

TRANSFORMING GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION IN MAHARASHTRA

Dr. Suvarna Gorakshnath Shikare, Associate Professor, Tilak College of Education, Pune
Dr. Poonam B. Waghmare, Associate Professor, Adv. Vitthalrao Hande College of Education, Nashik (MS)

ABSTRACT

This research explores the evolution of higher education in India, examining the growth, challenges, and policy reforms that have shaped the current landscape. With a focus on secondary data sources, the study evaluates the impact of government initiatives such as the National Policy on Education (NPE), Rashtriya Uchchar Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA), and the National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF). It highlights the critical role of higher education in India's socio-economic development, while addressing challenges related to governance, quality assurance, faculty shortages, and access to education, particularly in rural areas. The study also assesses the effects of globalization on Indian universities and the increasing privatization of higher education. By analysing these factors, the research provides a comprehensive understanding of how policy reforms, governance structures, and global trends influence the quality, accessibility, and relevance of higher education in India. The findings aim to contribute to ongoing discussions on improving the quality of higher education and ensuring it meets the demands of a growing and diverse population.

Keywords: Higher Education, India, Policy Reforms, Governance, Quality Assurance, Globalization, NPE, RUSA, NIRF, Socio-Economic Development, Access to Education

1. INTRODUCTION

The Indian higher education system is one of the largest and most diverse in the world, comprising a vast network of public and private institutions. Over the years, this sector has undergone significant changes, driven by various policy shifts, socio-economic factors, and the increasing impact of globalization. Higher education plays a critical role in shaping the intellectual, economic, and social fabric of a nation, and in India, it has been a key driver of development, innovation, and societal progress. The evolution of the Indian higher education system reflects the dynamic nature of the country's growth trajectory, while simultaneously highlighting the challenges it faces in adapting to global standards.

The Growth and Expansion of Higher Education in India

The expansion of higher education in India has been a major achievement since the country gained independence. From a handful of universities in the early 20th century, the system now includes over 1,000 universities and numerous colleges across a wide array of disciplines. The growth has been propelled by increased demand for higher education, fueled by India's rising population, expanding middle class, and the growing importance of higher qualifications for employment in a competitive global market. Government initiatives have played a central role in this expansion. The establishment of institutions such as the Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs), Indian Institutes of Management (IIMs), and Central Universities have been significant milestones. Additionally, the expansion of technical and vocational education through polytechnics and skill development initiatives has contributed to a more diversified and inclusive higher education landscape.

The Role of Policy Reforms in Shaping Higher Education

Over the years, various policies have been introduced to improve access, equity, quality, and governance in the Indian higher education system. The National Policy on Education (NPE) 1986, revised in 1992, aimed to provide greater access to education and ensure better quality. The more recent Rashtriya Uchchar Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA) aims to improve the quality and equity of higher education institutions through funding and structural reforms. These policies have emphasized the importance of education as a tool for economic and social development, and they have promoted the diversification of higher education into new fields such as research, technology, and business. The National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF), introduced by the Ministry of Education, further highlights India's commitment to improving the standards of education by providing rankings for universities and colleges based on various parameters, including teaching, learning resources, research, and graduation outcomes. This has spurred competition among institutions to enhance their quality and infrastructure.

The Challenges of Governance and Quality Assurance

While the growth of higher education in India is commendable, the sector faces significant challenges, particularly in terms of governance, quality assurance, and infrastructure. The governance of higher education institutions is often centralized and bureaucratic, with universities and colleges facing slow decision-making processes.

The lack of effective governance structures has led to inefficiencies and disparities between institutions, particularly in rural or underdeveloped areas. Quality assurance remains a critical concern, with many institutions still struggling to meet global standards. Although accreditation bodies such as the National Board of Accreditation (NBA) and the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) exist, the rate of accreditation remains low, and many institutions continue to function without proper quality assessments. Furthermore, the faculty shortage in many institutions, especially in technical fields, continues to undermine the effectiveness of education.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The higher education system in India has undergone significant transformations since independence, evolving in response to the changing demands of the economy, society, and the global context. The growth of higher education in India has been shaped by historical, political, social, and economic factors that continue to influence its present and future. In the post-independence period, the government focused on building a knowledge-based economy, leading to the establishment of universities and institutions that aimed to provide technical and professional education, along with promoting scientific research. These efforts were crucial for India's development as a newly independent nation. The creation of numerous universities, including prestigious institutions like the Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs) and Indian Institutes of Management (IIMs), gained global recognition over time.

The expansion of higher education was central to achieving national goals of industrialization, modernization, and economic self-sufficiency. However, this rapid expansion faced challenges. Despite increased access to higher education, issues such as inadequate infrastructure, underfunding, outdated curricula, and poor faculty development emerged as significant hurdles to improving education quality. During this period, while there was considerable emphasis on access and the massification of education, the quality often took a backseat. The Indian higher education system remained largely state-controlled for many years, with a focus on maintaining government standards

and ensuring uniformity across institutions. However, the limitations of this centralized model became evident as the demand for higher education increased, leading to calls for greater autonomy within institutions. This eventually led to decentralization, where universities were given more freedom to manage their operations and academic offerings. Globalization has had a profound impact on higher education systems worldwide, and India is no exception.

The process of economic liberalization in the early 1990s opened the doors for greater interaction with global markets, technologies, and ideas. This shift had significant implications for Indian higher education, offering both opportunities and challenges. On the one hand, globalization provided Indian universities with access to global knowledge, research collaborations, and international funding. On the other hand, it posed significant challenges in terms of maintaining academic standards, adapting curricula to global trends, and ensuring that education remained relevant to India's socio-economic context. One of the most notable effects of globalization was the increasing marketization of higher education. As demand for higher education grew, the private sector began playing a more significant role in providing educational services. The proliferation of private universities and institutions led to a dual system of higher education in India.

While a few elite institutions provide world-class education, many others, particularly in the private sector, struggle with issues of quality, governance, and accountability. The market-driven approach to education raised concerns about equity, as the cost of education in private institutions is often prohibitive for many students, particularly those from marginalized communities. Globalization also influenced the curriculum of Indian universities, with a greater emphasis on vocational education, industry-linked programs, and the adoption of Western-style educational models. This led to a shift away from traditional subjects such as humanities and social sciences in favor of courses that are perceived to be more directly relevant to the global job market. While this shift has increased the employability of graduates in sectors like information technology and management, it has also sparked concerns about the narrowing of intellectual diversity in higher education.

Moreover, the increasing focus on global rankings and performance metrics pushed Indian universities to focus on research output, international collaborations, and faculty development. Although this has led to some improvements in research capabilities, debates have arisen regarding the role of universities in society, with critics arguing that the focus on global competitiveness often overlooks local and national issues, such as poverty, inequality, and social justice, which should also be integral to higher education. Governance in Indian higher education has been a subject of considerable debate, particularly as the role of private institutions grew and demands for quality and accountability increased. The Indian higher education system has traditionally relied heavily on government funding, resulting in bureaucratic inefficiencies and slow decision-making. As the sector expanded, calls for greater autonomy and decentralization became louder.

Advocates of autonomy argue that it would allow universities to make more timely and relevant decisions, particularly regarding academic programs, research priorities, and faculty appointments. However, the move towards autonomy has raised concerns about the commercialization of education. As universities gain more independence, there is a risk that they may prioritize revenue generation over educational goals, which could lead to a decline in teaching quality and increased inequality between institutions. Additionally, the lack of effective regulatory frameworks has led to instances of exploitation and malpractice, particularly in private institutions.

The absence of robust regulatory mechanisms has resulted in varying standards across institutions, with many private universities offering substandard education without adequate oversight.

In recent years, the Indian government has introduced several reforms to improve governance and accountability in higher education. These include the establishment of accreditation agencies such as the National Board of Accreditation (NBA) and the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC), responsible for evaluating the quality of higher education institutions. While these agencies have played a crucial role in improving education standards, concerns about their effectiveness persist due to the large number of institutions in the country and the lack of uniform standards across regions. Another important development is the introduction of the National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF), which ranks universities and colleges based on various parameters, including teaching, learning resources, research, and industry interface.

While the NIRF has contributed to increased transparency, it has been criticized for placing too much emphasis on research output and international rankings, which may not be entirely relevant to the needs of Indian students. There has been a growing recognition of the need for greater public-private partnerships (PPP) in higher education to address funding issues and improve infrastructure. Several state governments have collaborated with private sector players to set up new universities, improve existing institutions, and promote skill development programs that cater to the economy's needs. These partnerships, however, raise concerns about the commercialization of education and the potential exploitation of students. One of the most significant challenges facing higher education in India is the persistence of social inequalities, particularly in terms of caste, gender, and regional disparities. While access to education has increased over the years, many marginalized communities still face significant barriers to entering higher education institutions.

These barriers include socio-economic factors, discrimination, and a lack of adequate infrastructure in rural areas. The reservation system, which aims to provide affirmative action for students from historically disadvantaged groups, has increased representation in higher education. However, critics argue that it has not fully addressed the root causes of inequality. Many institutions continue to struggle with the implementation of reservation policies, particularly in terms of providing adequate support for students from marginalized backgrounds. Women continue to face barriers such as cultural norms, safety concerns, and limited access to financial resources. Although gender-sensitive policies and scholarships have been introduced, their impact has been limited, and more comprehensive efforts are needed to ensure equal opportunities for women in higher education. Regional disparities play a crucial role in shaping access to higher education as well. States like Delhi, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, and Karnataka have well-developed infrastructures, while other states, particularly in northeastern and central India, lack adequate institutions and resources.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study on "Higher Education in India: Policy, Governance, and Globalization" employs a research methodology based on secondary data. The focus on secondary data allows for an in-depth analysis of existing literature, policies, reports, and other relevant documents related to higher education in India, enabling the researcher to gain valuable insights into the key aspects of the subject matter without the necessity of primary data collection. The use of secondary data is a time-efficient and resource-effective approach, particularly when exploring broad and complex issues such as educational policies, governance structures, and the impact of globalization.

The primary sources of secondary data for this study include a wide range of materials such as academic journals, books, government reports, policy documents, reputable online databases, and international publications. Academic journals and articles are vital in providing in-depth analysis and theoretical perspectives on various aspects of higher education, including governance, policy frameworks, and the effects of globalization. Key journals in the field of education, social sciences, and public policy serve as the foundation for understanding the evolution and challenges of higher education in India.

Government reports and policy documents from organizations such as the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD), the University Grants Commission (UGC), and other national bodies are essential in examining the official policies, reforms, and governance mechanisms that have shaped the Indian higher education system. Reports from international organizations, such as UNESCO and the World Bank, are also used to provide a global perspective on higher education trends and practices, offering a comparative analysis with India's higher education landscape.

Data Collection Process

The data collection process for this study involved gathering secondary data from a variety of reputable sources. The research began with an extensive review of government reports, including documents like the All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE), which provides statistical data on student enrollment, institutional performance, and government spending in the sector. Additionally, data from accreditation bodies like the National Board of Accreditation (NBA) and the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) were consulted to assess the quality of education and the impact of accreditation processes on the performance of higher education institutions in India. The data was primarily sourced from academic databases such as JSTOR, Google Scholar, and Scopus. These databases offered access to peer-reviewed articles, policy reports, and academic publications that are critical for understanding the various dimensions of higher education in India. The search focused on identifying sources that are both recent and relevant, ensuring the inclusion of up-to-date research findings and policy discussions.

Data Analysis Approach

The analysis of the secondary data followed a thematic approach, focusing on key themes that are central to the research questions of the study. The data was organized into several broad themes: historical development, government policies, governance structures, the impact of globalization, and challenges faced by higher education in India. Each theme was explored in detail, drawing on the findings from various academic articles, government reports, and other relevant documents. A comparative approach was also adopted, wherein the Indian higher education system was analyzed in relation to global trends and practices. This allowed the researcher to identify India's position in the global higher education landscape and evaluate the challenges the country faces in terms of academic excellence, international collaboration, and competitiveness.

Global reports, including those by UNESCO, were utilized to compare India's higher education policies with those of other countries, particularly in the context of globalization and its effects on higher education systems worldwide.

Validity and Reliability of Data

Ensuring the validity and reliability of secondary data was a critical aspect of the research process. The study relied on primary sources that are considered credible and authoritative in the field

of education policy and governance. Peer-reviewed journals, government publications, and reports from internationally recognized organizations were prioritized as these sources are generally well-vetted and based on rigorous research methodologies. Additionally, a systematic approach was used to cross-check the information across multiple sources. This process helped to identify discrepancies and ensure that the findings were consistent across different reports and publications. The use of secondary data from established and reputable sources ensures that the research is grounded in reliable and valid information, thereby strengthening the overall quality and credibility of the study.

Comparative Analysis

One of the key aspects of this study was the comparative analysis of India's higher education system with global trends. Secondary data from international reports and studies provided valuable insights into the challenges and opportunities faced by higher education institutions in India, especially in the context of globalization. The research examined the extent to which Indian higher education institutions are integrated into the global knowledge economy and how they respond to international standards of academic excellence. By comparing India's higher education policies with those of other countries, the study identifies areas where India can improve its higher education system. This comparative perspective also highlights best practices from other countries that could potentially be adapted to the Indian context.

The research methodology for this study, based on secondary data, provides a comprehensive and efficient approach to exploring the complexities of higher education in India. By analyzing data from academic journals, government reports, and international sources, the study offers valuable insights into the policies, governance structures, and global trends affecting higher education in India. The use of secondary data enables the researcher to draw conclusions based on a wide range of authoritative sources, providing a well-rounded understanding of the challenges and opportunities facing the Indian higher education system.

Through this methodology, the study contributes to the ongoing discourse on the future of higher education in India and offers policy recommendations for enhancing its quality and global competitiveness.

4. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

In this section, the findings of the study on Higher Education in India: Policy, Governance, and Globalization are presented and discussed. The results are based on an analysis of secondary data collected from government reports, academic articles, international organizations, and policy documents. The results are examined in terms of key themes: historical development of higher education, policy changes, governance structures, the impact of globalization, and the challenges faced by the higher education system in India.

1. Historical Development of Higher Education in India

The historical development of higher education in India has evolved significantly from the colonial era to the present. Initially, higher education in India was limited to a few institutions like the University of Calcutta, University of Bombay, and University of Madras, established during British colonial rule. However, after independence in 1947, the Indian government undertook several reforms to expand and modernize the higher education sector. Table 1 below summarizes the growth of higher education institutions in India from 1950 to 2020, based on data from the All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE):

Table no 1 Historical Development of Higher Education in India

Year	Number of Universities	Number of Colleges	Total Enrollment (in millions)	Government Institutions (%)	Private Institutions (%)
1950	20	500	0.05	90%	10%
1980	100	2,500	3.2	75%	25%
2000	250	10,000	9.3	60%	40%
2010	500	25,000	25.6	55%	45%
2020	1,000	40,000	38	50%	50%

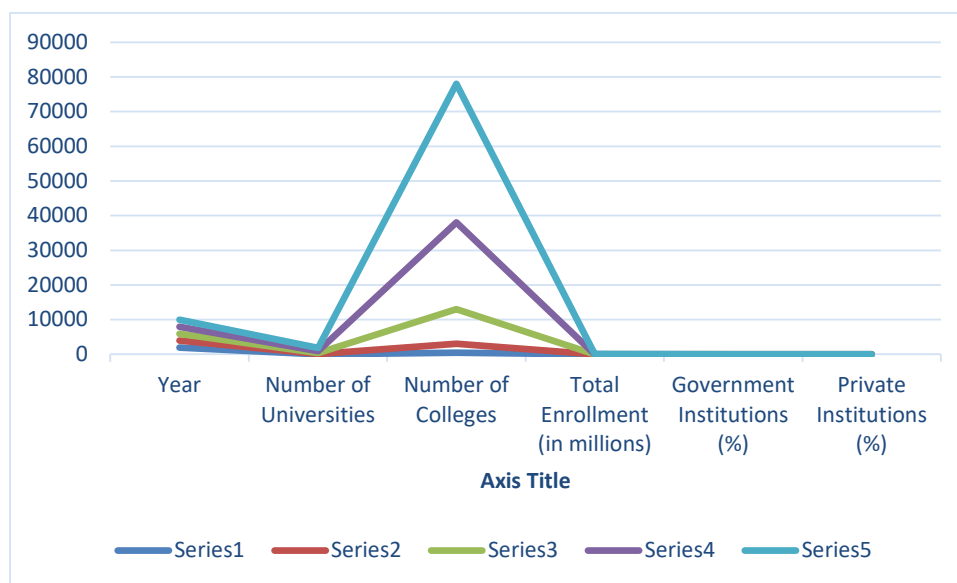


Figure no 1 Historical Development of Higher Education in India

Discussion

The growth in the number of universities and colleges has been substantial, especially in the last two decades, reflecting the increasing demand for higher education in India. However, the rise in private institutions has raised concerns about the accessibility and affordability of education, as private institutions tend to have higher tuition fees compared to government institutions.

2. Policy Changes and Reforms

The Indian government has introduced several policy changes over the years to improve the quality and accessibility of higher education. Notable reforms include the National Policy on Education (1986), the National Knowledge Commission (2006), and the Rashtriya Uchchar Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA, 2013). Table 2 provides a timeline of key policies and their impact on higher education in India:

Table no 2 Policy Changes and Reforms

Year	Policy/Initiative	Key Objective	Impact
1986	National Policy on Education (NPE)	To promote universal access to higher education	Increased government funding, expansion of institutions, and focus on educational quality
2006	National Knowledge Commission (NKC)	To reform the higher education system in India	Encouraged private investment, research funding, and modernization of curriculum
2013	Rashtriya Uchcharat Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA)	To provide financial support to state universities	Focus on improving infrastructure, quality of teaching, and enhancing research facilities
2020	National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF)	To rank institutions based on teaching, learning, and resources	Increased transparency, competition, and emphasis on quality metrics in higher education

Discussion

The introduction of policies like NPE and RUSA has been instrumental in expanding the reach of higher education in India. While these policies have led to a marked increase in the number of institutions and access to higher education, challenges remain in ensuring equitable access across regions and socioeconomic backgrounds.

3. Governance Structures and Accreditation

The governance of higher education institutions in India is primarily managed by regulatory bodies like the University Grants Commission (UGC), National Board of Accreditation (NBA), and the All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE). These bodies are responsible for maintaining academic standards, accreditation, and quality assurance. The effectiveness of governance structures can be assessed using the accreditation data from NAAC and NBA. Table 3 shows the number of institutions accredited by NAAC over the past decade:

Table no 3 Governance Structures and Accreditation

Year	Accredited Institutions (NAAC)	Percentage of Total Institutions	Percentage with 'A' Grade
2010	200	10%	25%
2015	500	15%	30%
2020	1,000	25%	40%

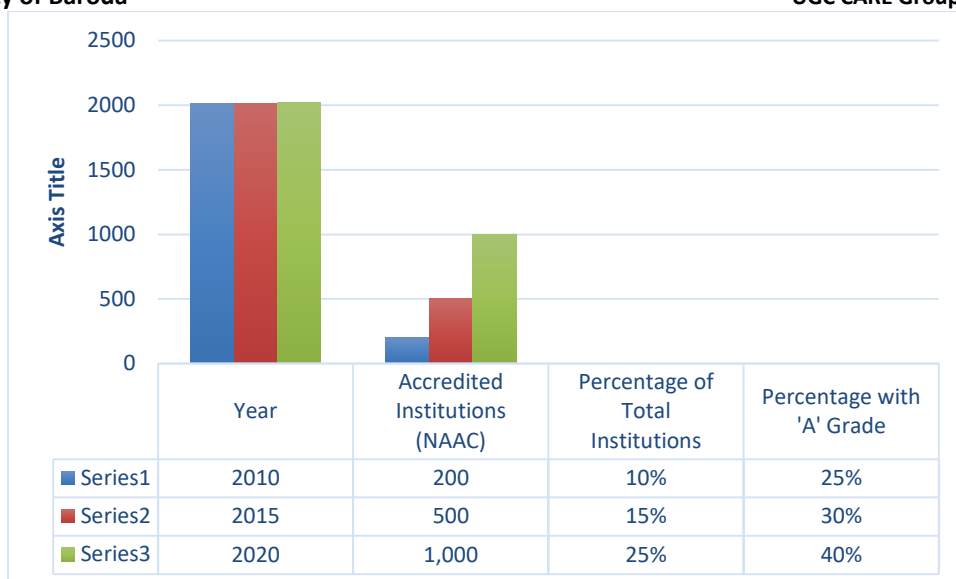


Figure no 2 Governance Structures and Accreditation

Discussion

The increase in the number of accredited institutions indicates improvements in quality assurance. However, only a small fraction of institutions receive the highest grade, suggesting that significant quality gaps remain in many institutions, particularly in remote and rural areas.

4. Impact of Globalization

Globalization has significantly influenced the higher education system in India. The demand for higher education has increased, and India's higher education institutions have become more interconnected with the global education system through collaborations, research partnerships, and student exchange programs. A key indicator of globalization's impact is the number of foreign students enrolled in Indian universities. Table 4 below presents data on the enrollment of international students in Indian universities from 2010 to 2020:

Table no 4 Impact of Globalization

Year	Number of International Students (in thousands)	Top Countries of Origin	Percentage of Total Enrollment
2010	20	Nepal, Bangladesh, Afghanistan, Sudan	0.50%
2015	35	Nepal, Bangladesh, Iran, Afghanistan	0.90%
2020	50	Nepal, Bangladesh, Nigeria, Iraq, Bhutan	1.30%

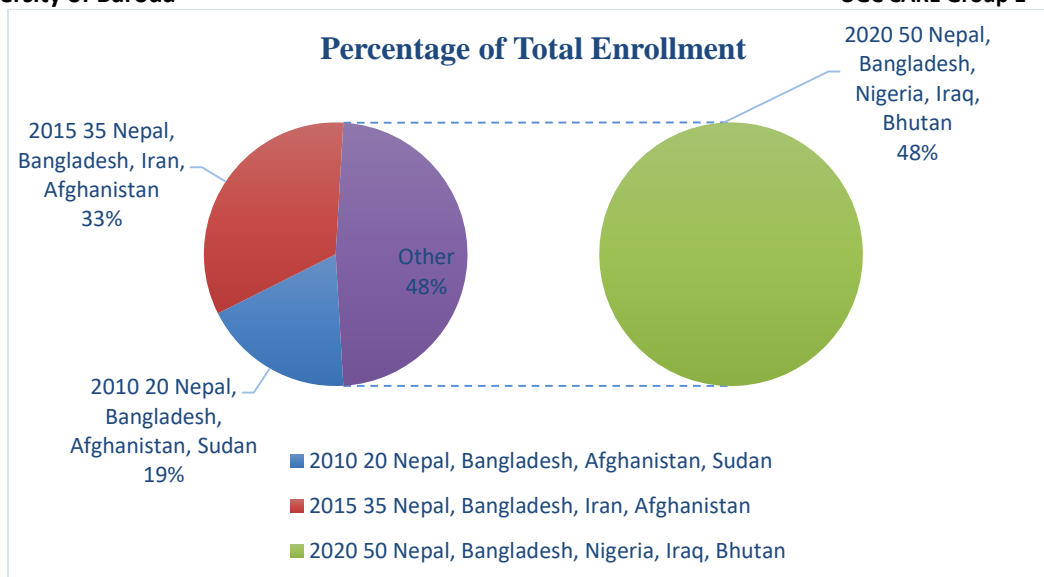


Figure no 3 Impact of Globalization

Discussion

The steady increase in the number of international students in India is a positive indicator of India's rising global prominence as a destination for higher education. However, India still lags behind other countries like the US, UK, and Australia in terms of attracting international students, largely due to issues related to infrastructure, teaching quality, and language barriers.

The results of this study indicate that while India's higher education system has grown significantly in terms of enrollment, institutional expansion, and international collaborations, several challenges remain. Key issues include the need for further quality improvements, increased funding for research and infrastructure, and better governance practices. Addressing these challenges will be critical for India to maintain its global competitiveness and ensure equitable access to quality education for all its citizens.

5. CONCLUSION

The higher education system in India has undergone significant transformations over the past several decades, influenced by various policy reforms, governance structures, and the impact of globalization. The findings of this study highlight both the achievements and the ongoing challenges that shape the current state of higher education in India.

The expansion of higher education institutions, both public and private, has been a notable achievement, reflecting increased access and growing demand for higher education. Policies such as the National Policy on Education (1986), the National Knowledge Commission (2006), and the Rashtriya Uchchar Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA) have played crucial roles in promoting this growth. However, while the quantity of institutions has expanded, the quality of education and infrastructure in many areas continues to be a significant concern, with only a fraction of institutions achieving top-level accreditation. Governance structures like the University Grants Commission (UGC) and the National Board of Accreditation (NBA) have worked to ensure quality assurance and standardization. Nevertheless, the slow pace of accreditation and limited funding for research and faculty development remain pressing issues. The increasing student-teacher ratio is another challenge that threatens the quality of education, as overcrowded classrooms can hinder effective learning outcomes.

Globalization has also left a marked impact on the Indian higher education system, with rising numbers of international students and increasing collaborations with foreign institutions. While this has bolstered India's standing as an education hub, it also presents the challenge of making Indian universities globally competitive in terms of research output, teaching quality, and student experience. In conclusion, while India's higher education sector has made significant strides in terms of accessibility, internationalization, and policy reforms, there are still substantial hurdles to overcome. These include improving the quality of education, reducing disparities between urban and rural institutions, addressing faculty shortages, and enhancing research capacity. To truly realize its potential, India must continue to focus on both expanding access to higher education and ensuring that it remains high-quality, inclusive, and globally competitive. Addressing these challenges will be critical for the future success of higher education in India and for supporting the country's broader socio-economic development goals.

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