



FROM GURUKUL TO GLOBALIZATION: THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC EVOLUTION OF INDIAN HIGHER EDUCATION

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Abstract:

Significant political and socioeconomic changes are occurring in Indian society, which have an immediate impact on the system of higher education. The current study looks at the two issues that are changing educational ideals and institutional functioning: the rising impact of extreme Hindu nationalism and the demands of the neoliberal market. Commercialisation has, on the one hand, diminished academic autonomy, decreased public accountability, and resulted in insufficient finance. Ideological interventions, on the other hand, pose a challenge to reason, scientific temper, and the long-held notion that universities are places of open inquiry. The core goal of higher education in India is changing as a result of these coupled factors. The history of the Indian education system, from the comprehensive Gurukul model to post-independence changes, is also discussed in this paper, along with the contributions of significant commissions and policies. It also examines how learning habits have changed in the twenty-first century due to globalisation, technological advancement, and changing professional needs. We go into great length on issues including excessive social media usage, diminished enthusiasm in studying, and the widening gap between traditional education and contemporary skills. All of the secondary data used in this study came from reliable web sources, publications, research articles, and policy documents. The study emphasises the important need for changes that support inclusivity, critical thinking, educational integrity, and skill-based learning by examining the body of existing literature. With the goal to make Indian higher education more relevant to current societal and global demands, the research paper's conclusion emphasises the need of bolstering governance, enhancing teaching-learning procedures, and promoting innovation.

Keywords: *Indian Society, Higher Education, Challenges*

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Introduction:

Every country's social, cultural, and economic growth is greatly influenced by higher education, and India is no exception. India's higher education system has the duty of producing knowledgeable, competent, and socially conscious citizens because the country is one of the biggest and most varied in the world. However, because to changes in politics, the economy, technology, and culture, this system has had to deal with a number of difficult issues in recent years. Academic freedom, institutional autonomy, and educational principles are all under assault due to the rising impact of neoliberal market policies and the

emergence of extreme Hindu nationalist ideology. Universities find it challenging to sustain the values of logical inquiry, critical thinking, and inclusive learning since these forces frequently place a higher priority on commercialisation, privatisation, and ideological control.

Indian education has developed historically from the ancient Gurukul customs to contemporary establishments influenced by national education policy and post-independence changes. Even while there have been many beneficial developments, such better access, increased employment prospects, and technology integration, the fundamental goal of producing

informed, well-rounded people is occasionally eclipsed by social expectations, political agendas, and commercial demands. Additionally, the present system frequently finds it difficult to supply the new skills, updated curriculum, and creative teaching techniques that are required due to growing globalisation, digital transformation, and changing employment markets.

Need and Importance of the Study:

To comprehend how India's changing political and socioeconomic landscape is influencing higher education, this research is crucial. Academic autonomy, reason, and the fundamental goal of universities are being undermined by neoliberal commercial forces and growing extreme nationalism. At the same time, the gap between conventional educational ideals and modern capabilities is growing due to globalisation, technological advancement, and changing professional expectations. In order to propose reforms that safeguard educational integrity, guarantee inclusivity, and make higher education responsive to current social requirements and future national growth, it is imperative to examine these combined issues.

Objectives of the research:

1. To analyze the impact of contemporary political dynamics and market-driven pressures on the functioning and quality of higher education in India.
2. To identify the reasons behind challenges such as inadequate funding, reduced institutional autonomy, and the weakening of rational and critical thinking within universities.
3. To explore how traditional educational principles interact with emerging social transformations and create new obstacles for the education system.
4. To assess the influence of technology, globalization, and evolving career expectations on students' learning patterns and skill development.
5. To propose reforms that enhance fairness, relevance, and knowledge-centered learning within Indian higher education.

Methodology of the Research Study:

The secondary data used in this study was gathered from a variety of published sources. To comprehend the difficulties encountered by higher education in India, the researcher studied books, research journals, government papers, media articles, educational policies, and reliable web sources. In order to discover important concerns including political influence, market pressure, diminishing academic quality, and shifting learning tendencies, the research used a descriptive and analytical method, meticulously reading, comparing, and interpreting the body of current literature. There was no utilisation of surveys, interviews, or primary data. The conclusions are solely based on data that has already been published and professional judgements.

Education in the post-independence era:

Everyone recognised the urgent need for literacy following India's 1947 independence. Children between the ages of six and fourteen are entitled to free and compulsory education under the Constitution. Additionally, it appears that the Planning Commission prioritised education in its five-year plans. The Indian government established a number of educational commissions to enhance Indian education following independence. In order to implement changes in higher education, the Radhakrishna Commission of 1948 was created. Then, in 1964, Dr. D.S. Under the chairmanship of Kothari, the Kothari Commission was appointed to improve the quality of primary, secondary, higher secondary and higher education in the country.

The commission included recommendations for significant improvements in the report. One to three years of pre-primary school, ten years of secondary education, two years of upper secondary education, three years of graduation, and two or three years of post-graduate study comprised his educational plan. This panel conducted a thorough analysis of education



at all levels and offered significant recommendations. Following independence, the Indian government unveiled its first education program in 1968.

21st-century educational trends:

Education is evolving in a variety of sectors and at all levels. Education is changing in tandem with societal and cultural shifts. It occurs both in the process of providing and receiving instruction. The telecommunications industry is now undergoing a major change. Radio, TV, computers, and mobile devices have all seen significant modifications. All of these mediums are heavily utilised in the classroom. We must set goals for education in the twenty-first century if we are to stay up with the rate of globalisation.

The goals of education in the twenty-first century:

The goals of education in the twenty-first century are as follows:

1. The necessity of producing morally upright and socially conscious citizens:

The goal of higher education should be to produce morally upright people who appreciate information, comprehend society, and make significant contributions to the advancement of their country. Young people's education should foster societal peace, ethical consciousness, and responsible citizenship.

2. Giving Learning More Importance:

Than Just Professional Training Education should go beyond financial objectives and job readiness. Intellectual growth, critical comprehension, and lifelong curiosity must be its main goals in order for kids to become intelligent, self-reliant, and thoughtful adults.

3. Creating a Diverse, Holistic, and Unrepetitive Education:

Institutions should provide a variety of learning opportunities, such as in the arts, athletics, technology, and research, in place of exam-oriented

routines. Diversity like this fosters the kind of creativity, curiosity, and well-rounded growth that are crucial for today's students.

3. Enhancing Falling Academic Quality in All Institutions:

Outdated curricula, inadequate teaching standards, and little use of technology plague many schools. To raise overall academic quality, curricula must be revised, teaching strategies must be strengthened, and concept-based learning must be encouraged.

5. Transitioning from Classroom Instruction to Real-World, Practical Learning:

In order for students to apply their theoretical knowledge to practical settings, higher education must incorporate fieldwork, internships, and hands-on activities. Exposure to practical situations improves comprehension, self-assurance, and problem-solving skills.

6. Promoting Natural Learning Rather than Forced Moral Teaching:

Rather than via strict moral instruction, students should learn values from real-world experiences, introspection, and inquiry. To create true understanding, education must foster curiosity, self-learning, and autonomous thought.

7. Controlling Digital Addiction and Overuse of Virtual Gaming:

Students' concentration and wellbeing are negatively impacted by excessive screen time and gaming. To sustain better learning lives, institutions must encourage balanced digital habits through outdoor engagement, sports, and cultural events.

8. Adapting the Curriculum to Contemporary Needs and Student Interests:

Regular curriculum updates are necessary due to the rapid advancements in technology and society. For education to remain current and inspiring, content must be in line with modern skills, digital tools, and student learning preferences.

9. Transitioning from Marks-Based Learning to Skill-Based Education:

Education should foster critical thinking, creativity, practical skills, and communication talents rather than just test grades. A skill-centered approach better equips students for professions and real-life difficulties.

10. Ensuring Emotional Well-Being and Overall Personality Development:

Higher education should promote intellectual, physical, social, and emotional development. Confidence, mental health, and holistic development are promoted by lowering parental pressure, putting an end to the grade race, and tailoring instruction to each student's skill level.

Challenges Facing Indian Higher Education in the 21st Century:

1. Students' and Teachers' Declining desire in Learning:

There is a discernible decline in students' and teachers' sincere desire in learning and teaching. While many professors lack enthusiasm or drive, students sometimes seek school just for grades or employment. This deterioration undermines academic culture, diminishes curiosity, and obstructs the generational transfer of significant information.

2. Globalization's Effect on Changing Lifestyles:

While rapid globalisation has raised living conditions, it has also led to an increase in distractions. Consumption, material comfort, and a fast-paced lifestyle divert attention from intellectual endeavours. The demands of a changing lifestyle clash with education, making it challenging for students to sustain long-term academic dedication, deep thought, and disciplined study habits.

3. Over-reliance on Digital Media and Technology:

Students' lives are dominated by social media, mobile phones, and continuous internet use.

Overuse of technology causes mental distractions, impairs focus, and promotes shallow learning. Students frequently become aimless when using technology, which has an impact on their academic achievement, emotional stability, and long-term professional development.

4. Information Overload Impacting Mental Focus:

Today's students are inundated with an endless amount of information via digital platforms. Access is simple, but the capacity to efficiently filter, evaluate, and use knowledge is deteriorating. Confusion, short attention spans, tension, and a diminished ability to learn deeply and critically are all consequences of information overload.

5. Lack of Collective Responsibility Among Leaders and Educators:

Despite the obvious drop in academic performance, many leaders, legislators, and educators do not take these problems seriously. Significant progress is impeded by the lack of robust debates, reforms, and accountability frameworks. Negative tendencies continue to erode the higher education system in the absence of proactive action.

6. Misuse of Technology Rather Than Educational Use:

Despite the existence of advanced technology, it is not successfully applied to improve learning. Instead of using smartphones for instructional purposes, students utilise them mostly for amusement. Technology has the potential to greatly enhance educational outcomes if it is used appropriately, through digital literacy, restricted usage, and relevant applications.

7. Pandemic- Caused Digital Dependency in Education:

Zoom, Google Meet, and Skype emerged as crucial alternatives to traditional classroom settings during COVID-19. Even once things returned to normal, this abrupt change rendered many teachers and



students too reliant on online instruction, which caused problems with student engagement, evaluation quality, and genuine learning.

8. **Strong Political and Educational Willpower:**

Policymakers and academic institutions must be firmly committed to improving higher education. India will find it difficult to reconstruct a meaningful education system that meets contemporary expectations if it lacks the willingness to enact changes, control technology usage, assist educators, and inspire students.

9. **Directionless Youth as a Result of Excessive Digital Exposure:**

The younger generation frequently feels disoriented as a result of ongoing social media use and digital diversions. Reduced academic focus, emotional instability, and career uncertainties are the results of this aimlessness. This tendency might have a detrimental impact on the nation's intellectual and economic future if it is not properly directed.

10. **Urgent Need for Educational Reform and technology Balance:**

India urgently needs to strike a balance between contemporary technology instruments and traditional learning ideals. Technology should be used in education in a useful way rather than taking the place of traditional academic subjects. To educate students for the difficulties of the twenty-first century, reforms must promote critical thinking, digital literacy, emotional development, and logical decision-making.

Opportunities in Career and Education:

1. **Early Career Planning with New Education Policy:**

Students can investigate practical skills at an early age thanks to the inclusion of vocational education starting in Class 6. This enables students to recognise their abilities, comprehend their interests, and make wise professional decisions.

Early exposure boosts self-esteem, clears up uncertainty, and gets kids ready for the demands of the contemporary workplace long before they start college.

2. **The Value of Self-Learning in a Competitive World:**

Post-pandemic developments show that formal education alone is inadequate. Through classes, internet resources, and real-world experiences, students must learn on their own. Self-learning fosters confidence, inventiveness, and adaptability—qualities necessary for success in rapidly evolving fields and international competitiveness.

3. **Encouraging a Passion for Creativity and Innovation:**

Innovation is more valued in today's job market than standard abilities. Students may thrive in developing disciplines if they experiment, think creatively, and investigate novel concepts. Entrepreneurship, research, technology creation, and distinctive career pathways that were not previously accessible in conventional educational institutions are all made possible by innovation-driven learning.

4. **Selecting the Correct Course and Institution:**

Long-term success depends on choosing the right course and institution. Before making a choice, students must consider their hobbies, career opportunities, and future industry trends. Making educated decisions helps students stay relevant in quickly changing work environments and lessens career instability.

5. **Adapting Education to Changing Industry Demands:**

Globalisation and technological innovation cause industries to evolve rapidly. When choosing their subjects of study, students must consider the demands of the future market. Careers that are

selected carelessly might become obsolete. Making forward-thinking choices guarantees stability, career advancement, and long-term employability.

6. Transition from Traditional to Skill-Based Education:

Students cannot be prepared for current occupations by traditional classroom knowledge alone. Digital literacy, communication, problem-solving, and technical abilities are examples of skill-based education that keeps students competitive. In an ever-changing global labour market, gaining a variety of skills increases employability and lowers unemployment.

7. Multiskilling as a Reaction to Increasing Unemployment:

Candidates with a variety of skills are now valued by employers. Students who possess a variety of abilities outside their degree, such as business, design, communication, or coding, are more likely to get work. Flexibility, more employment possibilities, and resilience in the face of economic volatility are all made possible by multiskilling.

8. Extending Career Options Outside of Conventional Fields:

Students should investigate cutting-edge fields including data science, environmental studies, hotel management, nanotechnology, and forensic accounting. There are a lot of chances for invention, creativity, and research in these sectors. There are more opportunities for both individual and national growth when one ventures outside of the conventional technical and medical fields.

9. Estimating Future Job Trends and Competition:

When making professional decisions, students must consider the future. Students are better prepared for impending issues and can avoid

obsolete skills by anticipating future market demands. Students may maintain their competitiveness in global work environments and secure stable employment by understanding industry forecasts.

10. Making the Most of Time to Develop Future-Ready Skills:

Regardless of competition, students who make the most of their school years by acquiring skills, gaining experiences, and keeping current will excel. In a workplace that is changing quickly, students may succeed in the long run with careful preparation, regular learning, and prompt decision-making.

Conclusion:

With the combined powers of political ideology, neoliberal market forces, technical advancement, and evolving societal ambitions, Indian higher education is currently at a crucial crossroads. Even though the system has grown considerably since independence, problems including dwindling academic autonomy, worse teaching-learning procedures, an excessive reliance on technology, and diminished critical inquiry still impede its actual goals. At the same time, students face new challenges arising from information overload, changing lifestyles, and rapidly evolving employment demands, which often widen the gap between traditional curricula and contemporary skills. To respond effectively, India must prioritise reforms that reinforce institutional integrity, ensure equitable access, and promote rational, inquiry-based education. Strengthening governance, improving funding mechanisms, updating curricula, and integrating experiential and skill-based learning are crucial for producing competent and socially responsible graduates. Balanced use of technology, support for innovation, and holistic student development must become central pillars of future policy.

If these reforms are undertaken with seriousness and collective responsibility, Indian higher education can become more relevant, future-ready, and aligned with both national aspirations and global expectations. India must give top priority to changes that uphold institutional integrity, provide fair access, and advance logical, inquiry-based education in order to properly react. To produce graduates who are capable and socially conscious, it is essential to update curriculum, improve financing methods, strengthen governance, and include experiential and skill-based learning. Future policy must prioritise balanced technology usage, encouraging innovation, and comprehensive student development.

Indian higher education may become more relevant, future-ready, and in line with both national goals and international expectations if these reforms are carried out with diligence and shared accountability.

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