



# "INCLUSIVE HIGHER EDUCATION IN INDIA: GLOBALIZATION AND HIGHER EDUCATION POLICY IN INDIA.

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## 1. ABSTRACT

This research paper comprehensively analyzes the impact of globalization on India's higher education system and policy since the country opened up to globalization, liberalization, and privatization in the 1990s. The study identifies key changes such as privatization, internationalization, and the technical revolution. Specifically, it discusses how the National Education Policy-2020 (NEP 2020) attempts to reshape the Indian higher education system to meet global requirements.

The paper examines the increase in enrolment during the post-globalization era and the early 21st century, analysing inclusion through the lens of gender and class. It evaluates innovative measures introduced by NEP 2020 and assesses how the higher education sector has confronted globalization within this framework. The study briefly explores the provision of quality education, opportunities for foreign university entry, and challenges arising from educational commercialization. Finally, it advocates for maintaining educational quality and equality to face global competition. The research primarily relies on secondary sources, including Government reports, UGC annual reports, All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) statistics, and academic articles.

This article aims to analyze and examine the higher education opportunities available to women and students from socially disadvantaged groups in India's higher education sector over the past two decades, based on statistics available in government reports. This research paper not only examines the various challenges faced

by the higher education sector but also attempts to provide necessary suggestions to address the challenges in this context of globalization.

- **Keywords:** Globalization, Higher Education, NEP 2020, Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER), Inclusion.

## 2. INTRODUCTION

In a general sense, inclusion means inviting those who have remained outside the system for various reasons to "come inside". Inclusive education relates to removing all barriers to learning and ensuring the participation of all learners, especially those on the margins. It is a strategic approach designed to facilitate learning success for all children (UNESCO, 2005).

Higher education is vital not only for personal development but also for the nation's economic and social progress, fostering civic consciousness and leadership qualities.

Globalization is a process, which has affected many areas of human life, one of those being education. In the twentieth century, many developing countries have experienced growth in the educational facilities available to them due to the entry of institutions from the west. Some believe that this process is an invaluable opportunity for the people of the developing countries to raise their skills and standards of education. Others fear that it is merely a modern version of cultural imperialism that will lead to the creation of a universal, ultimately western society. No human activity has remained unaffected by globalization and education is no exception. It brings education to the front lines. In the prevailing discourse, education is expected to be the major tool for incorporation into the 'knowledge society' and the technological economy. (singh, 2024)

### RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

- To analyse how globalization has impacted the higher education system of India.
- To analyse the importance of inclusive higher education in providing equal opportunities.
- To identify challenges like enrolment inequality, lack of quality, and infrastructure issues.
- To review Indian higher education policies, specifically how NEP 2020 is functioning.
- To evaluate the development of the Indian education system against international standards.
- To suggest future paths for improving equality, quality, and accessibility in higher education sector.

### RESEARCH GAP & METHODOLOGY

#### RESEARCH GAP

- Balance between Locality and Globalization: Lack of analysis on how regional languages and cultural values are being side-lined in the rush for global standards.
- Practical Implementation of NEP 2020: Limited data-based studies on infrastructure shortages in rural colleges despite the policy's global alignment.

- Digital Divide: Lack of focus on how globalization increases technical inequality among economically disadvantaged students.
- Privatization vs. Quality: Gap in research regarding the economic pressure on local government institutions due to foreign university entry.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research utilizes a Qualitative or Mixed Method approach.

- Design: Descriptive and Analytical.
- Data Collection:
  - Secondary: UGC/Ministry of Education reports, NEP 2020 documents, and international journals.
  - Primary: Interviews with experts/professors and student surveys on global education quality.
- Analysis: Information is evaluated via Content Analysis to assess the impact on quality, employment, and social justice.

## HIGHER EDUCATION IN INDIA:

As per Ministry of Education of Government of India “Higher Education is defined as the education, which is obtained after completing 12 years of schooling or equivalent and is of the duration of at least nine months (full time) or after completing 10 years of schooling and is of the duration of at least 3 years. The education may be of the nature of General, Vocational, Professional or Technical education.

The entire ecosystem of higher education in India is overseen by **University Grants Commission (UGC), and All India Council of Technical Education (AICTE)** which comes under the Ministry of Education, Government of India.

At the time of Independence of India, there were only 20 Universities and 500 Colleges in the country with 2.1 lakhs students enrolled in higher education institutions. The numbers now have increased 26 times in the case of Universities, 64 times in the case of Colleges and the students’ enrolment has gone up to 81 times in the formal system of higher education in comparison to the figures at the time of independence. (ugc, 2006)

As on 31.03.2006, 355 universities including 20 Central, 216 State, 101 Deemed Universities, and 5 Institutions established under State Legislation, 13 Institutes of National Importance and 18,064 colleges have existed in the Higher Education sector. (ugc, 2006)

As on 31.03.2011, the number of Universities had gone up to 523 universities – (43 Central, 265 State, 80 State Private, 130 Deemed to be Universities, five Institutions established under State Legislation) and 33,023 colleges in the Higher Education sector. (UGC, 2012)

As of March 31, 2024 total 1,153 universities, including 57 Central, 482 State Public, 478 State Private, and 136 Deemed universities. (UGC, 2024)

The statistics in the above Government report indicate an increase in the number of higher education institutions in India since India's independence, especially after the year 2000. It reflects the government's efforts to prepare higher education institutions to meet the demands of the growing population.

## CONCEPT OF INCLUSIVITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Higher education plays a crucial role in shaping economic development, social transformation, and the creation of knowledge societies. Universities and higher educational institutions contribute to the development of skilled human resources, innovation, and national competitiveness (Altbach, Reisberg, & Rumbley, 2009).

Inclusivity is not just about admission; it is a broad concept providing equal learning opportunities and respect regardless of background, ability, or status. It celebrates diversity across caste, religion, gender, and physical/mental abilities (UNESCO, 2020).

The inclusion of students from different social classes and foreign students in higher education in India can be ascertained by examining the statistics on enrolment of students in higher education in the last 10 years.

**Enrolment in Higher Education:** The total enrolment in Higher Education has increased to nearly 4.46 crore in 2022-23 from 3.42 crore in 2014-15, i.e., an increase of around 30.5% in the enrolment.

**Female enrolment in Higher Education:** increases to 2.18 crore (38.4% increase since 2014-15). Of the 4.46 crore students enrolled in 2022- 23. 15.5% belong to Scheduled Castes, 6.4% belong to Scheduled Tribes, 39% are from Other Backward Classes and remaining 39.1% students are from other communities.

**SC Enrolment:** Enrolment of Scheduled Caste students has increased to 69.13 lakh in 2022-23 from 66.23 lakh in 2021-22. Overall increase in SC Student enrolment since 2014- 15 is 50.1%. The enrolment of Scheduled Caste Female students has increased to 33.89 lakh in 2022-23 from 31.71 lakh in 2021-22. The overall increase in SC Female Student enrolment since 2014-15 is 61.2%.

**ST Enrolment:** In case of Scheduled Tribes students, the enrolment has increased to 28.72 lakh in 2022- 23 from 27.10 lakh in 2021-22. Overall increase in ST Student enrolment since 2014-15 is 75%. The enrolment of Scheduled Tribes Female students has increased to 14.67 lakh in 2022-23 from 7.47 lakh in 2021-22. In ST female enrolment 96.3% increase is observed since 2014-15.

**OBC Enrolment:** Enrolment of students from Other Backward Classes has increased to about 1.74 crore in 2022-23 from 1.63 crore in 2021-22. The increase in OBC Student enrolment since 2014-15 is 54.6%. Enrolment of OBC Female students has increased to 85.32 lakh in 2022-23 from 78.19 lakh in 2021- 22. Overall increase in OBC female Student enrolment since 2014-15 is 62.9%.

**Minority Enrolment:** The Minority enrolment has increased to 32.9 lakh in 2022-23 from 21.83 lakh in 2014-15 (an increase of 50.7%). Female Minority enrolment has increased 58% since 2014-15 (16.83 lakh in 2022-23 from 10.66 lakh in 2014-15.)

**Foreign Enrolment:** Total number of foreign students enrolled in higher education is 48726. The foreign students have come from 172 different countries. In 2022-23, highest share of foreign students is from Nepal (26.6%), followed by United States of America (5.8%), Bangladesh (5.6%), Nigeria (5.2%), Afghanistan (4.1%), and United Arab Emirates (3.6%). (Ministry of Education, Government of India, 2025)

## NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY- 2020

National Education Policy 2020 has been announced on 29.07.2020 after detailed consultation with stakeholders. National Education Policy 2020 envisions an education system rooted in Indian ethos that contributes directly to transforming India, that is Bharat, sustainably into an equitable and vibrant knowledge society, by providing high-quality education to all, and thereby making India a global knowledge superpower. (Ministry of Education, Government of India, 2025).

## NEP-2020 STRATEGY

Strategy of National Education Policy are as follows:

- Establishment of the National Research Foundation.
- Establishing National Mission on Foundational Literacy and Numeracy.
- Increasing GER in higher education to 50%;
- Introducing Holistic Multidisciplinary Education with multiple entry/exit option
- Introduction of Multidisciplinary Education allowing subject choice freedom.
- Single regulator for Higher Education.
- Internationalization of Education.
- Setting up of Multidisciplinary Education and Research Universities (MERUs);
- Inviting the world's top 100 universities to open campuses.
- “Light but tight” regulation by a single regulator for higher education;
- Reaffirming the integrity of faculty and institutional leadership positions through merit appointments and career progression based on teaching, research, and service;
- Integrating Skill Education.
- Introducing multiple mechanisms with checks and balances to combat and stop the commercialization of higher education.

To encourage culture of research & innovation in Indian HEIs and achieve global standards of quality, introduced regulations on Academic Collaboration between Indian & foreign HEIs along with regulations that provide Autonomous Status to colleges and guidelines for admission & supernumerary seats of international students in UG & PG in Indian HEIs. In last 10 years Indian HEIs have improved in global rankings with 46 HEIs/ Universities ranked in QS 2025 as against 13 in QS 2015. Out of this number of Indian Universities / HEIs increased in top 500 to 11 in QS 2024 as compared to 7 in QS 2015. At present, 14655 Institutions' Innovation Councils have been set up in 28 States & 8 UTs and around 113 HEIs are funded for idea development, evaluation and application labs (IDEA). UGC & AICTE have released 24 enabling regulations / guidelines / frameworks towards this end. (Ministry of Education, Government of India, 2025)

### **NEP-2020 AND INCLUSIVE HIGHER EDUCATION IN INDIA**

As per NEP-2020 the Government of India will constitute a 'Gender-Inclusion Fund' to build the nation's capacity to provide equitable quality education for all girls as well as transgender students. The fund will be available to States to implement priorities determined by the Central government critical for assisting female and transgender children in gaining access to education (such as the provisions of sanitation and toilets, bicycles, conditional cash transfers, etc.); funds will also enable States to support and scale effective community-based interventions that address local context specific barriers to female and transgender children's access to and participation in education. Similar 'Inclusion Fund' schemes shall also be developed to address analogous access issues for other SEDGs. In essence, this Policy aims to eliminate any remaining disparity in access to education (including vocational education) for children from any gender or other socio-economically disadvantaged group. (NEP-2020, 2021)

### **GLOBALIZATION AND NEP-2020**

"National Education Policy, 2020 (NEP) envisions a massive transformation in education through– "an education system rooted in Indian ethos that contributes directly to transforming India, that is Bharat, sustainably into an equitable and vibrant knowledge society, by providing high quality education to all, thereby making India a global knowledge superpower." The NEP 2020 is founded on the five guiding pillars of Access, Equity, Quality, Affordability and Accountability. It will prepare our youth to meet the diverse national and global challenges of the present and the future".-Ministry of Education, Government of India.

This policy envisions a complete overhaul and re-energising of the higher education system to overcome these challenges and thereby deliver high-quality higher education, with equity and inclusion. - (NEP-2020, 2021)

According to National Education Policy 2020- "India will be promoted as a global study destination providing premium education at affordable costs thereby helping to restore its role as a Vishwa Guru. An International Students Office at each HEI hosting foreign students will be set up to coordinate all matters relating to welcoming and supporting students arriving from abroad. Research/teaching collaborations and

faculty/student exchanges with high-quality foreign institutions will be facilitated, and relevant mutually beneficial MOUs with foreign countries will be signed. High performing Indian universities will be encouraged to set up campuses in other countries, and similarly, selected universities e.g., those from among the top 100 universities in the world will be facilitated to operate in India. A legislative framework facilitating such entry will be put in place, and such universities will be given special dispensation regarding regulatory, governance, and content norms on par with other autonomous institutions of India. Furthermore, research collaboration and student exchanges between Indian institutions and global institutions will be promoted through special efforts. Credits acquired in foreign universities will be permitted, where appropriate as per the requirements of each HEI, to be counted for the award of a degree. (NEP-2020, 2021)

## IMPACT OF GLOBALIZATION

Globalization has permeated almost all spheres of human life. The education sector is also included. As job opportunities increase as a result of globalization, it is the responsibility of the government to prepare students to the level expected by employers. In this context, the Government of India has tried to adopt the following elements under UGC regulations and NEP-2020:

- **Internationalization:** Student exchange programs and collaborations with foreign universities.
- **ICT Use:** Rise of E-learning, MOOCs, and digital libraries.
- **Foreign Institutions:** The UGC 2023 regulations allow top 500 global universities (e.g., University of Southampton, Deakin) to establish independent campuses in India, such as in Gujarat's GIFT City. (UGC, 2023)

## HIGHER EDUCATION IN INDIA: CURRENT STATUS

As a result of various initiatives by the Government of India, the higher education sector is now easily accessible to all sections of the people. The following factors reflect the gradual growth of the higher education sector in India.

- **Enrolment (GER):** According to the UGC 2023-24 report, the Gross Enrolment Ratio is 29.5%. In 2014-15 it was 24.5%. Gross Enrolment Ratio is increased 5% in last 10 years.
- **Gender Breakdown:** 28.9% for men and 30.2% for women. It reflects equal opportunities for both men and women.
- **Institutions (as of March 31, 2024):** 1,153 universities total, including 57 Central, 482 State Public, 478 State Private, and 136 Deemed universities.
- **Total Students:** Over 4.20 crore students were enrolled in various programs in 2022-23.
- **International Students:** 48,125 students from 171 nations enrolled during 2022-23. (UGC, 2023)

## CHALLENGES TO HIGHER EDUCATION IN INDIA:

**Enrolment:** The Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) of India in higher education is only 29.5% which is quite low as compared to the developed as well as, other developing countries. With the increase of enrolments at school level, the supply of higher education institutes is insufficient to meet the growing demand in the country.

**Equity:** There is no equity in GER among different sects of the society. There are regional variations too some states have high GER while as some is quite behind the national GER which reflect a significant imbalances within the higher education system.

**Quality:** Quality in higher education is a multi-dimensional, multilevel, and a dynamic concept. Ensuring quality in higher education is amongst the foremost challenges being faced in India today. However, Government is continuously focusing on the quality education. Still Large number of colleges and universities in India are unable to meet the minimum requirements laid down by the UGC.

**Infrastructure:** Poor infrastructure is another challenge to the higher education system of India particularly the institutes run by the public sector suffer from poor physical facilities and infrastructure. There are large number of colleges which are functioning on second or third floor of the building on ground or first floor there exists readymade hosieries or photocopy shops.

**Political interference:** Most of the educational Institutions are owned by the political leaders, who are playing key role in governing bodies of the Universities. They are using the innocent students for their selfish means. Students organise campaigns, forget their own objectives and begin to develop their careers in politics.

**Faculty:** Faculty shortages and the inability of the state educational system to attract and retain well qualified teachers have been posing challenges to quality education for many years. Large numbers of NET/SLET / PhD candidates are unemployed even there are lot of vacancies in higher education.

**Research and Innovation:** There are very nominal scholars in our country whose writing is cited by famous western authors. There is inadequate focus on research in higher education institutes. There are insufficient resources and facilities, as well as, limited numbers of quality faculty to advice students. Moreover, Indian Higher education institutions are poorly connected to research centres. (Sheikh, 2017)

## SUGGESTIONS IMPROVING THE SYSTEM OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN INDIA:

- There is a need to implement innovative and transformational approach at higher education level to make Indian educational system globally more relevant and competitive.
- Higher educational institutes need to improve quality and reputation.
- There should be a good infrastructure of colleges and universities which may attract the students.

- Government must promote collaboration between Indian higher education institutes and top International institutes and also generates linkage between national research laboratories and research centres of top institutions for better quality and collaborative research.
- There is a need to focus on the graduate students by providing them such courses in which they can achieve excellence, gain deeper knowledge of subject so that they will get jobs after recruitment in the companies which would reduce unnecessary rush to the higher education.
- Universities and colleges in both public private must be away from the political affiliations,
- Favouritism, money making process should be out of education system etc. (Sheikh, 2017)

## CONCLUSION

Globalization has provided a new dimension to Indian higher education. However, it must not remain limited to the upper class; it must work on the foundation of social justice and equality. For India to become a global "Knowledge Hub," increased investment in research and innovation is essential.

For globalization to complement the progress of any nation, it is very important that the education sector, especially the higher education sector, moves in line with the demands of globalization. Only when the higher education sector is not limited to any one class but includes all classes of society, then only the fruits of globalization can be enjoyed.

The Government of India has already considered the education sector as a priority sector and has provided more funding for primary education under the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) program since the year 2000. Primary education has been made free and compulsory under the Right to Education Act, 2009 (RTE). In 2013, the Rashtriya Uchchhatar Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA) was launched to strengthen the higher education sector. Through this, it has tried to strengthen education from the grassroots level to the higher level.

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