

CURRENT EDUCATION LEVEL OF INDIA: A REVIEW

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Introduction:

Education in India is provided by the public sector as well as the private sector, with control and funding coming from three levels; central, state and local. Under various articles of the Indian constitution, free and compulsory education is provided as a fundamental right to children between the ages of 6 and 14.

India has made progress in terms of increasing the primary education attendance rate and expanding literacy to approximately three-quarters of the population in the 7-100 age group, by 2011.¹ India's improved education system is often cited as one of the main contributors to its economic development.² Much of the progress, especially in higher education and scientific research, has been credited to various public institutions.

At the primary and secondary level, India has a large private school system complementing the government run schools, with 29% of students receiving private education in the 6 to 14 age group.³ Certain past-secondary technical schools are also private. The private education market in India had a revenue of US \$ 450 million in 2008, but is projected to be a US \$ 40 billion market.⁴

As per the annual status of education report (ASER) 2012, 96.5% of all rural children between the ages of 6-14 were enrolled in school. This is the fourth annual survey to report enrollment above 96%. Another report from 2013 stated the there were 229 million students enrolled in different accredited urban and rural schools of India, from class I to XII, representing an increase of 2.3 million students over 2002 total enrollment, and 19% increase in girl's enrollment.⁵ While quantitatively India is inching closer to

universal education, the quality of its education has been questioned particularly in its government run school system. Some of the reasons for the poor quality include absence of around 25% of teachers everyday.⁶ States of India have introduced tests and education assessment system to identify and improve such schools.⁷

In India's education system, a significant number of seats are reserved under affirmative action policies for the historically disadvantaged scheduled castes and scheduled tribes and other backward classes.⁸ The National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) is the apex body for curriculum related matters for school education in India.⁹ The NCERT provides support and technical assistance to a number of schools in India and oversees many aspects of enforcement of education policies.¹⁰ The National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS) conducts two examinations, namely secondary examination and senior secondary examination and also some courses in vocational education.¹¹

There have been several efforts to enhance quality made by the government. The District Education Revitalization Programme (DERP) was launched in 1994 with an aim to universalize primary education in India by reforming and revitalizing the existing primary education system.¹²

The DERP, which has opened 160000 new schools including 84000 alternative education to approximately 3.5 million children, was also supported by UNICEF and other international programmes.¹³

The guarantee of education is meaningless without satisfactory learning. There are serious implications for India's equity and growth if basic learning outcomes do not improve soon.¹⁴

As of January 2015, the International schools consultancy (ISC)¹⁵ listed India as having 410 international schools.¹⁶ ISC defines an 'International School'. In the following terms "ISC includes an international school if the school delivers a curriculum to any combination of pre-school, primary or secondary students, wholly or partly in English outside and English-speaking country, or if a school in a country where English is one of the official language, offers an English-medium curriculum and is international in its orientation. After passing the Higher Secondary Examination, students may enroll in

general degree programmes such as bachelor's degree in arts, commerce or science, or professional degree programs such as engineering, law or medicine.¹⁷

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