



Education: Achievements & Challenges

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Abstract:

Higher education in India has expanded very rapidly in the later half of the twentieth century. India's higher educational system is the third largest in the world, after China and United States. However, India continues to face stern challenges. Despite its remarkable progress in some specific fields of education, 25% of its population is still illiterate. Only 15% of Indian students reach high school, and just 7% graduate. 25% of teaching posts are vacated, and 57% of college teachers lack Ph.D. degree. There are a few universities which have been founded with the sole objective of making easy money. Misrepresentations and malpractices are rampant in higher education. The purity and sacred atmosphere of campuses is often polluted by politics and politicians. The quality of university education has steadily declined and the increasingly large proportions of graduates are unable to find employment.

By 2001 literacy for women had exceeded 50% of the overall female population. These statistics are still very low compared to world standards and even male literacy in India. There is a large disparity between female literacy rates in different states. Studies show that a lower level of women literacy rates results in higher levels of fertility and infant mortality, poorer nutrition.

Coming decades are likely to see continuing development and change in education. The teacher must adjust to new developments in educational technology. In all countries there are evidences of radical change in the structure of ideas and assumptions that will surely affect education. But it is unlikely that coming decades will see the introduction of any comprehensive pedagogical system resembling those of the 19th century. No single theory of learning or teaching is likely to satisfy the diversity of individual needs and societal arrangements.

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1. Introduction

Every modern state is striving to create an educational system that promotes economic growth and provides equal educational opportunities. Higher education in India has expanded very rapidly in the later half of the twentieth century. The major issues that we face are the quality and the relevance of education with specific reference to the changing socio-economic milieu. By and large our educational pattern is still influenced by the 19th century British oriented education.

The educational scene in India is so varied from state to state that it is difficult to prescribe a common homogeneous model of education throughout India. In spite of a few drawbacks the present India owes a lot to the beneficial contribution of education. Education is a complex issue and its relevance to the changing time needs to be addressed carefully. India has changed at multi level within the last five decades. It's a time to re think about the present day education system.

2. Expansion of Education

There has been remarkable improvement in scientific and technological **education** and research. India's higher educational system is the third largest in the world, after China and United States. As of 2009, India has 20 central universities, 215 state universities, 100 deemed universities. Other institutions include 16000 colleges, including 1800 exclusive women's colleges. Distance learning is also a part of the Indian higher educational system. However, India continues to face stern challenges. Despite its remarkable progress in some specific fields of education, 25% of its population is still illiterate. Only 15% of Indian students reach high school, and just 7% graduate. 25% of teaching posts are vacated, and 57% of college teachers lack PhD degree.

3. Qualitative Decline

As of 2011, there are 1522 engineering colleges in India with an annual student intake of 582000, plus 1244 polytechnics with an intake of 265000. However, these institutions face shortage of faculty and the quality of education is also a matter of doubt. Some institutions of India, such as the Indian Institutes of Technology (IIT), have maintained high level of standard in engineering. Their contribution to both the growth of the private sector and the public sector is noteworthy. But the IIT's contribution to fundamental scientific research and innovation is not significant. Some other institutes are known for their fundamental research in basic sciences and mathematics such as the Indian Association for the Cultivation of Science (IACS), Indian Institute of Science (IISc), and Tata Institute of Fundamental Research (TIFR). In spite of such handful prestigious institutes, India has not been able to produce world class universities.

4. A Few Good Models

Three Indian universities were listed in the Times Higher Education list of the world's top 200 universities-Indian Institutes of Technology, Indian Institutes of Management, and Jawaharlal Nehru University in 2005 and 2006. Six Indian Institutes of Technology and the Birla Institutes of Technology and Science-Pilani were listed among the top 20 science and technology schools in Asia by Asiaweek. The Indian School of Business situated in Hyderabad was ranked number 12 in global MBA rankings by the Financial Times. The All India Institute of Medical Sciences has been recognized as a global leader in medical research and treatment.

5. Rampant Malpractices

There are a few universities which have been founded with the sole objective of making easy money. Regulatory authorities like UGC and AICTE have been trying very hard to extirpate such danger of private universities. Such universities are running course without any affiliation or recognition. Many private colleges and universities do not fulfill the required criterion by the Government and central bodies (UGC, AICTE, MCI, etc). They mislead many students. Misrepresentations and malpractices are rampant in higher education. The purity and sacred atmosphere of campuses is often polluted by politics and politicians.

6. Present Scenario

The examination and certificate roles of the university have come to dominate all other roles. The situation has gone so far that sometimes examinations are held without completing the courses. In some institutes copying in the examination is resorted to on a large scale. Our standards are not trustworthy. Students are involved in extension work which lacks international quality. The syllabus, equipments, teacher ratio, even examination papers or results does not verify the high quality of education. The public confidence in many of the institutes is at lower ebb. It is generally agreed that people do not learn simply by being told, or lectured to-for learning they must participate in the process by reading for themselves and by undertaking inquires. The quality issue in higher education is in the doldrums. We are confronted with declining standards in HE system. Despite many seminars, workshops, Orientation and Refresher Courses the standard of quality and efficiency is not satisfactory.

6. Women's Share in Education

Inequalities remain in such areas as rural and urban access to education and women's education. Although female school enrollment ratios have risen throughout the country, they remain considerably lower than male ratios. Moreover, at the **higher** levels of education, the percentage of women students becomes progressively lower. India has made strenuous efforts to overcome the economic and cultural factors that limit women's education, but the experience demonstrates how difficult it is to do so. Far fewer girls are enrolled in the schools, and many of them drop out. According to a 1998 report by U S Department of Commerce, the chief barrier to female education in India are inadequate school facilities such as sanitary facilities, shortage of female teachers and gender bias in curriculum(majority of the female characters being depicted as weak and helpless). Conservative cultural attitudes, especially among Muslims, prevent some girls from attending school.

7. Incentives for Women's Education

The number of literate women among the female population of India was between 2-6% from the British Raj onwards to the formation of the Republic of India in 1947. Concerted efforts led to the improvement from 15.3% in 1961 to 28.5% in 1981. By 2001 literacy for women had exceeded 50% of the overall female population. These statistics are still very low compared to world standards and even male literacy in India. Recently the Indian government has launched Saakshar Bharat Mission for Female Literacy. This mission aims to bring down female illiteracy by half of its present level. The Government tries to provide incentives for girls' education through programs like midday meals, free books, uniforms, relief in tuition fees and free travelling to attend colleges in the state like Gujarat.

8. Female Literacy Rates

There is a large disparity between female literacy rates in different states. Kerala has a female literacy rate of about 86 percent while Bihar and Utter Pradesh have female literacy rates around 55-60 percent. These values are further reflected in the health levels of citizens. Kerala was found with the lowest infant mortality rate while Bihar and Utter Pradesh are the states with the lowest life expectations in India. Moreover the disparity of female literacy rates across rural and urban areas is also wide in India. The state of Rajasthan has a female literacy rate of less than 12 percent.

9. Need for Female Education

The education of women in India plays a significant role in improving living standards in the country. A higher women literacy rate improves the quality of life both at home and outside home by encouraging and promoting education of children, especially female children. It reduces the infant mortality rate. Studies show that a lower level of women literacy rates results in higher levels of fertility and infant mortality, poorer nutrition, lower earning potential and the lack of an ability to make decisions within a household. Lower level of education in women adversely affects the health and living conditions of children. Infant mortality rate was inversely related to female literacy rate and educational level. There is also a correlation between education and economic growth. We must be conscious of the dangers that threaten to widen the education gap between the educated and the uneducated. UN statistics reveal that in some regions of the world, boys receive more calories and vitamins than girls and fewer girls than boys live past adolescence. The education columns of these statistical compendiums reveal that fewer girls than boys enroll in secondary schools and that this gap has increased by graduation. The narrowing of gaps--within as well as between countries--must be our goal.

10. Unemployment

Numerous key universities, institutes of technology, and other specialized institutions of **higher** education are under union government control, while a much larger number of universities are controlled by the state governments. A disproportionate share of India's total educational budget goes toward **higher** education. The number of universities and equivalent institutions increased but at the same time, funding for libraries, laboratories, and other facilities has been a constant and serious problem. Critics of the unabated growth of **higher education** have asserted that the quality of university education has steadily declined and have noted the increasingly large proportion of graduates who are unable to find employment, especially among those with liberal-arts degrees.

11. Social Discrepancies

In the past, virtually all **higher** instruction was in English, but as new universities and their thousands of affiliated colleges spread out to smaller cities and towns, state languages increasingly has been used, notwithstanding the paucity of textbooks in such languages. Reserved quotas in universities and lower admission standards for members of scheduled castes whose prior **education** often has been less than adequate has put additional stress on the system. The fact that India's best students often take their **higher** degrees abroad, many never to return, further exacerbates the problem of quality. Nevertheless, elite institutions continue to exist, and, in absolute terms, the output of well-educated individuals is substantial.

12. 20th Century Challenges

International wars, together with an intensification of internal stresses and conflicts among social, racial, and ideological groups, have characterized the 20th century and have had profound effects on education. Rapidly spreading prosperity but widening gaps between rich and poor, immense increases in population, the growth of large-scale industry and its dependence on science and technological advancement, are changes that have had far-reaching effects. Challenges to accepted values, including those supported by religion; changes in social relations, and an explosion of knowledge affecting paradigms as well as particular information mark a

century of social and political swings, always toward a more dynamic and less categorical resolution. As new independent nations emerged in Africa and Asia and the needs and powers of a "third world" caused a shift in international thinking, education was seen to be both an instrument of national development and a means of crossing national and cultural barriers. One consequence of this has been a great increase in the quantity of education provided.

13. Technical Education Vs Traditional Education

New methods, processes, and machines are continually introduced. Old skills become irrelevant; new industries spring up. In addition, the amount of scientific, as distinct from merely technical, knowledge grows continually. More and more researchers, skilled workers, and high-level professionals are called for. The processing of information has undergone revolutionary change. The educational response has mainly been to develop technical colleges. But ethical or moral education is neglected and if this condition persists for a longer time, it might erode or wipe out age old traditional values.

14. Search for New Teaching Contents

The adoption of modern methods of food production has diminished the need for agricultural workers, who have headed for the cities. Urbanization, however, brings problems. There is a trend toward violence. The poor have outnumbered the well to do. It becomes difficult to provide adequate education to all and sundry. The radical change to large numbers of disrupted families, where the norm is a single working parent, affects the urban poor extensively but in all cases raises an expectation of additional school services. Differences in family background, together with the cultural mix partly occasioned by change of immigration patterns, requires teaching behaviour and content appropriate to a more heterogeneous school population.

15. New Emerging Factors

Coming decades are likely to see continuing development and change in education. The teacher must adjust to new developments in educational technology, the growth of human knowledge, and the problem of creating a relevant and appropriate curriculum from the enormous range of material available. There will be new understanding of how children develop and learn. The patterns of authority in society will continue to change, and it is likely that there will be a greater recognition of the importance of moral and personal education in a world of pluralistic values and goals. All these factors will affect the ways in which students are educated and trained. In all countries there are evidences of radical change in the structure of ideas and assumptions that will surely affect education. But it is unlikely that coming decades will see the introduction of any comprehensive pedagogical system resembling those of the 19th century. No single theory of learning or teaching is likely to satisfy the diversity of individual needs and societal arrangements,

16. Conclusion

“The 20th century has been called the century of extremes, one in which human vices reached unfathomable depths--the century of dictators and torture, the Holocaust, ethnic cleansing in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the bombings of Pearl Harbor and Hiroshima. It was, however, also a century of great progress. Many countries experienced unprecedented economic and educational growth. “By the turn of the century, almost one-half of humanity will live in urban

areas. A failure to manage the urban infrastructure will lead to further mushrooming of settlements having insufficient access to essential facilities such as clean water, sanitation, food supplies, transportation, **education**, health care, and other public services.” “The greatest profits to society will not come from playing the stock market or downsizing the microchip. The greater good is in devising optimal solutions to problems plaguing the environment, public health, and **education** and in harnessing the very best of human energies.”

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