



INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN INDIA: CHALLENGES AND ISSUES

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Abstract

With a focus on fairness and inclusion, India's higher education system aims to maximise the country's human resource potential. There has been a huge expansion in many elements of the higher education industry in recent decades, including institutional capacity, enrollment, teacher-student ratio, and more. Many important concerns have arisen as a result of the country's fast development of the higher education system, which has brought about a number of significant challenges. The current study is of urgent importance to stakeholders at both the national and global levels since it raises awareness of a wide range of concerns that need to be addressed. The research is also unique in the sense that it provides a better knowledge of the current situation in the country's higher education system and its development patterns considering the possibilities and challenges to the system. The findings of this research provide important information on higher education funding and enrollment in India.

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I. Introduction

There are more students in India's higher education system than there are in China and the United States combined. In the not-too-distant future, India will be a major educational hub. Since India gained its independence and became a sovereign state, the number of universities, university-level institutions, and colleges has increased dramatically. Over the last four years, school enrolment in the nation has skyrocketed due to the implementation of the "Right to Education Act," which guarantees free and compulsory education for children between the ages of 6 and 14. Things have changed considerably since the business sector has become increasingly engaged in the university

sector. In India, 60 percent of the country's higher education institutions are supported by the private sector today. It's a consequence of this that India today has the most colleges and universities in the world as well as the second-largest student population (Shaguri, 2013). In 1950, there were only 20 colleges and universities in the United States, but by 2014, there were 677. Despite having large student populations, international education ranking organisations have not given many of these institutions the credit they deserve. The country's universities, however, have fallen well short of world-class standards. Information is king in today's digital age. It is said that knowledge is power, and it is true. Despite this, India continues to face significant



challenges. Despite greater government assistance for education, 25 percent of Indians remain illiterate. India's high school graduation rate is barely 15%, with only 7% of those pupils going on to college (Masani, 2008). India's educational system, both in elementary and secondary schools and at the university level, is significantly underdeveloped compared to other major rising nations. India's postsecondary institutions are only able to accommodate 7 percent of the country's college-age population, and 25 percent of teaching positions throughout the country are now vacant, with 57 percent of college instructors lacking at least a master's or PhD degree (Newsweek, 2011). As of 2009, India has 1,244 polytechnics and 15,224 colleges that provide degrees in engineering, according to the Science and Technology Education, 2009 report. However, these institutions are suffering from a shortage of teachers, raising concerns about the level of education provided (Mitra, 2008). Despite these challenges, India's higher education system still has a lot of space to build its own distinct identity on the global arena. Higher education and cutting-edge research into how people learn are crucial in the new millennium. Because of the enormous number of Indians with advanced degrees working overseas, the shift from developing to industrialised country is quite straightforward for us.

Traditionally, India's position in international education has been as a top sending country, but it is also becoming more popular as a destination for foreign students. All of India's overlapping aims of increasing access to higher education, retaining and recruiting bright Indian students at home, as well as enticing foreigners all begin with prioritising the country's educational system. Within two years of the epidemic, India's existing problems linked to capacity, fairness, access to resources and quality have been exacerbated. However, as India's tertiary sector expands rapidly, reform initiatives to address these and other concerns are taking root.

The national government of India adopted the "National Education Policy 2020 (NEP 2020)" in July 2020, which offers some promise for serious change. But it's too early to say whether the adoption of the NEP will have a positive impact on the industry..

An understanding of the Indian higher education system is essential to recognise the country's expanding position in international education, as well as the country's strengths and limitations and biggest hurdles.

The state of higher education in India is a mixed bag. This industry is one of the biggest in the world, with 1,043 universities, 42,343 colleges and 11,779 stand-alone institutions, according to the 2017 All India Survey of Higher Education Report.

According to a "key Brookings Institution research, Reviving Higher Education in India, the number of institutions has grown by more than 400 percent since 2001, with most of the development occurring in the private education sector. According to the 2019–20 AISHE report, this expansion has continued throughout 2019–20."

India's young population and college-aged population are expanding at an unprecedented rate. The gross enrolment ratio (GER) is an important indicator that indicates the proportion of eligible school-aged population that is enrolled in education. In 2019–20, India's GER was 27.1%, which suggests that it would fall short of the 32% objective set by the Ministry of Education by that year. According to "Philip Altbach, a research professor at Boston College and the founding director of the Center for International Higher Education, it is also substantially behind China's 51% and much of Europe and North America, where 80% or more of young people enrol in higher education."

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II. Research Methodology

Due to a lack of primary resources and the practicality of this study, secondary sources of data were used to perform the research. Many books, journals, research papers, and other secondary sources have been used to gather the information. The study's approach also incorporates the ideas and writings of academics and researchers from across the world. To add to that, below are the study's goals:

Researching inclusive education in India's educational landscape.

To find out whether India's educational system needs to be more inclusive.

To learn more about India's new education policy.

To examine the difficulties that different Indian stakeholders are having implementing inclusive education,

III. Result and Discussion

Issues and Challenges

- a) The first problem that India's higher education system is dealing with is a decline in the quality of its teachers. Some institutions hire recent graduates as teachers even if they lack the necessary training and expertise to do so. So this is a serious issue. Teaching English in a multilingual environment is a challenge for higher education. Teaching languages in general and languages of instruction in particular is taken for granted in a multi-lingual world that has become more multicultural. This is incorrect.
- b) Schools and universities don't teach about the importance of morality. Religion and anti-Semitism are used as a pretext for spreading values education. As a society's "saviours," physicians, attorneys, CAs, politicians, and government employees are often charged with corruption. A rise in the number of facilities catering to the elderly has been seen. The number of suicides is rising. The definition of love will ultimately shift. Misuse is being made of technology, inventions, and ideas spurred forward by educational institutions..
- c) Women's literacy rates are much lower than men's. As a result of cultural conservatism, few females attend school. School attendance for females is low, despite government efforts to motivate them with free lunches, books, and uniforms. Despite the fact that the legal age of marriage in the Philippines is eighteen, many young women marry significantly sooner. As a result, the female drop-out rate is significant at the secondary level.
- d) Additionally, political interference in higher education is a problem. As a general rule, governments are wary of political intervention in their operations. Because they control the majority of educational institutions, the most powerful politicians now hold positions of power on university boards of trustees (Aided-non-aided). On the political front,



- they've set up their own young cells and promote student activism. They take advantage of the youthful exuberance of the students to further their own political agendas. Students set goals for themselves and begin to build a political career.
- e) There is a lack of enthusiasm in serving one's nation among the younger generation, and they are more concerned with finding a job and being paid. Our ancient morals and values are at jeopardy because of the rapid rise of science and technology and the following industrialization. The deterioration of society's ideals is reflected in the discontent and outrage of the younger generation.
- f) The quality of education in India has been deteriorating as a result of widespread corruption in the educational system. In terms of domestic black money, it is a substantial contributor. The amount of money being paid to the management of dark rooms and admissions is rising. Some private schools also follow the practise of "getting the whole wage into the account and paying back part of it to management through blank signed checks."
- g) To many people, this is one of the most upsetting things that the current model of higher education has brought about. Most students come from lower-middle and working-class backgrounds, and many of them are unable to afford even the most basic of living expenses. Economic hardship has increased as a result of growing prices, consumer spending patterns, an expanding population, a decreasing food supply, corruption, selfishness, and other factors. Students must work part-time jobs to pay for their education and must balance their time between their employment and their studies. Nearly seventy-five percent of today's students are dealing with financial difficulties. The Earn While You Learn (EWYL) programme does not effectively help students in the face of economic hardships.
- h) Engineering, Medical, and Business Administration all have various curriculum frameworks that might be confusing to students who want to reach the same goal. There is no consistency in the syllabuses that are taught to the same programmer at the college level. It is not uncommon for syllabuses to be revised without taking current industry needs into account. There is a dearth of choice in college when it comes to majors and courses of study. In addition, there is a lack of ability to cross across waterways.
- i) More points equals success in the eyes of governments. Now, one's ability to communicate in English is seen as a sign of one's overall intelligence. Parents nowadays have little interest in using a language other than English to teach their children. Many parents no longer consider sending their children to public schools because of the widespread belief that they are of lower quality. Many families take great satisfaction in their children's desire to migrate in order to further their education. Most students devote the bulk of their time in school on studying for standardised testing. Unwarranted competitiveness across coaching courses has led to a class-divide.
- j) Rural-urban, rich-poor, and other socioeconomic divides provide unique challenges for educational institutions. Different kinds and levels of education have been generated as a result of the various colleges, universities, and technical institutions that exist. Some of the mares are really providing high-quality schooling, while a few others are undertaking the most squalid of tasks. Thank you, University Grants Commission, for posting this list of fraudulent educational institutions.
- k) Higher education in India is similarly plagued by the question of money. Even if it were possible, India would be unable to spend any more money on higher



education. However, additional funding is required if higher education quality is to be enhanced.

- l) Higher education is likewise grappling with the issue of privatization.
- m) Higher education should be privatised. In the end, privatisation alone will not be enough to fix the problem. Young pupils should be encouraged to develop a culture of innovation, inventiveness, and a thirst for knowledge.
- n) Debating quotas are highly debated. Quotas may be bad for the quality of higher education in the long run, though, therefore I must warn you this: What matters most is your ability and accomplishments, not your ethnicity or gender identity. However, implementing a quota system remains a difficult task.
- o) In India, teacher absenteeism is at an all-time high. According to the World Bank, the annual salary expense for teachers who aren't in the classroom is over \$2 billion. For example, a Kremer research indicated that 25% in the teaching profession were not in attendance, while 40% of medical professionals in the public sector weren't either. From 14.6% in Maharashtra to 41.9 PERCENT in Jharkhand, they had a wide variation in absence rates.
- p) Project-based learning is lacking in higher education. Students who just graduated need to acquire new skills, particularly those that will help them get a job. As a result, project-based learning is not a priority of ours. We need both theoretical and practical expertise. In India, there is no plan for higher education. In our nation, there are no foreign students that come to study and work here. The government has no strategy in place to deal with this, which makes it a significant task.

Education trends 2022 with India's education sector undergoing a huge digital shift:

The educational landscape in India has shifted tectonically in the past year as a result of the outbreak and the horrific second wave that hit

closer to home. Students and teachers alike were shocked when classroom lectures and student discussion unexpectedly disappeared from schools throughout the country. A few days later, teachers were retrained and the students were able to adapt. With an increasing number of institutions adopting hybrid models, they've become the norm in higher education during the previous year and a half. Digital learning is expected to be the main trend in the new year, with learning gaps such as the effectiveness of assessments and curriculum taking centre stage.

When it comes to digital education, access to the most relevant knowledge has not kept pace. According to an Oxford University Press (OUP) report titled "Addressing the Deepening Digital Divide," 70% of teachers believe that students who do not have access to digital devices are missing out on valuable educational possibilities. Due to the need of sharing technology with their families, many students were unable to continue their studies on their own. With the exorbitant expense of digital educational systems, many families cannot afford to utilise them. OUP's study also found that 56 percent of instructors indicated that the lack of digital skills on the side of both learners and educators limited their capacity to use digital resources effectively and was a barrier to learning.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Augmented and Virtual Reality (AR/VR) were already on the rise before the epidemic, but now they're moving much faster. Aids that help students better connect with and understand topics are becoming more popular as more classes transition to using computers as primary teaching tools. To assist students better understand new ideas and apply them to real-world situations, these tools aid in the immersion of students in a more engaging learning environment.

There were and continue to be huge discrepancies in educational achievements in India as the country transitioned to online education. Gradually returning students and schools adopting a hybrid strategy will need an assessment of the learning gaps caused by the online model in the next months and years. Individual kids in the private and public



education systems will demand a more individualised and tailored evaluation strategy.

There is an urgent need for well-designed, on-going training programmes and seminars for instructors who have adapted to a new medium of teaching with remarkable fortitude. For instructors who use VR, AR, and AI in the classroom, we need to see a transition away from upskilling training to "always-skilling," as these technologies become more commonplace. Teachers must always be prepared to use the most up-to-date learning platforms in seamless and effective ways when new ones arise to enhance both the delivery and evaluation of education.

During the epidemic, it became clear that the blurred barriers between our real and online lives had a significant influence on our mental health. For the first time, educational institutions are making mindful living and mental wellbeing a priority as they build curricula for students of all ages and levels. The importance of mental well-being in achieving successful educational achievements will only grow as new educational approaches that seek to make mental well-being a part of everyday life gain traction. If we don't change our ways, we'll never be able to keep up with the pace of change that is taking place in the education sector, which is at an inflection point.

New Reforms and Challenges

According to NEP 2020 and EQUIP, a five-year education plan launched in 2019, the Indian government is taking action on the tertiary sector's difficulties and steering it in a new direction. NEP's primary reforms, in addition to teacher education programmes and the introduction of 4-year degrees and more flexible routes, include the following:

Postsecondary education enrollment rates should be increased significantly—up to 50% from the existing 26.3 percent. GER should reach at least 50% by 2035, according to the proposed national strategy, whereas EQUIP aspires for a 2x GER by 2024, up to a total of 52%. Over a ten-year period, increasing public education spending from 10% to 20% of total government spending. Making research

universities and colleges distinct from each other in order to eliminate the affiliation model, consolidate institutions into broader interdisciplinary education and research institutions, and increase the autonomy of the finest universities. It is necessary to create a worldwide academic network that will allow India's scientists and entrepreneurs to tap into a larger pool of global talent, allowing the country to better use its current academic resources while also speeding up the pace of quality improvement.

Foreign academics might be used to help boost India's academic and research competitiveness by creating a Scheme for Promoting Academic and Research Collaboration. Continue and develop the current Institutions of Excellence (IoE) initiative, which aims to create world-class teaching and research institutions.. Each year, the world's top 100 universities and colleges are determined by identifying 10 public and 10 private schools as world-class. It is hoped that the IoE accreditation would provide these institutions more latitude to set fees and course formats and create their own governing bodies. Maintaining the Leadership for Academicians Program, which was started in 2019 and offers training for academic and administrative leaders in conjunction with chosen international institutions. Consolidation and restructuring of the system in order to ensure that all institutions have at least 3,000 students Due to disagreements over terminology and claims that state powers are being disregarded, the NEP 2020 has yet to be implemented in some Indian states. According to Changing Higher Education in India, a 2022 higher education treatise that contains a review of the implementation of NEP 2020 reforms, some states are close to attaining their goal GERs, while others trail far behind. Some argue that increased financing is essential, but there is no evidence that this will happen. An rise of about 3 percent in education expenditures as a proportion of GDP was indicated in India's Economic Survey 2021–22, however all sources contacted were doubtful of a significant increase in spending on higher education.



Public and Private Universities

According to the AISHE 2019–20 report, private institutions in India account for 78.6 percent of overall enrolment. In spite of the fact that private institutions have accounted for the majority of the development in Indian higher education capacity, the quality has been inconsistent. The Times of India reports that the All India Council for Technical Education has put an embargo on the licencing of new engineering institutions due to a lack of students in the nation. The National Endowment for the People's (NEP) task list includes this: Smaller colleges with fewer students need to be eliminated from the system.

Structural Difficulties

The NEP seeks to solve the unique problems that arise as a result of the current design of India's higher education system. The public universities are at the heart of the system. Numerous smaller, frequently private universities, often of lower renown and calibre, are affiliated with the majority of them. While many Indian colleges are older than their university affiliations, "of 40,000 institutions, most are reliant on a mother university for their frameworks and other things," says Mathews. I think that's a major obstacle to go over. A former vice provost for global strategy and international affairs at The Ohio State University (OSU) from 2009 to 2016, William Brustein, is now interim head of the Global Studies Center at the University of Pittsburgh, where he launched U.S.-India mobility initiatives. "Their professors are underpaid and sometimes work two or three jobs to make ends meet. They don't have the time to do research, and their classrooms lack the equipment that you'd find in China," Indian state Uttar Pradesh's BHU is an example of a public entity that is stretched too thin. An Institution of Eminence will be acknowledged for its excellence in 2020, which was founded with strong national support in 1916 and an ambitious mission that required significant resources. Located on a 1,300-acre campus, it includes a residential university, a women's college, the Institute of Medical Sciences, and the Institute of Technology, which was recently established as

an independent college. BHU, on the other hand, has had difficulties in recent years. Students and teachers have faced several administrative and academic problems due to the wide range of courses offered, as well as the big campus and quantity of students.

For the NEP, one option to solve these problems is by moving away from the affiliation model and creating a new system of academic institutions including research universities as well as educational establishments. Merging institutions will generate bigger, more diverse, and more autonomous educational and research organisations.

Introducing New Approaches

The most prevalent degree in India is a three-year degree in the arts, commerce, and sciences. And old-fashioned teaching methods like rote memorization are still in use. When I was a professor at a college associated with Calcutta University, Mousumi Mukherjee notes that the teaching reality of many academics in India at colleges linked with public institutions still mirrors her own early career experience as a lecturer at the University of Kolkata.

An administrative body remote from her school dictated that she and other instructors must follow a predetermined syllabus in the classroom, "whether or whether the pupils were truly capable of understanding it," she claims. It was during my Fulbright teaching fellowship that I had to relearn all I had learnt about teaching throughout my previous professional experience. "

The NEP 2020, on the other hand, has established 4-year undergraduate degrees with different entrance and departure points, as well. Increased credit transfers across institutions and programmes are also a goal of the strategy. An academic credit bank that allows students to transfer credits from one university to another will be one of the NEP's new efforts in this area. A draught framework and credit system for the four-year undergraduate programme proposed by the UGC argues for a multidisciplinary and comprehensive education that emphasises conceptual knowledge, creativity, and critical thinking. As a result of more flexibility,



stakeholders intend to lower dropout rates and promote degree completion. There is a growing trend in India toward a liberal arts education and a more open-minded way of thinking.

Conclusion

Many variables influence whether or not inclusive education is a success in any given setting. Pupils' success in school and teacher preparation programmes is dependent on the quality of the educators who educate those students. All stakeholders must work together to ensure that teachers are equipped with the information and skills necessary for inclusive education. Many of the obstacles to comprehensive and effective implementation of inclusion have been noted in the literature. When general schools are not well prepared, inclusion will not provide desirable outcomes. Concerns about school facilities, curricular changes, and educational resources must be addressed. Constructing the necessary infrastructure for inclusive education must begin at the local level, with community engagement and mobilisation being key components. For these reasons and more, it can be concluded that the inclusion of children with disabilities in the educational process is a difficult task that requires a large-scale community mobilisation as well as appropriate responses to the wide spectrum of learning needs of special children in both formal and non-formal settings. In order to develop an inclusive educational environment, we must overcome a number of educational systemic impediments and problems. Despite the fact that effective tactics and other means may be used to achieve success in inclusive education in the country, there are still certain concerns and obstacles that must be handled with care. It is essential that all educational programmes include training for teachers, as well as the retention of special needs students, in order to ensure proper inclusion. To make the inclusive education programme a success, more high-quality resources, faculty, and facilities must be provided to each school.

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