

## **PUBLIC PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP IN STRENGTHENING THE BASE OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN INDIA**

**Dr. Sonali Mishra, Arun B Prasad, Dr. Padam Bhushan, Dr. Deo karan Ram, Dr. Anjali Singh**

Associate Professor Lloyd Law College. Sonali.mishra@lloydlawcollege.edu.in

Assistant Professor (Economics), Institute of Law, Nirma University, Ahmedabad -382481, ORCID ID:  
0000-0002-6108-9219. Email: arunprasad16@gmail.com

Associate Professor, University Business School, Chandigarh University. bhushanpadam01@gmail.com

Associate Professor & HOD, Nims School of Petroleum and Chemical Engineering, NIET, Nims  
University Rajasthan, Jaipur 303121. ORCID ID: 0000-0003-3783-6138. Email I'd-  
drdeokaranram@gmail.com

Associate Professor, Faculty of Under Graduate Management Studies, Manav Rachna International  
Institute of Research and Studies. singh.anjali.5787@gmail.com

### **Abstract**

If we look at the expenditure being made by the government on higher education, then it is clear that more focus of the government is on educating the population of the country or on primary education itself. There has always been a dearth of higher resources for higher education. Since the Fourth Five Year Plan, there has been a drastic reduction in higher education. During the fourth plan, 25% of the total education expenditure was spent on higher education, whereas in the ninth plan only 12% was spent. The introduction of the National Policy on Education, 1986 started indicating the entry of privatization in education. In this policy, for the better functioning of higher education institutions, to collect donations and to help the local people in the maintenance of buildings and supply of items of daily use.

The Ministry of Human Resource Development has put forward some policy proposals, through which government schools are to be improved on the basis of private and public sector partnership. The Planning Commission has identified four business models on PPP basis to strengthen the education sector. Though private and public sector partnership is not the only way and it cannot be considered as the only solution to all the problems in the education sector, but there are some advantages of such partnership. In the field of education, the PPP model has been adopted in countries like America, England, New Zealand, Chile, Canada and Australia and there it has been very successful in terms of better achievements in education. It eliminates capital constraints, increases efficiency, reduces risk, increases speed, and reduces costs, increases accountability, quality control and flexibility. This article suggests how policy document strengthening the public education system through PPP also has a significant impact on future ownership practices in the higher education system in India.

**Keywords:** Higher education, PPP, Planning Commission, Policy, Government

### **Introduction**

In the report titled Higher Education - Lessons from Experiences released by the World Bank, it has been clearly stated in relation to Indian education that it is certainly logical to say that in those developing countries, which have so far achieved adequate quality, equity and required education in primary and secondary education. Srivastava, P. (2010). Availability is not achieved, higher education should not claim priority over available public resources. Because it is usually much more than the investment made in primary and secondary education. The 'Mahmud Rehman Committee' constituted in relation to the review and reform of the fee structure in the Central Universities and the Delhi University. It also became clear from the recommendations of the 'Anand Krishnan Committee' constituted in relation to the review and reform of the fee structure that now preparations have been made to pass on the expenses of higher education to the parents. Datta, A. (2009).

The gist of the reports of all these committees is that the expenditure on higher education is a waste of precious national resources in the current economic context. Thus now the only option left is to open the doors of higher education to the private sector to compensate for the loss caused by the government's retreat. How could education have avoided falling prey to the increasing privatization? In the field of primary education, this process started long back. In the last decade, there has been a rapid privatization of higher education. Ever since the 'self-financing' solution has been found, many private schools are being opened in every district in different provinces of the country. Now this flood has reached private universities. Chatterjee, R., & Shaw, R. (2015).

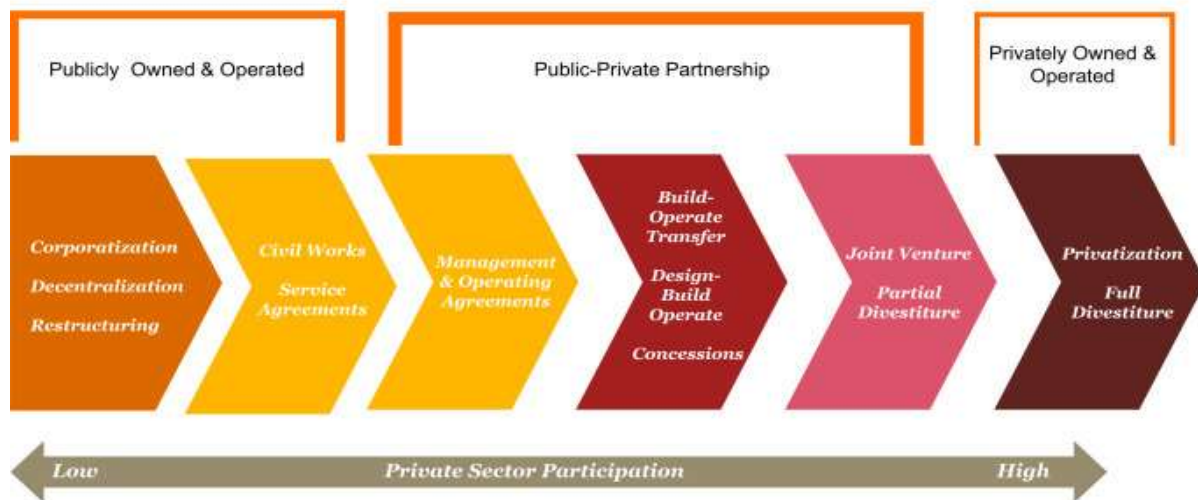
The situation can be gauged from some figures. According to the 'National Knowledge Commission', 1500 new universities will be required by 2020, keeping in view the needs of India. There is a demand of students and parents that new subjects should be taught so that the chances of getting a job increase. The middle class and its right and wrong income is expanding in India. Students of this class have turned to private universities abroad. Private universities are flooded in India for those who cannot afford to study abroad. It is being promised here that the same quality as abroad will be made available for Rs 3-5 lakh per annum. Mehta, A., Bhatia, A., & Chatterjee, A. (Eds.). (2010).

As long as the government claimed to follow the path of socialism, education and health were considered its responsibility. After taking the path of Pashvakaran, governments started pulling hands from areas of public welfare like these. Since then there has been a massive private enterprise in both the education and health sectors. Since then the entrepreneurs of India started investing money in these areas in the same way as in any other sector. There is also an additional trick of earning virtue that is, doing public welfare. Meissner, D. (2019).

Earlier university meant where all kinds of education were available. Till the nineteenth century, humanities, social sciences, natural sciences and new subjects were also taught in universities in the world. In the twentieth century, the importance of job guaranteeing subjects i.e. professional subjects increased, so such institutions were also declared as universities where only certain subjects were taught, such as India's first engineering college in Roorkee was declared a university. Some institutions came to be called 'deemed universities' i.e. institutions like universities. Some were made 'Centers of Excellence'. Thus discrimination like caste distinction came into force in educational institutions as well. Shiji, O. (2014).

### Concept of Public Private Partnership

#### CONTINUUM OF PUBLIC PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP ARRANGEMENTS FOR INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS



Source: [www.scieeDirect.com](http://www.scieeDirect.com)

Privatization refers to a process in which formerly government-run or restricted entities are transferred to a private entrepreneur or institution for operational management. N K Ghodke has defined privatization as "the term generally refers to the process which reduces the investment of the state or public sector in the economic activities of a country". According to A.N. Agrawal, "Privatization in colloquial language means change of ownership of enterprises from government or public sector to private sector or private companies. It is the transfer of ownership to the whole or a part of the public sector units. Saravanakumar, A. R., & Padmini Devi, K. R. (2020).

According to the Indian Constitution, education is the responsibility of the states. The main objective of which is to develop such abilities and skills in every person, so that he can become a responsible and cooperative citizen. After independence, there was a continuous increase in the number of institutions in the field of education at various places in India, and many commissions, University Commission, Secondary Education Commission, Kothari Commission etc. were also formed to improve education. Patrinos, H. A., Osorio, F. B., & Guáqueta, J. (2009). A new education policy was prepared, but the situation cannot be said to be satisfactory. Therefore, due to the system prevailing in the field of education, in view of the declining quality, it is being considered that education should be privatized. Today many private colleges and universities are also being opened along with private educational institutions of pre-primary, primary and secondary level. The concept of self-financing of institutions by the

government, has provided opportunities for privatization to spread rapidly. There has been an influx of private institutions in the fields of medicine, technology, and management and teacher education. Samii, R., Van Wassenhove, L. N., & Bhattacharya, S. (2002).

The pathetic condition of government-run and maintained educational institutions remains a matter of serious concern. Due to lack of necessary infrastructure facilities like modern class rooms, rich library, laboratory, playground and proper arrangement of materials, qualified and trained teachers etc., their educational level is deteriorating day by day. Both teachers and students are involved in political activities. Gopalan, P. (2013). The trend of teachers is increasing towards tutoring and coaching. Classes in the schools are negligible. As a result, despite obtaining high level degrees, the student is devoid of subject knowledge. These circumstances have not only raised the demand for privatization of education but have also paved the way for them. Provided ideological support to the concept of privatization of quality education being provided by some private institutions. Neema, S. (2012).

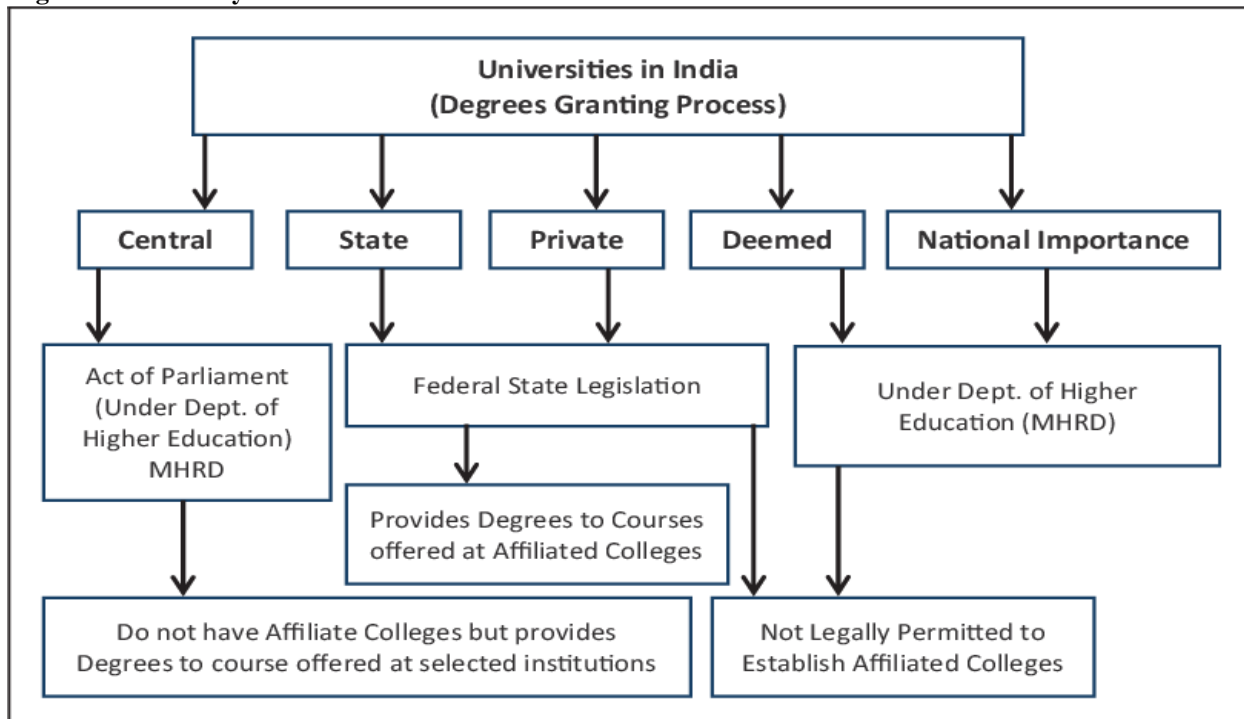
### **Privatization of Higher Educations**

Expansion of higher education facilities is the need of the hour. Following New Education Policy (1986-92), there were efforts to strengthen open and distance learning system at university stage. However, during the nineties the international support was given on focusing more on expanding the base of elementary education. Since then various grants came for strengthening lower base of education in developing countries like India. Vijayalakshmi, C. (2013). The 21st century demands quality human resources employment in various sectors of development. From quantitative point of view, Indian system of higher education absorbs around two percent population of age cohort of 17-23 years age group. This figure needs to be doubled to project our strength in the field of higher education in a knowledge society. There are a few reasons which hinder rapid expansion of government or government aided institutions. While resources constraint is projected as a major barrier, lack of political will to strengthen the base of higher education through government initiatives come on the way. Srivastava, P. (2010). Moreover, bureaucratic system acts as a hindrance to autonomy of functioning of the higher education system. Delayed delivery of goods, apathetic attitude of the functionaries and top to bottom direction oriented governance mechanism do not promote smooth functioning of the system. The private unaided systems contribute significantly towards expansion of higher education, particularly in the area of professional education. Lack of service oriented approach integrated with commercial motive adds to exploitation of target groups with hallow incentives for employability of its products in limited sectors of employment. As a result, neither the government sector nor the private sector play healthy role in promoting higher education in true sense. Muralidharan, K. (2006).

The government systems having rich and qualified potentials of human resources for teaching and research are either over utilized or under-utilized depending on the contextual realities. On the part of the private sector having attractive and lucrative infrastructure of professional programmes lack qualified and motivated staff and clear cut mission for delivery of goods to its stakeholders. They concentrate mainly on examination oriented activities with view to meet formal requirements of award of degrees and certificates. In spite of the existence of regulatory bodies, the lust for acquiring recognition along with higher rating at any cost, pushes back the ultimate purpose of higher education from the ground reality. Unfortunately the politically and economically affluent groups find it more lucrative to promote such kind of private institutions by neglecting their role in the management of public system. Robertson, S., Mundy, K., & Verger, A. (Eds.). (2012).

The knowledge commission report, 2006 insisted on fast expansion of higher education institutions with due emphasis on private sectors responsibilities in it. However, the public sector must come forward to provide leadership to well-motivated private institutions for strengthening quality of the system. The private system must be open to promote quality educational practices by involving innovators and the researchers who may be working in the public sector. They must extend material support to the government system since they avail a lot of government subsidies and benefits to provide higher education programmes. Luthra, M., & Mahajan, S. (2013). The industrialists must come forward to promote research activities and infrastructure support in the government institutions of higher learning. There must be collaborative ventures between higher education institutions and the industries in conducting research and development activities aiming at improving productivity and meeting the needs of the outer community. Continuous communications and networking of different kinds of government and non-government institutions shall strengthen the journey for quality higher education in the country.

### Higher Education System in India



Source: <https://www.semanticscholar.org/>

The 21st century is dominated by a society driven by information and knowledge. Technological changes are taking place around the world due to industrialization and economic expansion. As such, universities are expected to play an important role in social change and break the barrier of the one-disciplinary structure that has been in place since the 19th century. The importance of education is paramount in the development of society, which brings technology and economic growth. The maximum development of the society can be achieved only when the level of education is raised for the all-round development of the people. Higher education is vital to the aspirations, values and development priorities of the society. All these should be regularly evaluated and improved. Raman, A. V., & Björkman, J. W. (2008).

India has the largest higher education system in the world with more than 45 thousand higher education institutions. It has increased four times since 2001. But the sector is still facing challenges like inadequate funding, difficulties in getting employment for students, low standard of teaching, poor governance and complicated regulatory process. Based on the trend of India's population, it will soon overtake China to become the most populous country in the world. In this context, the demand for higher education will also increase rapidly in the coming years. Akintoye, A., Beck, M., & Kumaraswamy, M. (Eds.). (2015).

India's higher education system was first designed to meet the needs of a select few. Now it should be changed to make it workable for more people. There are currently 1,043 universities in the country. These include 49 central universities, 405 state universities, 135 institutions of national importance, 126 deemed to be universities and 328 private universities. Apart from these there are 42,343 colleges and 11,779 standalone institutions. This number is increasing continuously. Tiwari, R. (2007).

About 3.5 crore students have taken admission in higher education. Of these, 1.96 crore are boys and 1.89 crore are girl students. That is, 49 percent of the total enrollment are girls. India will have the maximum number of students and girl students enrolling in higher education by the year 2025. India will have the largest number of young people pursuing higher education by 2030.

#### Examining the ideas of private public relationship as revealed in policy documents

Encouraging private sectors initiative in higher education at a mass scale is a recent phenomenon. The policy documents and commission reports upto the nineties did not touch this component seriously. It is only after promotion of liberal economy and globalization society, the thoughts were directed towards promotion of private

investment in higher education following a typical model of cost benefit approach. Sharma, D., Gupta, D., Chowhan, D., & Srivastava, M. (2015).

For the first time in India, the industrialists ventured in policy formulation in education through Ambani-Birla report in the year 2000. At the same time of NDA regime, a policy framework for reforms in education document stressed on the need for private investment in education. It advocated the creation of “a credit market for education, together with selective scholarships especially in higher education.” The report also stressed that a climate of competition among educational institutions must be fostered. Gupta, A. (2008). The ideas of decentralization of management of public institutions, as well as expansion of private institutions was the major recommendation. It can be commented that a business model talked about competition in place of collaboration, that too the motive of competition if any business sector remain on enhancing financial output. The competition is not visible in quality products when the key motive of businessmen remains on getting higher monetary returns. In this context, demand for autonomy of higher education by the industrialists is quite genuine to serve their purpose. Mahalingam, A., & Delhi, V. S. K. (2012).

A significant document known as Yashpal committee report during the UPA I regime on renovation and rejuvenation of higher education, (2008-09), discussed the phenomena of privatization in higher education. It pointed out the corrupt and less transparent practices of private colleges and universities. It also criticized that “the solution to the unscrupulous methods of some private investors should not mean doing away with their participation in the field of higher education together.” Jindal, R. M., Patel, T. G., & Waller, S. G. (2017). While encouraging participation of the private sector in higher education, the government cannot afford to abandon the responsibility for further augmentation of existing capacity entirely on the private sector. The comments on such report can be geared towards expecting much from a proposed regulatory body like NCHER. What magic it can do to strengthen the quality control practices at national and state level in the age of privatization, is a serious question to be pondered upon. Patrinos, H. A., Osorio, F. B., & Guáqueta, J. (2009).

As a contemporary effort to strengthen higher education in the era of knowledge economy, the UPA I regime also appointed a commission called National Knowledge Commission (NKC) (2006-09). The NKC talked at length about the role of higher education in economic growth. It talked that producing new knowledge and protecting existing resources is crucial for a nation to compete in the global knowledge economy. It stressed on massive expansion of opportunities, to around 1500 universities nationwide, that would enable India to attain gross enrolment ratio at least 15% by 2015. It criticized the money making motives of private institutions that reinvigorating the present universities and scaling them up make a more sound policy initiative. It stressed on private ventures in higher education, however, not at the cost of quality. The NKC recommended for creation of an independent body called IRHAE to initiate quality control mechanism at national level. Singh, G., & Khan, M. S. (2015).

### **Conclusion**

The recent documents insist on fast expansion of higher education institutions with due emphasis on private sectors responsibilities in it. However, the public sector must come forward to provide leadership to well-motivated private institutions for strengthening quality of the system. The private system must be open to promote quality educational practices by involving innovators and the researchers who may be working in the public sector. They must extend material support to the government system since they avail a lot of government subsidies and benefits to provide higher education programmes. The industrialists must come forward to promote research activities and infrastructure support in the government institutions of higher learning. There must be collaborative ventures between higher education institutions and the industries in conducting the research and development activities aiming at improving productivity and meet the need of the outer community.

Continuous communication and networking of different kinds of government and non-government institutions shall strengthen the journey for quality higher education in the country. Besides linkage of public institutions with private institutions, immediate steps should be taken for networking and collaboration of public institutions i.e. among government semi government universities and colleges and research institutions. Collaboration and co-operation should be the motto of development of higher education rather than encouraging competition among institutions of higher education. It can be concluded that in the era of globalization and ICT there should be more scope for sharing the material and manpower resources, academic programmes, learning materials and providing multiple alternative opportunities to the students for higher education not only at state/ national level but also at international level.

There are many models of private and public sector participation in education, but we should choose according to our needs and circumstances. We have to address the challenges in the field of education through multi-layered approaches and imaginative solutions. The use of private capital with public money does not mean that the government has lost its responsibility to provide good education, but it means that we are trying a more efficient and just method. Only a multi-pronged approach can take us forward.

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