ghosh, Senior Director, FICCI, said the EY-FICCI Index has been developed with the intent to foster a healthy competition and promote collaboration among states to achieve the Vision 2030 goals. It provides an objective current status of higher education in the states/UTs and helps them in defining a roadmap to align their state priorities towards the overall Vision 2030. It provides a simple indication of the higher education ecosystem in the state, which could be further broken down to identify key areas of focus. It relatively ranks each state as compared to the best

performing state under the following five parameters — Access, Equity, Relevance and Quality, Governance and Funding, and Excellence and positions them across four different quadrants in two dimensions across access and equity, and relevance and quality, governance and funding, and excellence. Based on the current status of the states on these parameters, they are grouped together in the following four sets:

Sustain Leadership (above average performance on both dimensions): This group comprises States with higher education systems, which are above-average across the composite scores for both access-equity dimension and relevance, quality, and excellence dimension. Tamil Nadu, Delhi, Chandigarh, Haryana, Kerala are few examples. Chandigarh has the highest GER of 57.3% followed by Puducherry with 45.8% and Tamil Nadu with GER of 41.1%. Delhi and Tamil Nadu have many top ranked higher education institutes. These states need to ensure that they invest the government focus and budgets towards sustaining their leadership in higher education space.

Deepen Impact (high performance on quality, low on access and equity): This contains the State higher education systems that rank high on relevance, excellence and quality outcomes to students; however, lack on ensuring equity and access for all. Maharashtra, Karnataka, Gujarat, West Bengal, Rajasthan are few examples. Karnataka has low rural penetration across the state (rural to urban institutes ratio of ~0.45) and a high GER variance among social groups (9%). While West Bengal has a GER of 15%, which is below national average and a high GER disparity across districts (~40%). The state need to focus on ensuring that the quality of their higher education system is penetrated equitably across their citizens.

Invest in Quality (High performance on access & equity, low on quality): This group highlights the State higher education systems that have above-average composite scores for access and equity, but offer poor quality education with low employability outcomes. Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, Manipur, Mizoram are examples. These states have very few or no HEIs appearing in the top rankings and have a less number of Centres of Excellence and incubators. Only 2 of the universities in Himachal Pradesh have been accredited by NAAC.

Restructure (Below average performance on both metrics): This group encompasses State higher education systems that offer a poor quality education with low industry relevance, but have a more urgent imperative to expand access for all. Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, and Jharkhand are few examples. Bihar has the least number of HEIs per lakh population (only 7) and has a very high intra-state migrant students, highlighting disparity among districts. While Chhattisgarh has less than 15% (70) colleges are accredited by NAAC, out of which only 4 have been rated A, A+.

Once the states have been grouped as per the EY-FICCI Index, the states can then take a closer look at what steps are required to transform their higher education system. For this, we have outlined a three-step recommendation roadmap:

A list of "Core Action Points" that are common for all states: The starting point for the journey towards the vision may be different, but the basic tenets of core transformation agenda remain similar. The states can develop a meta-university (choice of multi-discipline courses from various colleges) with partner states, setup and strengthen the State Higher Education Councils (SHECs), foster competition and collaboration for research among institutes, etc.

Interventions specific for the four groups, including long term recommendations and a 300-day road map: States with similar as-is scenario are grouped together and the roadmaps for each group have been proposed. The states could use the 300-day action plan as a starting point and then look at the group level recommendations based on the group they currently belong to. They may consider to launch initiatives for top 4-5 professional HEIs to reach global standards, invest in CoEs, incubators, research networks and IP development, promote institutional alliances, catalyse the State Private University Act to drive private investment, provide graded strategic and operational autonomy to affiliated colleges, offer targeted scholarships for under-served communities etc.

State-level recommendations: The socio-economic considerations are likely to guide local actions in addition to the core and group roadmaps. The state action plan may look at budgetary constraints, unique demographic and geographic constraints, and the maturity of the higher education system.

While the State Governments are taking several measures to improve their higher education systems, there is need for them to play a more active role in transforming the higher education system. The states still struggling with basic challenges can learn from the ones having strengths in those areas, while those having above average performance can try to emulate international best practices to become educational hubs. In this report, we have looked at some world-class higher education systems as well as some within country systems that could hold important guiding references for the state governments on taking appropriate measures to improve the quality of higher education.

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