

**PUBLIC-PRIVATE COLLABORATIONS IN FUNDING HIGHER EDUCATION: ACHIEVEMENTS AND  
TAKEAWAYS IN THE INDIAN CONTEXT**

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**Abstract:**

*Public-Private Collaborations have emerged as a key strategy for improving higher education in India by leveraging private-sector investment, efficiency and innovation. This paper explores the conceptual framework, examines notable success stories, and analyses lessons learned from these initiatives. Despite noteworthy success stories, the study also identifies major challenges, including regulatory challenges, affordability issues and limited capacity. Through a review of literature, policy analysis and case studies, the paper provides a comprehensive understanding of the effectiveness of collaboration in higher education. The study concludes with policy suggestions to make the collaboration more inclusive, sustainable and accountable. These insights offer key suggestions for educational leaders, policymakers and private stakeholders seeking to reform and expand higher education system in India through collaborative models.*

**Key Terms-** *Public-Private Collaboration, Infrastructure, Higher Education, Policy Reform*

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**Introduction:**

Higher education plays an acute role in shaping the human capital of any nation, thereby influencing its socio-economic growth. India, with over 1,000 universities and 40,000 colleges, hosts one of the largest higher education arrangements in the world. However, this enormous expansion has not been complemented with satisfactory public investment. The Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) in India has enhanced over the years, but concerns persist about research capabilities, faculty shortages, infrastructure gaps and quality education. To bridge these gaps, the Government of India has endorsed the Public-Private Collaboration model as a substitute mechanism to finance and manage higher education institutions. These are collaborative agreements where private bodies contribute to innovation, infrastructure development and service delivery while sharing risks and rewards with the public sector.

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 also identifies the implication of private collaboration and industry collaboration in achieving excellence in higher education. The research also provides actionable suggestions strengthening the collaborative practices in the Indian context.

**Objectives:**

- To propose policy suggestion for promoting effective and equitable
- To examine the role and scope of collaboration in financing and managing higher education in India.
- To analyse successful collaborative initiatives in Indian higher education institutions.
- To assess the challenges and limitations associated

**Review of Literature :**

**Tilak (2015)** in his study titled Public-Private Partnerships in Education, employed a qualitative policy analysis procedure to discover the evolution and impact of collaboration models in Indian higher education. The study focused on institutions across

urban cities in India, mainly those under central governance. While the study did not stipulate a numerical sample size, it used purposive sampling, analysing policies, official data, and discussions with policymakers and educational administrators. Data were collected through article analysis and semi-structured interviews. The findings revealed that Collaboration in higher education have enhanced infrastructure development and industry linkages but raised concerns regarding access and affordability. Tilak recommended creating a national collaboration policy with parity safeguards, robust monitoring, and better transparency in contractual obligations.

**Agarwal, P. (2009)**, in his influential work, *Indian Higher Education: Envisioning the Future*, conducted a mixed-methods study focusing on higher education backing trends, including Collaboration, in India. The research analysed secondary data from 20 public and private universities across Maharashtra, Delhi and Tamil Nadu. The sample size included 60 administrators and faculty members, selected using stratified random sampling. Data collection was done through structured surveys and detailed interviews. The findings specified that private investment had filled funding gaps, but the absenteeism of regulation led to quality and equity concerns. Agarwal recommended an outline to monitor private participation, regulate fee structures and promote public responsibility in collaboration models

**Sharma and Gupta (2018)** in their article *Public Private Collaboration in Higher Education in India*, conducted a quantitative evaluation of 25 engineering colleges in Uttar Pradesh and Karnataka involved in collaboration initiatives. Using random sampling, data were collected from 500 final-year students and 100 faculty members through organized questionnaires and institutional record examinations. Findings recommended that institutions under collaboration had better campus facilities and internship chances but

showed slight improvements in research output. The study suggested improving faculty quality, providing research incentives, and ensuring that Collaboration arrange academic superiority alongside financial returns.

#### **Research Methodology :**

This research accepts a qualitative methodology maintained by secondary data sources. Data was collected from government policy documents, institutional reports, academic publications and case studies of Collaboration models in higher education. Analytical methods include content analysis and thematic understanding. Case examples were selected based on significance, documented outcomes and accessibility of information. Key institutions such as NSDC-partnered institutions, Indian Institutes of Information Technology (IIITs) and state-level education hubs were studied in detail

#### **Conceptual Framework of Collaboration in Higher Education :**

The concept of Public-Private Collaboration in higher education has changed as a response to the dual burdens of rising demand for quality education and the constraints of public financing. Collaboration are increasingly conceptualized as strategic collaboration that extend beyond mere infrastructure development to encompass academic innovation, employability enhancement and research advancement.

The Collaboration framework in higher education is grounded in the premise that public and private sectors bring complementary strengths— public institutions offer scale, validity, and access, while private bodies contribute innovation, investment, and responsiveness to market dynamics. At its core, the collaboration framework in higher education is built on five pillars: shared responsibility, risk allocation, long-term contracts, performance-based accountability and mutual advantage.

These philosophies guide the structuring of agreements between the universities and private partners, which may contain corporations, foundations and non-profit educational establishments. This approach allows institutions to improve both infrastructure and educational services while ensuring that strategic control and oversight continue with public authorities. Models within this framework are varied. The Design-Build-Finance Operate (DBFO) model includes comprehensive private engagement in planning, financing and operating educational infrastructure over a clear period. Another model, the Service Contract Model, focuses on engaging private expertise in delivering academic support services such as digital learning platforms, placement cells and research incubation centres. The Equity Participation Model is ahead traction in technical universities, where private companies invest capital and skill in exchange for a stake in institutional governance.

Beyond physical and managerial roles, collaboration are also being abstracted as a framework for curricular transformation and industry integration. Universities progressively engage with corporate partners to co-create academic programs, design internships, fund research, and participate in governance boards. These partnerships foster a demand-driven education system, where graduates are better aligned with labour market needs, thereby improving employability and innovation. However, the conceptual validity of collaboration in higher education depends on the integration of quality assurance, equity and regulatory oversight into the partnership model. Collaboration that are virtuously profit-driven risk excluding marginalized communities or weakening academic standards. Thus, the framework must include inclusivity sections, student grievance mechanisms and transparent monitoring and assessment systems to safeguard that public interests are conserved alongside private efficiency. A rising body of research supports

the effectiveness of Collaboration in improving institutional performance. In summary, the conceptual framework of Collaboration in higher education is not a static policy model but a supple governance mechanism tailored to local needs and institutional contexts. By embedding accountability, innovation, and collaboration at its core, Collaboration can drive the transformation of India's higher education sector into a more inclusive, dynamic, and internationally competitive space

### **Success Stories of Collaboration in Indian Higher Education :**

India has witnessed numerous successful models of Public-Private Collaboration in higher education, demonstrating the possible of collaborative efforts between the public sector and private stakeholders to recover academic quality, infrastructure, and employability outcomes. One protuberant example is the formation of new generation Indian Institutes of Information Technology (IIITs), such as IIIT-Hyderabad and IIIT Bangalore. These institutions were set up under a exclusive tripartite Collaboration model involving the Ministry of Education, respective state governments, and industry leaders such as Infosys and Tata Consultancy Services (TCS). By adopting independent governance structures and industry-aligned curricula, these IIITs have arose as premier centres for technical education and research, mainly in areas like computer science, machine learning, and cybersecurity. Another notable success is the National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC), created as a Collaboration to address the rising need for skill-based education in India. NSDC partners with private training providers, many of whom collaborate directly with universities and colleges. For instance, institutions like Symbiosis Skill & Professional University and Centurion University have integrated NSDC-funded programs into their academic contributions, thereby indorsing vocational education and industry readiness.

These initiatives have been instrumental in increasing access to employability focused training, particularly in rural and semi-urban areas.

Vedanta Group's investment in higher education in Odisha replicates a socially driven collaboration model rooted in corporate social responsibility (CSR). Vedanta has known engineering and medical institutions aimed at serving underserved regions, merging world-class infrastructure development with advantages such as scholarships and community outreach programs. These energies underscore how collaboration can simultaneously address educational gaps and promote socio-economic upliftment in disregarded communities. Together, these examples prove that collaboration in Indian higher education are not only feasible but also scalable. With durable governance frameworks, shared responsibilities and mutual accountability, collaboration models have the ability to bridge infrastructure shortfalls, improve quality standards, and bring into line educational outputs with industry and societal needs.

#### **Lessons Learned from Collaboration in Indian Higher Education :**

The evolution of Public-Private Collaboration in Indian higher education offers a range of perceptive lessons that can inform future initiatives and policy directions. Among the most important takeaways is the acute role of governance in decisive the success of such partnerships. Institutions like the Indian Institutes of Information Technology (IIITs), particularly those recognized under the IIIT Act of 2014, have profited from a well-defined legal framework that outlines the accountabilities of all stakeholders. This transparency has assisted efficient decision-making, ensured academic autonomy and facilitated these institutions to adopt inventive practices without bureaucratic delays. In contrast, collaboration without strong governance mechanisms often fight with role ambiguity and operational inadequacies.

However, one of the advisory lessons from past collaboration is the need to balance commercial efficiency with social equity. Some partnerships tend to highlight profitability and market-centric outcomes, risking the exclusion of marginalized groups due to high dues or urban-centric focus. Therefore, equity mechanisms such as fee caps, scholarships and rural outreach must be fixed into the design of collaboration to ensure that they fulfil their public service directive. The use of transparent performance metrics is another important lesson. Institutions that track and reveal their progress through indicators like graduation rates, placement statistics and community impact are more likely to be answerable and sustainable. This data-driven approach permits for course correction and strengthens trust among stakeholders, including students, faculties and investors.

#### **Challenges Facing Collaboration in Higher Education:**

##### **Profit Motive vs Public Good:**

While Public Private Collaboration in Indian higher education offer significant promise, their implementation is fraught with several structural and operational encounters that often undermine their potential. One of the notable concerns lies in the conflict between the profit motive of private partners and the broader public good. In numerous cases, private bodies view higher education mainly as a business opportunity, focusing on revenue generation rather than academic integrity or social responsibility.

##### **Limited State Capacity:**

Limited state capacity poses yet another serious barrier. Numerous state governments, particularly in underdeveloped regions, lack the technical expertise and institutional capability required to design, discuss, implement, and monitor sophisticated collaboration contracts. The absence of financial, specialized legal and educational planning units within state higher education departments often results in poorly

structured agreements that either unethically burden public institutions or allow private partners to operate without adequate accountability. This capacity gap severely compromises the effectiveness and sustainability of collaboration initiatives.

#### Findings and Policy Recommendations:

- Create a National collaboration Policy for Education: India presently lacks a unified policy framework dedicated to collaboration in education. A national-level policy document complementary to the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 should openly define risk-sharing arrangements, collaborative models, governance structures and operative modalities
- Incentivize Inclusivity: To escape the risk of elitism, policy instruments should mandate provisions for access and equity within collaborative structures. This includes reserved quotas for students from economically poorer sections, provision of scholarships and alliance with Corporate Social Responsibility goals
- Transparent Monitoring Systems: Accountability is acute for sustaining trust and safeguarding value-for-money outcomes. Collaboration should be subject to regular audits and performance evaluations based on metrics such as student outcomes, infrastructure delivery, academic quality and social impact.

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