THE EDUCATION SYSTEM IN INDIA: OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

Zahid Hussain Bhat, Cluster University Srinagar, J&K, India
Nuzhat Saba, University of Kashmir, Srinagar, J&K, India

ABSTRACT

The education system is critical in building a strong and prosperous nation. A nation's economy is linked directly to the quality of its education system. India, with a population of over 1.3 billion people, has the third-largest education system in the world. Since gaining independence, the country has made significant progress in education. Despite these gains, the Indian education system faces numerous challenges. One of the most significant challenges is in the field of higher education. The lack of adequate resources and infrastructure, insufficient faculty, and outdated curriculum are some of the critical issues that plague the Indian higher education system. While the Indian education system faces significant challenges, it also has ample opportunities for growth and improvement. By prioritizing transparency and accountability, adopting new technologies in academic and research settings, and investing in research and development, the Indian education system can be transformed into a world-class system that will contribute significantly to economic growth and prosperity. Furthermore, ensuring that all segments of society have access to quality education is essential to building a solid and inclusive nation. This paper examines the challenges and explores the opportunities for enhancing India's higher education system.

Keywords: Higher education; Technology; Transparency; Accountability; Academia.

INTRODUCTION

The vision of higher education is to fully develop a country's human resources potential with equity and inclusion. In recent years, India's higher education sector has experienced tremendous growth in many areas, such as institutional capacity, enrolment, and teacher-student ratio. However, this rapid expansion has also brought several issues related to equity, efficiency, excellence, and access to higher education in the country. Education has been highly valued in Indian society since ancient times, with the "gurukul" education system being the earliest known method of transmitting knowledge. In this system, students lived with their teacher and learned specialized subjects, essential life skills, and values. While this system still exists today, it is only a tiny part of the overall education landscape in India.

Throughout history, India has had many esteemed institutions of higher learning, such as Nalanda, Takshshila, and Vikramshila, which attracted students worldwide and served as centres of philosophical, scientific, and social education. However, the decline of these institutions occurred due to invasions and changes in the ruling structure of various kingdoms and princely states. During the period of British colonization, the education system in India underwent a significant transformation with the introduction of a new framework for education. After India gained independence, leaders recognized the importance of education in promoting social and economic development. As a result, they instituted policies and created organizations to support the education sector, helping India to establish itself as a centre of knowledge and innovation on the global stage.

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India is currently at a turning point in its history, with a population of over 500 million young people representing a significant opportunity for growth in the education sector. As the country with the world's largest population of young people, India has not lost sight of the potential of its "demographic dividend," Its leaders and intellectuals continue to prioritize education. India also has the largest English-speaking population in the world, which facilitates communication and interaction with the global community. The country is ranked 34th out of 100 on the English Proficiency Index 2019. The education system in India caters to over 250 million students in schools, with a network of higher education institutions that is continuously expanding. In FY19, there were approximately 39,931 colleges and 993 universities, with over 37.4 million students enrolled in higher education and a Gross Enrollment Ratio of around 26.3 per cent.

Given the importance of the education sector for the country's development, it is not surprising that the Government of India has prioritized it. The National Education Policy 2020 focuses on school and higher education, with a framework built around access, equity, quality, affordability, and accountability. This policy also aligns with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Higher education plays a significant role in various domains, including supplying labour for industrial, economic, and societal needs, contributing research to the knowledge economy, enhancing participation in civil society, addressing significant inequality of income and opportunity, and promoting the empowerment of women and minorities. Studies have shown that investing in human capital positively impacts economic growth, and the social and economic returns from such investments are as significant as those from physical capital.

Furthermore, raising skill levels leads to better jobs and higher salaries—education quality matters. Universities are crucial channels for the flow of knowledge in the economy and society, serving as both drivers and channels. They also play vital roles as labour suppliers, purchasers of goods and services, centres of excellence, and cultural and economic hubs.

Despite the significant contributions of private unaided colleges and universities in meeting the demand for higher education, their widespread growth has resulted in poor-quality systems. This paper provides an overview of the structure and salient features of India's higher education sector and aims to improve understanding of its growth patterns and the opportunities and challenges it faces. It is essential to examine the opportunities and challenges to the system under consideration to understand better the scenario in the country's higher education system.

It must be noted at the outset that the existing, contemporary Indian higher education system manifests two distinct legacies. The British enforced a system of rote learning and associated colleges, in many ways overturning India's ancient learning system based on the oral tradition and close-knit learning and teaching about life and philosophy between pupil and guru. According to Tharoor and others, British rule was intended to submit Indian Higher Education (and the entire innovation system) to British interests, primarily through English as the language of education (Altbach, 2014; Tharoor, 2016). Tharoor states, citing Lord Mcaculey about teaching English, that "it was also intended to teach a minority of Indians to constitute a class of interpreters between us and the millions we control" (Tharoor, 2016). The second legacy the current Indian Higher Education system must contend with is the post-independence era, in which authorities centralized and determined economic and social development patterns through five-year plans and other initiatives. Including the establishment of elite public institutions to meet national needs in research and technology, thereby rendering universities primarily as teaching rather than research bodies, with notable

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exceptions to the Indian Institute of Science and the Indian Institute of Technology (Altbach, 2014). It also meant that research bodies in the public domain were governed by national development parameters rather than market forces and entrepreneur demands.

During the colonial era in India, education was deliberately left off the development agenda, and the universities founded then were modelled after the University of London and served as affiliating, examining, and regulatory authorities. Thus, the structures of the educational system in independent India were insufficient to create the human capital essential for self-sufficient socio-economic development. To remove the infirmities of these inherited structures, the Radhakrishnan Commission (1948–49) and the Kothari Commission (1964–66) were appointed, and their reports served as the foundation for the New Education Policy (1986) and Program of Action (1992), which had broad objectives such as increasing student enrollment, ensuring equal access for all, ensuring quality education, and promoting the relevance of education.

Inadequate infrastructure and facilities, largely vacant faculty positions, a low student enrollment rate, i.e., a gross enrollment ratio that is very low compared to other countries, obsolete teaching methods, declining research standards, overcrowded classrooms, and widespread geographic, ethnic, and socio-economic imbalances are the fundamental problems facing higher education in the country. In response to the social need for empowerment and capacity building through postsecondary education, the number of higher education institutions in India has increased along with the number of students enrolled. Nonetheless, the country has yet to experience growth in terms of quality improvement. Instead of imparting skills, many higher education institutions in the country have become exam centres.

The continuing connected system of Universities and Colleges is a specific cause of anxiety. Under this structure, the University is responsible for awarding degrees, establishing curricula and administering examinations, whereas Colleges implement these directives. According to many, the ‘dead hand’ approach has led to a lack of autonomy, creativity and innovation at the College level and in a manner that does not meet local demands and conditions. For Universities, cumbersome administrative monitoring of Colleges diverts resources from research and other academic efforts, and the affiliation fees that Colleges give enable rent-seeking on the part of Universities (Government of India (a) 2013, Kapur and Mehta 2017).

The following precise objectives are established to provide this macro-level analysis:

To evaluate the status of India’s higher education system.

To emphasize the potential and obstacles facing the Indian higher education system.

To provide solutions to the difficulties affecting higher education in India.

METHODOLOGY

This paper is a descriptive macro-level analysis based on secondary data collected from public and unpublished records, reports, and contributions by several institutions, organizations, and individuals throughout India. In particular, the secondary sources include the Annual Reports of the UGC, the Planning Commission, the Education Department of the Ministry of Human Resource Development, the Economic Survey, and various periodicals, books, and websites. Owing to sampling and dimensional study restrictions created by secondary data, this study is only a macro-analysis of the nation’s higher education system.

Higher Education in India

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India is among the world's first civilizations. It has a highly developed higher education system and is the third largest in the world after China and the United States. Higher Education in India refers to education received after 12 years of elementary and secondary education. Higher education in India is primarily a public sector activity viewed as a public utility where the Federal Government leads in formulating and implementing educational policies and action plans. The University Grants Commission is the primary governing body, enforces its standards, and provides the government with advice and suggestions.

The primary institutions of higher education in India are universities and affiliated colleges. The institutional framework consists of Universities established by an Act of Parliament (Central Universities) or of a State Legislature (State Universities), Deemed Universities (institutions accorded the status of a university with authority to award their degrees through central government notification), Institutes of National Importance (prestigious institutions granted the status as mentioned earlier by Parliament), and Institutions established by State Legislative Acts (both government-aided and unaided).

General, vocational, professional, and technical education are the types of education that are provided. The All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) governs engineering/technology, architecture, hotel management and catering technology, management studies, computer applications, and applied arts institutes in India. Technical education includes 65 institutions funded by the Central Government, including the Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs), Indian Institutes of Management (IIMs), Indian Institute of Science (IISc), and National Institutes of Technology (NITs), as well as numerous engineering colleges established by State Governments.

In India, another path of higher education is Vocational education. A network of governmental and private polytechnics and vocational schools exists for this purpose. They are governed and overseen by Councils specializing in their particular disciplines. The Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) was the pioneer of distance education and the creator of the Open University system. There are currently fourteen open universities. The Distance Education Council of India (DEC) in New Delhi monitors and maintains the standards for these universities. The distance mode of education enabled by new information and communication technology (ICT) has accelerated the growth of the higher education sector, as it is 66% less expensive and does not need students to leave their homes or jobs. Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) has just joined the field of Open Learning. India has initiated numerous MOOC course delivery initiatives. The available platforms are NPTEL, MOOC KIT, IITBX, and SWAYAM.

With the aid of accreditation institutions formed for this purpose, the quality of the educational process in the higher education sector is evaluated and maintained. The National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC), established by the UGC in 1994, accredits universities and colleges in general education. A similar function is performed by the National Board of Accreditation (NBA), established by the AICTE in 1994, and by the Accreditation Board (AB), established by the ICAR in 1996.

The National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) has suggested that the India Education Index (IEI) rates institutions based on academic, research, and other characteristics. NAAC has engaged in a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the higher education institutions of the United States, Taiwan, Norway, and Kuwait, as well as the Commonwealth of Learning (COL), to facilitate joint work on quality assurance in higher education institutions.

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Opportunities in Higher Education

India has become a global leader in the information economy. It provides education, training, and research facilities in all fields of study, including arts, sciences, humanities, mathematics, management, engineering, medicine, agriculture, law, linguistics, and communication. The education system has enormous potential to eradicate poverty and income inequality. Studies have demonstrated the existence of a correlation between enrollment and economic disparities. When enrollments in higher education are low, income disparities are significant, and vice versa. Higher education benefits individuals because it gives them the abilities necessary to adapt to the continually changing demands of the labour market. It empowers people to obtain better employment, more enormous salaries, and a greater inclination to consume and save. Overall, investment in higher education increases the workforce, which may be exchanged for more significant salaries. India is not an exception; a country that provides educational opportunities for its residents is much more likely to decrease poverty, encourage economic progress, and achieve social inclusion.

Challenges in Higher Education

Providing access to expanding portions of the population requiring postsecondary education is one of India's most significant obstacles to higher education. According to government figures, one in seven youngsters in India attends college. It demonstrates that the nation suffers from a severe quantity and quality problem regarding higher education. Next, equity presents a more incredible difficulty than access to higher education. Traditionally, equity has been a primary priority for India's planners. The gap is attributed to the urban-rural divide, income inequality, gender and religion, etc. The geographical distribution of higher education institutions remains significantly skewed, with a large concentration in major metropolitan areas. From 2007 to 2012, the overall institution density increased from 10 to 14 per 1000 square kilometres.

Meanwhile, many habitations and clusters of settlements with populations between 10,000 and 100,000 lack nearby higher education institutions. In addition, the higher education industry suffers from uneven national growth. Rural areas, which account for around 65 per cent of the overall population, have only 20 per cent of all professional colleges. The Indian higher education system faces numerous obstacles. Many are explored in detail below Table 1.

Table 1
INSTITUTIONAL AND ENROLLMENT GROWTH FROM 2011-12 TO 2015-16

	Enrollment Growth	**Institutional Growth**
Public Universities (National and State Universities)	17.60%	14.80%
Private Universities	39.10%	37.30%
Public Colleges	37.20%	29.00%
Private Colleges	70.40%	62.70%

Source: All India Survey of Higher Education (AISHE)

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Development of the System

The system has witnessed a significant expansion of institutional structures, particularly colleges. Higher Education enrollment has increased by 18.5% between 2011-2012 and 2015-2016, compared to the overall institutional growth rate of 15.8%. This, however, conceals some crucial aspects.

It is evident from this table that the system is in a rapid expansion phase (with 35 million enrollments, it is one of the largest in the world) as it has been for the past decade and beyond (Ernst and Young 2012, Price Waterhouse Coopers 2012). The enormous shift in enrollment makeup and institutional growth towards privatization also characterizes it. In addition to Table 1, there was a 7% increase in standalone institutions (diploma-granting institutions) between 2011-12 and 2015-16, with more than 75% of these schools owned privately. Nonetheless, this development has significant ramifications. Government of India (b) 2016, Kapur and Mehta (2017), and Government of India (b) 2016) have written extensively on the proliferation of private Institutions and Colleges, including in professional and technical fields, which are frequently unregulated, of poor quality, and established rapidly solely as money-making devices with excessive government support.

The rapid expansion of colleges has also resulted in problems such as the inability to hire professors due to a 40% faculty shortage (Government of India, 2016b). This is also related to red tape, hiring restrictions, low teacher training standards, and the allure of higher-paying jobs in other industries. It has also resulted in the dispersion of resources over the entire system, resulting in a lack of critical mass. The expansion of schools has evident ramifications for capacity utilization, availability of appropriately qualified professors, and return on investment rates. From 2011-12 to 2015-16, enrolment per college went from 721 to 723, although the average number of colleges per lakh people (ages 18-23) rose to 26. Hence, it appears that, in response to the requirement to serve a growing tertiary education population, the emphasis has been placed on expanding the number of institutions rather than improving capacity utilization. When opening new institutions, “ribbon cutting” ceremonies have been favoured. The Planning Commission also cites an inadequate geographical distribution of institutions, with considerable concentrations in major metropolitan areas. The Government of India (2012) reveals that a considerable percentage of regions with populations between 10,000 and fewer than 100,000 lacked proximity to institutions. Similar disparities exist when comparing colleges per one million inhabitants. 62.7 per cent of colleges, according to the All India Survey of Higher Education (AISHE), have fewer than 500 students (AISHE, 2015-16). What is lacking is a detailed system design that links student growth with facilities, potential consolidation of existing institutions to achieve the size and critical mass, and achieving a balance between online infrastructure (which is not capital-expensive) and physical infrastructure.

Bureaucracy in the system

The increased bureaucracy in the system is an additional factor that poses a difficulty for higher education in India.

While the student-to-teacher ratio has stayed relatively stable or improved over the past five years (although it decreased in 2013-14), the professional staff-to-teacher ratio has continuously risen, suggesting that the system has become more “bureaucratized.” Administration resources have been increasingly diverted away from instruction and research in favour of the administration Table 2.

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Table 2 GROWING BUREAUCRACY					
	2011-12	**2012-13**	**2013-14**	**2014-15**	**2015-16**
Professional staff/teacher ratio	0.64	0.69	0.72	0.74	0.74
Pupil/Teacher	23.4	23.0	23.6	23.2	22.8

Source: All India Survey of Higher Education (AISHE)

Private and public roles

While private sector expansion has supported the growth of institutions and enrollment, private provision and consumption have a distinct role alongside an articulated and implemented governmental function. Higher education possesses characteristics of mixed goods. On the one hand, externalities connected with research, information gaps for students, risk and uncertainty regarding unknown future returns from investment in education and training, capital market imperfections, and equity and access concerns necessitate a vital public role (Chowdry 2009). Individual graduates get a substantial private advantage through salary and other payments from their higher education, whilst private provision can offer the system much-needed capital, management expertise, and innovation. There should be a balanced public and private participation structure in which the two sectors coexist, complement one another, and sometimes even collaborate Table 3.

Table 3 INITIAL GOVERNMENT FUNDING TERTIARY PER STUDENT ($)		
Country	**2010**	**2015**
India	788.40	711.40
Australia	11101.10	13838.30
Bangladesh	151.40	202.40
Brazil	3122.50	3561.50
Chile	2056.50	2499.70
Germany	17641.30	17515.60
Japan	9968.60	9951.20
Malaysia	4111.20	4918.80
Pakistan	941.50	788.50
Republic of Korea	2232.10	4472.60
Russian Federation	1666.90	2202.90
Sri Lanka	522.00	1054.90
Thailand	814.20	1120.90
UK	9092.80	16127.30
US	9813.96	14842.50

Source: UNESCO

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The public sector can have a multifaceted and variable role in education, including providing education through public institutions, subsidized support for institutions and students, appropriate regulatory monitoring, and providing information to students regarding their study options. In India, the public sector is decreasing involvement in Higher Education expenditures. India, Pakistan, and, to a lesser extent, Germany are the only 16 countries against whom India has experienced a decline in government funding per student during the past five years. The second thing to note is that India ranks significantly lower in both years than most benchmark nations. Thirdly, India falls behind its natural counterparts in the BRIC nations (except for China, for which we lack statistics) and is worrisomely behind Sri Lanka in 2015 and other emerging nations in Malaysia and Thailand, while Bangladesh trails considerably behind.

India performs worse on these metrics than countries with GDP levels many times lower than its own. In India's situation, it appears to be less about its ability to pay and more about its willingness, competence, and preparation. The subject of the total allocation of resources to Higher Education is broader. According to Universitas 21, India ranks 38th out of 50 countries in terms of total resources devoted to higher education, while India scores better when economic development is considered (Universitas 21, 2017).

The private sector has increasingly picked up the slack, including at all levels of education. Private expenditures on higher education have nearly tripled in the past six years. Other nations mostly unmatch the expansion of education privatization in India.

Diversity and quality

Modern systems require diversity in higher education. It allows for more excellent student choices, fosters the synergies and complementarities across disciplines required for cutting-edge research, and gives the range of skills required by a complex knowledge economy. India should strive towards specialities that combine in-depth learning and expertise with a system-wide breadth. Nevertheless, India is afflicted with the "illusion of diversity." 71% of graduates are from only three fields: arts, science, and commerce, with general arts degrees accounting for more than 36% of all graduates (University Grants Commission 2015-16).

According to the University Grants Commission (UGC), despite the importance of agriculture and veterinary sciences to the Indian economy, very few students are enrolled in these fields, and the education system has to place more emphasis on vocational training (University Grants Commission 2015-16). Based on quality, around 32% of certified schools and only 9% of accredited colleges have received an A rating or above. 68% of universities and 91% of colleges are considered below mediocre. (Indian government (b) 2016) The National Assessment and Accreditation Council has not yet accredited many schools and institutions (NAAC). In an era of mass education, the Indian higher education industry faces a significant challenge in enhancing quality, which is crucial yet difficult. However, the system's actual application is limited. According to a recent poll of what matters to Indian students, the lack of practical applications in Indian courses is a common reason for wanting to study overseas, and many specialized learning areas are unavailable in India (QS (a) 2016). There are numerous reputable, high-performing, and well-managed organizations. Indian Institutes of Technology and Indian Institutes of Management, for instance, are of high calibre, although many non-profit colleges, some private postgraduate professional colleges, and more recent universities have positive characteristics (Altbach, 2014).

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Opportunity and access

Opportunity and access are essential characteristics of a modern economy. Notwithstanding gains in recent years, India maintains one of the lowest rates of Tertiary Gross Enrollment due to many economic and social variables. Gross enrollment ratios vary substantially from state to state and among socio-economic categories in society. It should be mentioned that gender distinctions are not as pronounced as once. The effectiveness of the system of reserves and affirmative action for distinct socio-economic categories is open to debate. India has a severe problem with "leaking pipes." Pre-higher enrollments are at the lowest end of the worldwide comparative set, indicating that students are not moving into tertiary education. This goes against the concept of an inclusive education system. As shown in the table below, India has the lowest Gross Enrollment Ratio in Secondary (74%) and the lowest Gross Enrollment Ratio in upper secondary (63.6%) among the benchmark set of countries, while the share of the population (above 25 years of age) with at least some secondary education is 48.7%, indicating that India is relatively poorly positioned when compared to other nations, especially BRICS and developing nations Table 4.

Table 4
GROSS ENROLLMENT RATIO TERTIARY, 2016

Country	GER
India	26.9%
Australia	90.3%
Bangladesh	13.4%
Brazil	50.6%
China	43.4%
Chile	88.6%
Germany	68.3%
Japan	63.4%
Malaysia	26.1%
Pakistan	9.9%
Republic of Korea	93.2%
Russian Federation	80.4%
Sri Lanka	19.8%
Thailand	48.9%
UK	56.5%
US	85.8%

Source: UNESCO

While dropout rates have decreased across the board, discontinuation rates have climbed and continue to be significant, particularly at the secondary and advanced secondary levels. These levels are preparatory for Higher Education. In addition, dropout rates at graduate and postgraduate levels continue to be substantial, notwithstanding a fall. Surveys on discontinuance and dropping out indicate that for both males and females of varying ages, four key and inter-related factors stand out: financial constraints on households; economic

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activities, such as working in a home business, particularly for males who may have to assume the breadwinner role; domestic activities, especially for females across all age groups; and "uninterested in education," which also appears among males and females in the lower age groups (NSSO 2014).

These numbers represent the broader characteristics of Indian society and economy. These boil down to money uncertainty in households, including precarious employment among family members, prospective education costs, and societal conditioning and custom, which continue to place a premium on young women marrying and providing domestic assistance. Concerning is the lack of desire for education among individuals. This generates questions and perceptions regarding its value and reputation. Inferences might be drawn that this education, emphasizing rote learning, assessment, and out-of-date material, may neither stimulate nor pull out the youthful population's intrinsic creative and innovative potential. Modernizing methods of instruction and income support to encourage greater involvement in education can be one solution to the problem.

Implications for practice

India's system of administration and accountability will be overhauled by eliminating the affiliation system, which has severely limited universities and their associated colleges. The shifting incentive structures, particularly loosening restrictions on fee setting. One possibility is for prices to fluctuate between the floor and ceiling (divided between public and private institutions), with market forces and competition determining the final prices. Given the current scenario, the focus of higher education policy in India should be on maintaining high standards of education while keeping pace with advancements in knowledge and technology. This requires a multi-faceted approach that includes:

1. Quality Enhancement: Strengthening quality assurance mechanisms to ensure that institutions maintain high educational standards. This includes regular accreditation, performance audits, and fostering a culture of continuous improvement.
2. Inclusive Access: Implementing targeted policies to increase enrolment among underrepresented groups, such as scholarships, financial aid, and community outreach programs.
3. Industry-Academia Collaboration: Promoting stronger collaboration between academic institutions and the industry to align curricula with market needs and enhance the employability of graduates.
4. Investment in Technology: Leveraging technology to enhance teaching and learning experiences. This includes the use of digital tools, online learning platforms, and the integration of artificial intelligence in educational methodologies.
5. Research and Innovation: Encouraging research and innovation through increased funding, infrastructure support, and fostering a research-oriented culture within institutions.
6. Regulatory Reforms: Simplifying regulatory frameworks to reduce bureaucratic hurdles and facilitate the smooth implementation of policies and initiatives.
7. Increased use of scholarships and stipends to mitigate any distributional effects of the pricing structure.
8. A reorganization of university governance through a new structure to control the entire sector, encompassing Higher Education and Vocational Education, with funding tied to the quality of outcomes and performance.
9. Let institutions, including international providers, operate profitably and build branch campuses. An infusion of foreign finance will bring new insights; management practises, pedagogical, and course offers innovation, research connections, and skills.
10. Reform pedagogy to enhance the rote system of learning with its exam-oriented emphasis. A comprehensive plan for the knowledge economy should support this. Also, it should emphasize the employability of graduates.
11. A comprehensive strategy to enhance the research capacity of the Indian Higher Education sector employing rigorous research training increased expenditure on Higher Education research, and a programme to recruit internationally renowned scholars.
12. Create new intermediary groups that link industry, research organizations, and universities through networks of researchers to collaborate on projects, facilitate the mobility of researchers, and share risk.

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13. Colleges and universities should offer job-focused courses based on society's skill-based educational requirements.
14. Essentially, students from economically disadvantaged families must receive an entirely funded education.
15. Special funding should be offered to universities and colleges in underdeveloped regions so that they can upgrade their infrastructure and foster innovation, therefore gaining international recognition.

CONCLUSIONS

This paper reveals the present state of Indian higher education. The current state of Indian higher education is marked by several critical challenges that highlight the need for substantial reforms and policy interventions. Key among these challenges are issues related to demand-supply mismatch, enrolment, and the effects of privatization. These factors collectively underscore that the higher education sector in India is not in an ideal position. One of the most pressing issues in Indian higher education is the significant demand-supply mismatch. Despite a growing number of higher education institutions, the quality and relevance of education provided often do not meet the expectations and needs of the job market. This gap results in a large number of graduates who are either unemployed or underemployed, unable to find positions that match their qualifications and skills. The mismatch not only affects individual career prospects but also has broader implications for the country's economic growth and competitiveness.

Enrolment in higher education institutions in India presents another major concern. Although there has been a steady increase in enrolment rates over the years, disparities remain. Rural areas, underprivileged communities, and women often have lower enrolment rates compared to their urban and male counterparts. These disparities reflect broader socio-economic inequalities and highlight the need for inclusive policies that ensure equitable access to higher education for all sections of society. Privatization of higher education in India has introduced both opportunities and challenges. On the one hand, private institutions have contributed to the expansion of the higher education sector and provided alternatives to government-run institutions. On the other hand, the rapid growth of private institutions has raised concerns about quality assurance, affordability, and the commercialization of education. Many private colleges and universities prioritize profit over educational excellence, leading to questions about the value and credibility of the degrees they offer.

The Indian government has undertaken several initiatives to address these issues and improve the state of higher education. Programs such as the National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF), the Rashtriya Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA), and the introduction of the New Education Policy (NEP) 2020 are steps in the right direction. These initiatives aim to enhance the quality of education, promote research and innovation, and increase access and equity.

However, despite these efforts, the initiatives have been insufficient in bringing about a transformative change. Implementation challenges, inadequate funding, and bureaucratic hurdles often impede the effectiveness of these programs. Furthermore, the rapid pace of technological advancements and the evolving demands of the global knowledge economy require a more dynamic and responsive higher education system.

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