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REIMAGINING THE INDIAN HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM 2050: THE RISE OF PHOENIX

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ABSTRACT

In the past decade, the economies like China, Korea and Singapore have broadened their vision and are marching fast in order to bring revolutionary changes in their higher education system. On this front, Indian economy is no exception. Over the last two decades, Indian higher education landscape has also witnessed a remarkable transformation. This is evident that a number of higher education institutions are emerging and efforts are being made to enhance the quality of teaching. Unfortunately, the globalization of COVID-19 pandemic gave a nasty blow to various segments of all economies round the world. As a result, Higher education is left no behind. This created an overall uncertainty regarding the future scenario of higher education system may be 30 years down the line and calls for Rationality and Reimagination. Needless to say, that the imagination and reimagination of Indian higher education system in the year 2050 calls for usage of a new vision that can help in defining the framework of Indian Higher Education System 2050.

The present paper gives its justification by unfolding the various facets related to present state and the future of Higher education system. For the purpose of the study, the present paper has been bifurcated under four sections. Section 1 begins with the introduction. Thereafter, the Section 2 considers the explanation pertaining to the present state of higher education. For this purpose, the present growth trends of number of Higher Educational Institutions have been considered in terms of number of universities and colleges. In addition, the variables such as number of major universities in past 5 years has been considered. The paper further specifies the anticipations pertaining to the future state of higher education in Section 3.

For this purpose, the study has considered the attributes pertaining to reimagination of perspectives in terms of the students, the Teachers Cum Mentors, the Classrooms, and the Curriculum. For this purpose, the study incorporates the dynamics associated with of Higher education that would exist probably 30 years from now. The paper finally ends up with the conclusion that has been explained in Section 4.

Keywords: Incorporates, Globalization, Pandemic, Perspectives, Revolutionary.

SECTION 1

INTRODUCTION

The planners and policy makers who have been striving hard in order to elevate the level of higher education system as they consider it as a powerful tool to build knowledge-based economy. The need for consolidating and strengthening the Higher Education System is imperative as it will help in stimulating not only the growth of education as a segment of tertiary sector but also help in elevating the existing employment scenario. Moreover, it will also help in rejuvenating Indian Higher Education system and will make it globally competitive (Ramesh, 2013). Indeed, Indian higher education system is being improvised in terms of both quantity as well as quality.

But the rise of Covid-9 pandemic shackled the entire economic system and made the delivery of lectures and receipt of knowledge as too difficult. This called for a gamut of online lecture delivery modes, adoption of online teaching pedagogies, conduct of webinars, etc. keeping in view the wave of online lectures and teaching pedagogies, the present study was conducted to understand the dynamics pertaining to Higher Education in present and future ahead. For understanding future, a lag of 30 years has been taken and an attempt has been made to study the dynamics pertaining to Indian Higher Education System 2050.

Indian Higher Education System had a glorious history as early as 1000 BC for imparting the higher knowledge. This is evident from the ancient Higher education foundation stones such as Nalanda, Takshashila and Vikramashila that catered to the higher educational needs of scholars from across the world. These institutes attracted more than 10,000 students in more than 60 subjects as early as the 7th century (Salunkhe M.M., 2020). The works of Fa Hien and Hiuen Tsang also acknowledged the contribution of Nalanda University in attaining proficiency in imparting higher education to the students. This spread of knowledge through Higher Educational Institutions (HEIs) continued to expand. As a result, there is a remarkable rise in the quantity of HEIs in terms of increase in number of universities and educational institutions in India (Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India, 2016). This is evident from a study carried out by Gupta and Gupta (2012) that India is the third largest higher education system in the world after China and the United States of America in terms of enrolment. The data pertaining to year 2015 reflects that there are 3 crores 42 lakhs enrolment



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of students in higher education (Ministry of HRD, Government of India, 2016). Whereas, there are in total 51534 HEIs in India, of which 38498 are colleges, 760 are universities and 12276 are standalone institutions. A glance at the figures of enrolment of students reflects that the number of students getting enrolled in HEIs is rising year after year. There was an enrolment of 4 lakh students in the year 1951. The number gradually increased from 1950-2010, when there was massive increase in higher educational institutions from 2 crore seven lakhs to 2 crores seventy-five lakhs. The recent figures reflect that the number of student's enrolment is 3 crores 42 Lakhs at the year ended 2015 (Ministry of HRD, Government of India, 2016).

However, it is a matter of serious concern that though we have had quantitative expansion; the requisite qualitative growth, yet, is a matter of concern. (Ramesh, 2013). In this direction, the globalization of COVID-19 pandemic shackled the situation as there was a complete transformation of educating system from offline to online mode, rise in admission in online diploma/ certificate courses, merging of classes, use of ICT techniques in conduct of classes and so on. It is high time that we need to think, rethink, imagine and reimagine this in future so that future generations can benefit.

In the present paper, the future of Higher Education has been compared with that of the Phoenix. The Phoenix is a mythological bird which when dies, bursts into flames and is reborn from its ashes, making it immortal. Thereafter, its life is said to be long and the lifespan is anticipated to be between 500 and 1000 years. Through its beauty and unusual death, the Phoenix has become a symbol of immortality, renewal, and rebirth (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2021). The present study also considers the aspect of renewal and rebirth of higher education in India after 30 years from now. Thus, the way the bird named "Phoenix" is reborn from ashes in the same manner, the higher education would also be reborn after 30 years. Thus, Higher Education 2050 would reflect a system where the traditional system would be altogether replaced by a new revolutionary system that would be very different from present higher education system.

Research Objectives

- To examine the current status of higher education in India.
- To unfurl the dynamics pertaining to Indian Higher Education System 2050.
- To present the concluding remarks.

Methodology

The study is basically mainly based on secondary data. The various sources that have been utilized for the same include the various reports and documents of Ministry of Human Resource Development, All India Survey on Higher Education, Journals, other published and unpublished reports which is relevant to the study and web sources.

PRESENT STATE OF INDIAN HIGHER EDUCATION

2.1 Key Findings of All India Survey on Higher Education (2018-19)

For a developing economy like India, quality of higher education is very important in order to raise the quality of human capital (Ramesh, 2013). Needless to say, Indian education system has taken initiatives in this regard. This is evident from a study carried out by Gupta and Gupta (2012) that India is the third largest higher education system in the world after China and the United States of America in terms of enrolment. Hence, the higher education system is on verge of expansion.

As per the reports of All India Survey on Higher Education (2018-19), published by the Department of Higher Education, Ministry of HRD (2019) following key findings were reported in relation to higher education:



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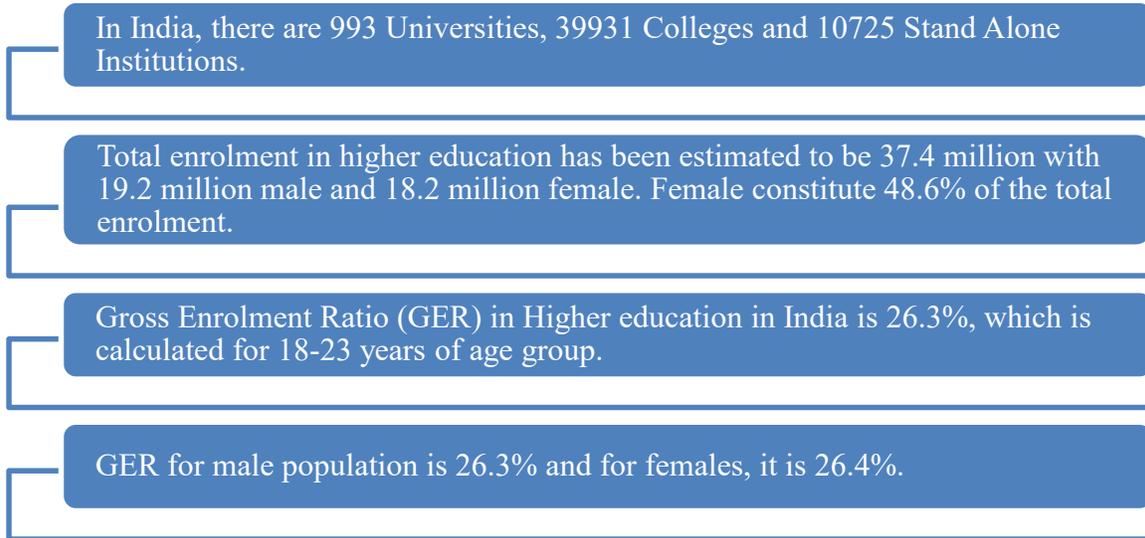


Fig. 1: Key Findings of All India Survey on Higher Education (2018-19)

Source: All India Survey on Higher Education (2018-19)

2.2 Growth in Number of Higher Educational Institutions (2014-19)

2.2.1 Growth in Number of Universities (2014-19)

Fig. 2 clearly depicts that there are 760 universities on year ended 2015. The number figures reported an upward sloping trend thereafter. This is evident as approximately 40 universities were established during 2015-16. A Steep rise was observed again during 2016-17 when the number of universities rose to 864. These figures stood at 903 and 993 in the year ended 2018 and 2019 respectively. It means that the number of universities and similar Institutions increased from 760 in 2014-15 to 993 in 2018-19 which means a rise by almost 30.7 percent.

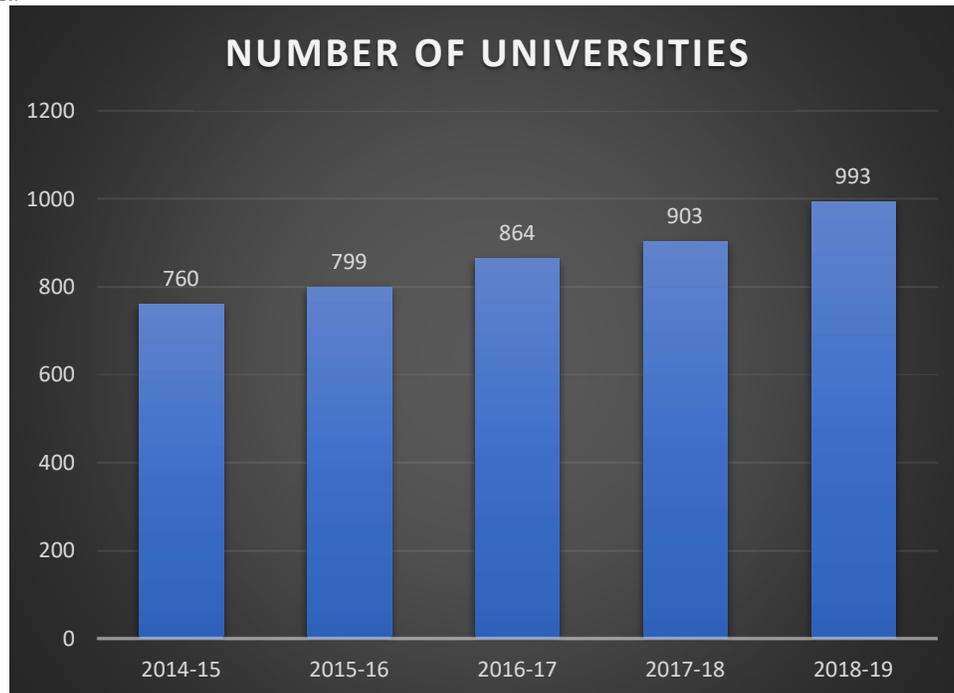


Fig. 2: Growth in Number of Universities (2014-19)

Source: All India Survey on Higher Education (2018-19)

2.2.2 Growth in Number of Colleges (2014-19)

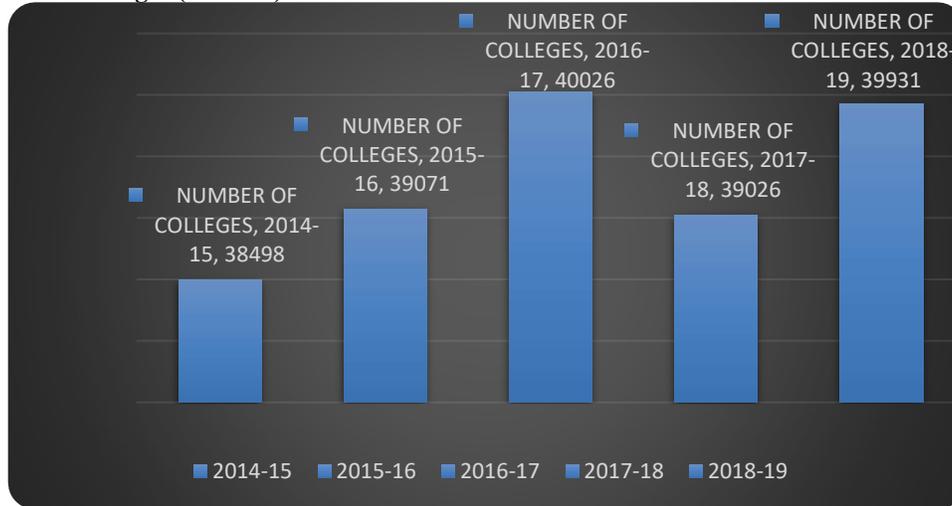


Fig. 3: Growth in Colleges (2014-19)

Source: All India Survey on Higher Education (2018-19)

On the other hand, the number of colleges has increased from 38,498 in 2014-15 to 39,931 in 2018-19. Thus, the rise in number of colleges is merely by about 3.7% which is too less after more than 70 years of independence (Refer fig.3).

2.3 Number of Major Universities in Past 5 Years

Table 1: Number of Universities in Last 5 Years

UNIVERSITY	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19
State Public University	316	329	345	351	371
State Private University	181	197	233	262	304
Deemed University-Private	79	79	79	80	80
Institute of National Importance	75	75	100	101	127
Central University	43	43	44	45	46
Deemed Government Universities	32	32	33	33	34

Source: All India Survey on Higher Education (2018-19)

A glance at the figures of number of universities reflect that the number of state public and state private universities is enhancing from 2014-15 till 2018-19. However, the deemed private universities have remained stagnant during 2015-2019. Evidently, the increase in institutes of National Importance is also very high. However, not much rise is observed in case of Central Universities and deemed government Universities in the five years commencing from 2014-15 till 2018-19. This clearly reveals that the number of universities in last 5 years have risen from the year ended 2015 till year ended 2019. still the growth rate of universities is less as compared to the requisite numbers (refer table 1).

Higher Education 2050: Reimagining and Rise of PHOENIX

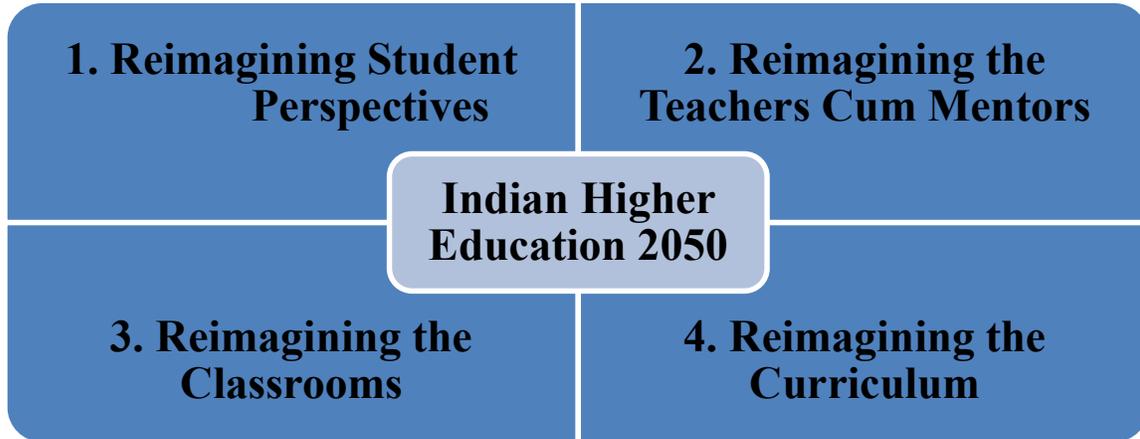
Indian Higher Education landscape is witnessing remarkable transformations especially during and post Covid-19 timespan. An imagination and reimagination of Higher Education 2050 require study of transformation of learning strategies and pedagogical approaches 30 years down the line. In addition, it also requires the deliberation on the possibilities and probabilities that may define the higher education system thirty years from now. Thus, for the purpose of the study, the attributes that define and delineate Higher Education system in India in the year 2050 have been bifurcated under the following heads:



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Source: Author (2021)

These heads are based on the probabilities that relate to student as the major stakeholders, the transformational role of teachers cum mentors, the transitions in classrooms and the curriculum and teaching pedagogies. These heads have been identified after careful examination and review of literature and are have been created to give justification to the study by the author. In wake of the present study that aims at anticipation of higher education system 30 years from now and limited literature available on the subject, the author has contributed her anticipations to the existing pool of literature in the present study. These have been explained as under:

1. Reimagining Student Perspectives

Reimagining student perspectives relates to the literature that defines the future of higher education in India from student's perspectives.

AUTHOR /SOURCE	YEAR	CONCLUSION
India Today	June 8, 2018	<p>It was asserted that the education in future would be dependent on three main pillars: Being Edu-Tech Digital Learning and Online Education.</p> <p>It was further reflected that future of higher education would encompass the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Any time and Any place Learning. 2. Personalised learning 3. BYOD (Bring Your Own Device) for learning. 4. Project-based and experiential learning.



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DeMillo	July 24, 2018	The predictions of higher education in the year 2040 were made and the implementation of e-learning platforms was advocated. It was pointed that the e-learning platforms would facilitate the following: the online exchange of data. more affordable for people with limited budget Enables to mix study, work and family duties, and maintain the balance between them Physical presence is not required, so learning becomes affordable in any corner of the world.
Peace Le	2014	The study advocated the adoption of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) which serve following purposes: Provision of in-person lectures, hands on projects, networking opportunities in partnership with the industry with better student focused outcomes. It was further opined that Innovation labs may be initiated which would experiment with either technology tools and would build new models required in business and education.
Pham D.	June 4, 2019	Predicted that in 2050, there would be globalisation which would unhindered the students in terms of the following: age, social boundaries. geographical or national boundaries.
Murria P. (Author)	2021	Predicted the following in relation to the year 2050: No requirement to carry notebooks. Students would carry tablets or any other gadget which they would use for following purposes: as writing pads giving presentations reference to previous notes. The Cooperative learning would be encouraged on the part of students as it will ensure exchange of ideas, higher level of reasoning, and would also promote the cognitive development of students.

2. Reimagining the Teachers Cum Mentors

- Reimagining the teachers cum mentors' perspectives relates to the literature that defines the future of higher education in India from teacher's perspectives.

AUTHOR /SOURCE	YEAR	CONCLUSION
India Today	June 8, 2018	It was asserted that: Student has enhanced ownership in the learning process. whereas, the teacher's role is of "a clarifier, a problem solver and a specialist". Teacher assumes the role of a "Mentor" as it is not only confined to giving knowledge but also to identify student's strengths, interests and values. Their primary job is to guide students in the areas where they need guidance as innovators.



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		<p>Teachers would also act as “facilitators”.in this role they would foster way of thinking and learning of their students.</p> <p>The study emphasised the three main pillars of virtual teaching-learning environment. These are as follows: Consideration of ICT (Redecker C, 2011) personalised learning and individual mentoring</p>
Duc Pham	June 4, 2019	<p>The major findings were as follows: The limited workforce would be employed. Overall student-staff ratios of 100:1 will be the norm. Those who would be employed would engage in development and maintenance of online modules. Face-to-face lectures, seminars and tutorials would be occasionally conducted. Teacher robots will prepare courses, give lectures, answer questions, set and mark assignments, and provide timely and insightful feedback. There may also be research robots that can help develop research proposals, conduct investigations and produce articles for dissemination.</p>
Murria P.(Author)	2021	<p>Predicted the following in relation to the year 2050: adoption of teacher-mentor concept. This concept is followed even now but in 2050 the teachers would be assuming this dual role with more integrity and responsibility as they will not only consider the curriculum but also focus on the overall grooming of the students and that too in case where virtual environment would prevail. software monitored attendance mechanism both for faculties and students. Automated Class Scheduling mechanism A Software monitoring the empty slots in case any faculty fails to take class. Automated Message Facility where the faculty is intimated to take extra class in case of inability of any faculty to take class.</p>

3.Reimagining the Class Rooms

Reimagining class rooms relates to the literature that defines the future of higher education in India in terms of transitions in class room structures and functionalities.

AUTHOR /SOURCE	YEAR	CONCLUSION
India Today	June 8, 2018	<p>Asserted that emerging learning landscape would necessitate a change in the following institutions and they will have to reposition themselves. These institutions include: schools universities, vocational and adult training providers</p>
Peace Le	2014	<p>It was opined that higher education 2050 would involve extensive use of online teaching mechanisms.</p>
Manikrao M Salunkhe	2020	<p>Predicted that by the year 2050, the fixed-seating tiered large lecture hall would be fully replaced by classrooms which would have robust and immersive virtual environments.</p>



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Shamika R. etal.	2019	By 2050 the following changes would be introduced: The classrooms would be paperless and more computer-based. In higher education system 2050, there would be no connectivity and internet accessibility issues and they would not become barriers in higher education. the role played by Tamil Nadu government in provision of laptop computers produced by TATA at only 2000 rupees (approx. £20) per student was pointed.
Murria P. (Author)	2021	Predicted the following in relation to the year 2050: Extensive use of visual media use of miniature models and simulations instead of chalk board system Flat screens or projector screens with touch screen will replace the green or black boards. May be government may take initiative of providing laptops or any gadget to the students pursuing higher education and may be by 2050 the Indian economy may strengthen and consolidate so that there may be provision of wifi or internet free for students pursuing higher education.

4. Reimagining the Curriculum

Reimagining the curriculum relates to the literature that defines the future of higher education in India in terms of transitions in curriculum and teaching mechanisms.

AUTHOR /SOURCE	YEAR	CONCLUSION
India Today	June 8, 2018	The key findings pertaining to higher education 2050 were as follows: More choice of subjects. Data interpretation and data analytics would be given increased importance. Complete change in examination patterns with increased use of the following pedagogical tools online quizzes, online group projects, and online group discussions.
Murria P.	2021	Increased emphasis on application-oriented approach to higher education Focus would be on those subjects that are of practical use to enhance the employability of students. More use of case studies and case lets in imparting higher education. The presentations would be made compulsory and would form integral part of curricula. ICT would be inbuilt in curricula. Interdisciplinary studies would be promoted and encouraged and students would have more choice of subjects. Globalisation of education and focus would be on gaining knowledge through use of ICT.

Conclusion

Reimagining higher education system in Indian economy after 30 years from now is all about anticipating the transitions and transformations in higher education. This calls for study of a transformational environment where the changes would be introduced in students, teachers, curriculum and classrooms. It goes without saying that such anticipations require far more thinking skills and content



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knowledge. The present paper first considers the present state of higher education in terms of variables such as growth trends of Higher Educational Institutions in terms of number of universities and colleges. In addition, the variables such as number of major universities in past 5 years have been considered. The paper concludes that still the growth rate of universities is less as compared to the requisite numbers.

The paper further moves with the consideration of the attributes pertaining to reimagination of perspectives in terms of students, the Teachers Cum Mentors, the Classrooms, and the Curriculum. It has been opined that post 50 years digital learning and online education would be an integral part of higher education system. There would be globalisation of education and removal of barriers in terms of age, social boundaries, geographical or national boundaries. There would be no requirement to carry notebooks and instead the students would carry tablets or any other gadget. The face-to-face lectures, seminars and tutorials would be occasionally conducted. Some studies hinted the possibility of teacher and research robots. Teachers would assume the role of a “Mentor”, “guide” and “facilitators”.

In addition, software monitored Attendance Mechanism, Automated Class Scheduling Mechanism, Automated Message Facility where the faculty is intimated to take extra class in case of inability of take class. Use of miniature models and simulations instead of chalk board system may also come into existence. Flat screens or projector screens with touch screen will replace the green or black boards. The emphasis on application-oriented approach and subjects that are of practical use will enhance to increase the employability of students. More use of case studies, case lets and presentations in imparting higher education. The focus of universities and colleges would be on creation of young individuals who would be employable and will excel professionally.

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