

Status of Education in India

Issue Brief

Issue Briefs

SPRF's Issue Briefs outline the broader issues with respect to specific policy areas in India. In doing so, these pieces explain the 'what' and 'how' of policy challenges for readers wanting to know more about complex, multilayered issues.

Cover Photo

A schoolgirl stops to pose on the streets of Sanganer, a small town near Jaipur famed for its crafts.

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This paper is the first in the series on education, researched and published by the Social and Political Research Foundation. If you have any suggestions, or would like to contribute to the section, please write to us at contact@sprf.in.

Contents

Executive Summary	1
Introduction	3
Education Levels among India's Adolescents	4
Quality of Education and Private School Enrolment	5
Educational Standards in Rural Areas	6
Higher Education	7
Bibliography	8

Status of Education in India

Acronyms and Abbreviations

ASER	Annual Status of Education Report
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GER	Gross Enrolment Ratio
IBEF	India Brand Equity Foundation
MHRD	Ministry of Human Resource Development
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
MBA	Masters in Business Administration
RISE	Revitalising Infrastructure and Systems in Education
RTE	Right to Education
SC	Scheduled Castes
ST	Scheduled Tribes
UGC	University Grants Commission

Executive Summary

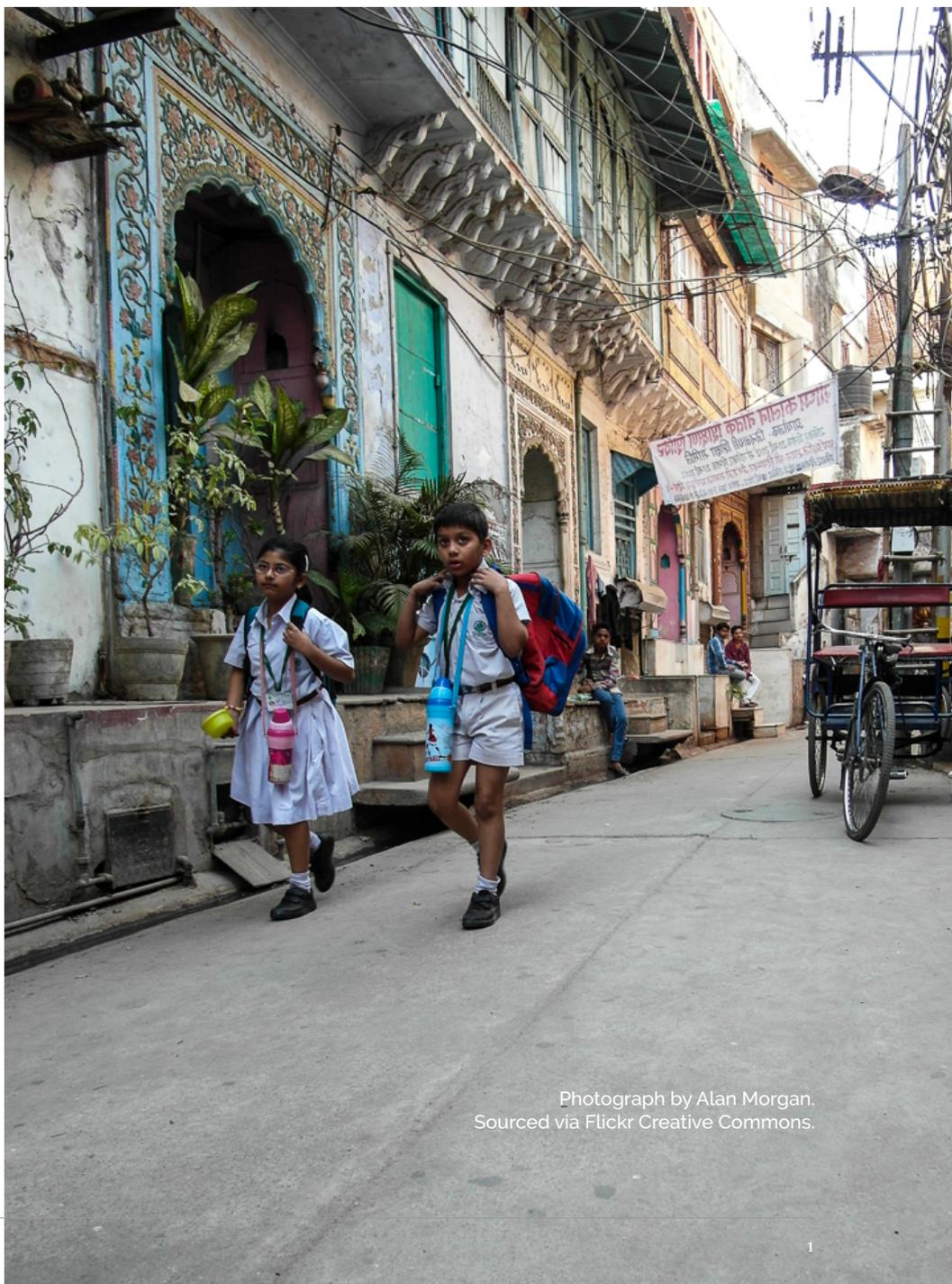
India has the third largest education sector in the world, with a market share of \$91.7 Billion. Over the past decade, the number of schools, colleges and universities has seen a substantial increase.

The Right to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009, has further assisted in bringing primary education to far flung regions of this vast country, and to marginalized communities who previously may not have access to the same.

Moreover, in 2018, the government invested 1,00,000 crore to better the quality of higher education over the next four years. However, given the sheer size of the nation, as well as of the sector itself, education in India faces numerous challenges.

This paper is the first in the series on Education. It sets out to highlight the scope and nature of issues within the sphere; this includes gender and caste imbalances, private school enrolment in rural and urban areas,

quality of teaching, and higher education and internationalisation.



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Introduction

India has the third largest education system in the world with a school life expectancy rate (primary to tertiary education) of 12.35 years, spending 2.7% of its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) on education (Ministry of Finance 2018).

The education sector in India is estimated at \$91.7 billion with the second largest market for e-learning after the US and is only set to grow further (IBEF December 2018).

The number of schools (Grade I – XII), for example, increased from 9,71,054 in

2001 to 15,22,346 in 2016 (MHRD 2018) with over 25 crore school-going children (Rajgopalan 2018).

Similarly, the number of colleges and universities reached 39,050 and 903, respectively, with 3.664 crore students enrolled in higher education institutions in 2017-18.

Given the sheer vastness of the sector, initiatives to provide access to quality education and promote research and innovation underscore the government's priority areas for reform. This paper

will outline the scope and nature of the challenges associated with education in India, highlighting issues such as gender and caste imbalances, public and private schooling enrolment, higher education and internationalization, and the quality of teaching.



The government invested 100,000 crore in 2018 to better the quality of higher education until 2022.

Education Levels among India's Adolescents

Article 21A, introduced through the 68th Amendment to the Constitution in 2002, guarantees education to all. This was brought into legal effect by the *Right to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009*, making elementary education (I-VIII) mandatory for all age groups between 6 and 14.

Although this contributed to a steady increase in student enrolment at all levels of education, it is accompanied by a significantly high attrition rate (17.06% annually) at the secondary level (MHRD 2018).

Gender inequality, low quality of education, teacher absenteeism, lack of adequate public investment, underqualified teachers, a lack of capacity utilization, poor infrastructure, lack of quality curricula, and insufficient monitoring collectively impact the quality of education in schools.

The Annual Status of Education Report (ASER), for example, observed that a fourth of children

in rural India between 14 and 18 years cannot read their native language. 57% of the children surveyed struggled to solve simple mathematical problems (Datta 2018).

The level of educational attainment and quality of education provided also differ significantly on the basis of caste and gender.

For example, 78.7% of

general category students passed their matriculation examination, as compared to 73.2% of Scheduled Castes (SC) and 65% of Scheduled Tribes (ST) students in 2016.

Female students outperformed their male counterparts in all categories, except among STs (MHRD 2018).

Education in India

3rd

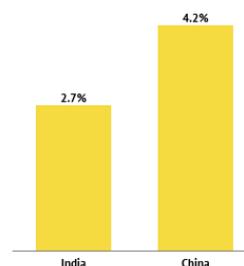
largest education system in the world

12.35

school life expectancy rate (in years)

\$91.7

billion



As per Budget Estimates for 2017-18, India spent 2.7% of its GDP on Education

estimated market size of the education sector

An estimate by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) reveals that the gender gap in educational attainment remains very high in India – the share of young women without senior secondary education is 12% higher than that of young men in 2018 (OECD 2018).

Quality of Education and Private School Enrolment

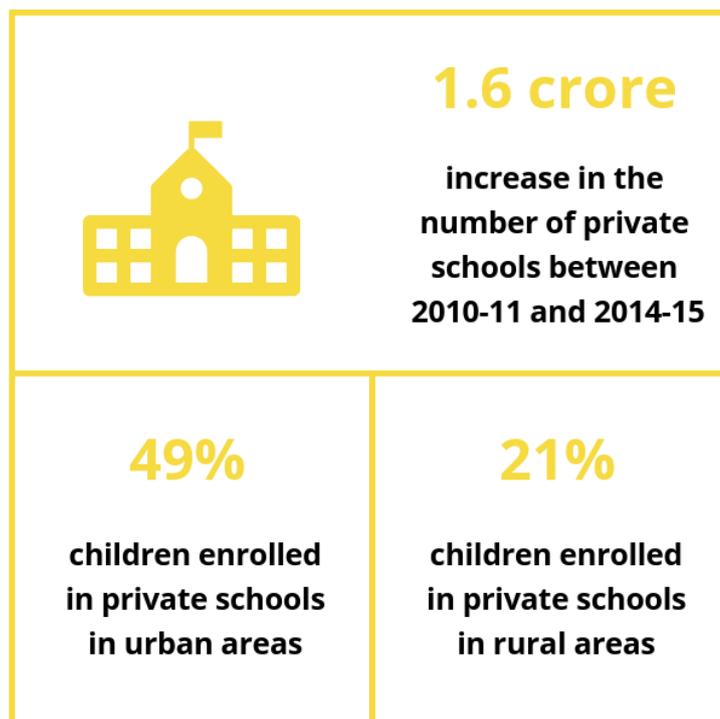
Given the low quality of education in government schools, private school enrolment increased in 2014-15 with 49% of children in urban and 21% in rural areas, respectively. The number of private schools itself substantially increased by 1.6 crore between 2010-11 and 2014-15 as compared to government schools (Kingdon 2017). Such a lack of quality also forces economically marginalized communities in rural areas to seek out low-cost private schools (Tooley 2013).

While evidence suggests that students from private schools outperform

their counterparts, it is pertinent to note that the preservation of status quo among government schools

and a lack of institutional reforms has further added to the quality crisis (Ibid. 2013).

Private School Enrolment





Photograph by Jose Antonio Morcillo Valenciano. Sourced via Flickr Creative Commons.

Educational Standards in Rural Areas

In spite of the availability of low-cost private schools in rural areas, the quality of teaching and search for qualified teachers remains a challenge for the education

sector. In contrast to regular, government school teachers, contract-based teachers are poorly trained, inadequately qualified, and face unequal working

conditions. Additionally, sustained pressure from schools' management to take classes of regular teachers also contributes to a lack of motivation (Sharma 2015).

Higher Education

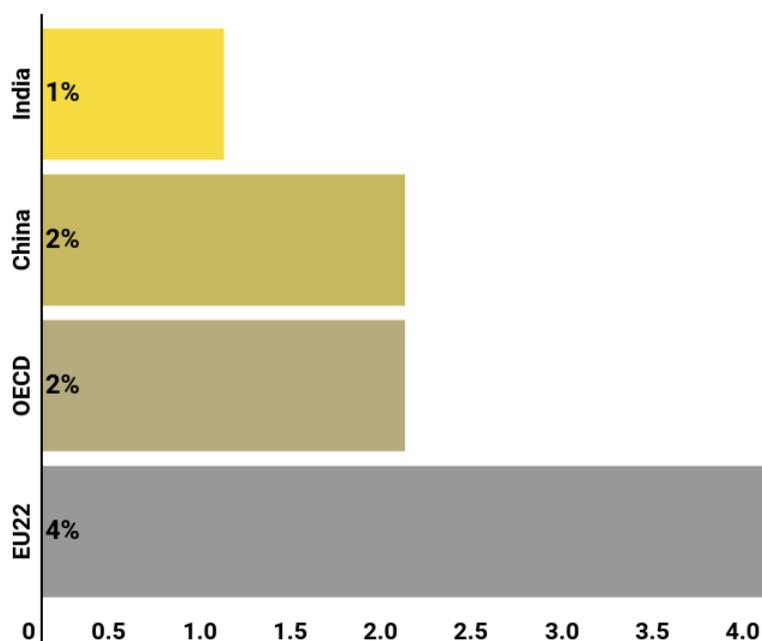
Higher education in India too faces similar difficulties. In spite of the number of private universities in India increasing from 197 in 2015-16 to 325 in 2018-19, according to the University Grants Commission, capacity utilization remains a challenge. In the case of institutions providing a Masters in Business Administration (MBA), for example, capacity utilization is only about 57% in Maharashtra and 72% in Haryana. The necessity of fully utilizing capacities for providing higher education cannot be understated, even with commitments from the government to raising the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) from 25.2% in 2017-18 to 30% by 2020.

Attempts at internationalising Indian universities have also been met with obstacles. While it helps students develop a global outlook and foster a sense of global citizenship (Association of Indian Universities 2017), only 0.1% of students enrolled in tertiary education in India are foreign with a majority of them belonging to neighbouring countries. Similarly, only 1% of Indian students are enrolled abroad. This is half of the average across OECD countries and China (OECD 2018), respectively. Internationalising universities is known to have a direct impact on revenue and increase diversity among students and faculty.

Yet, a lack of attention to capacity utilisation is resulting in Indian universities missing opportunities at developing institutional collaborations and facilitating exchange programmes in teaching, research, and innovation.

In February 2018, the Finance Minister of India launched the “Revitalising Infrastructure and Systems in Education (RISE)” with a total investment of Rs. 100,000 crore up to 2022 to enhance quality of higher education in India.

Percentage of Students Enrolled Abroad in Tertiary Education



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