Landon Gomillion

Homeschool

Carthage, MS

India, Education

**Encouraging growth and culture in India**

For as long as you can remember, you have attended some kind of formal education. From preschool to college, several extracurricular activities on the side and a variety of classes along the way. However, in India most school aged children will have no access to any education, formal or not. Those that do often travel absurd distances to enter a school that often has few teachers, few resources and extremely inefficient systems in place. Many students aren’t allowed to receive an education due to their gender, race, or place in the caste system. Leaving them unprepared and unable to claim any kind of job security and diminishing any chance of higher-level education.

The traditional family structure of India is ruled by a patriarch. This will usually be the father or eldest son of the family. The wife of the father will typically supervise the daughters or women of the family, this often secludes the women of the family. Family relationships with uncles and aunts are often as strong as parental relationships, however, this tradition is usually absent in urbanized locations. The average household size is 4.44 undergoing an average 0.9 decline (Global Data).

Housing is often constructed of cement, metal, bricks, wood, marble, concrete, clay and stone. There is usually some kind of plumbing in place in homes, but due to water shortages the toilets cannot be properly used. Electricity is also found, but blackouts cause outlets to be useless most of the time.

Average daily calorie intake in India is less than the recommended 2503 kcal/capita/day. Meat, fish, eggs fruits, vegetables and legumes are much lower than recommended as well (nih.gov). It is hard to accurately compare average diet among the many populations of because of great variation between the different states in India. But generally, the average diet is high in carbohydrates, saturated fat, trans fat and fiber.

64 percent of the overall 1.4 billion Indian population in living in rural environments (worldbank.org). 60.5% of the land in India is used for crops, which is about 154 million hectares. The average farm size, however, is 1.15 hectares or about 2.8 acres (about the area of a Manhattan city block).

The climate of India is greatly varied between different states, this makes generalizations regarding geography difficult. The northern portion of India is an alpine tundra with glaciers. The west is more of a desert. The southwest is more tropical with rainforests. The highest mountain range in India is the Himalayas. The oldest mountain range that has formed in India are the Aravalli Mountain ranges. The Vindhya Mountain range separates the northern and southern portions of India.

The government of India is defined as a parliamentary democracy. There are three branches of the union government charged with different responsibilities. India has an executive branch that consists of a president, vice president and a council of ministers led by a prime minister. There is a legislative branch with the lower and upper house of parliament. The president of India is Droupadi Murmu, the vice president is Jagdeep Dhankhar, and the prime minister is Narendra Modi.

India follows a 10+2+3 education system. The first decade of school is mandatory, it begins at age 5 in preschool, but is not compulsory until age six. Primary school begins at age six, students must participate until the age of 14 is reached. Beyond that, school is optional.

Nearly 50 per cent of minors do not finish secondary education, whilst around 20 million do not attend even pre-school. (Rapid survey of children 2013-2014 MWCD). Approximately half of primary school-going children are not accomplishing grade appropriate learning levels (National Achievement Survey NCERT 2017).

There have already been great measures to help in this crisis. According to the UNICEF “India has made great strides in improving access to quality education, increasing elementary school enrollment and reducing the number of out-of-school children”. Those achievements are bolstered by key policies, programmes and laws such as the Right of children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act (2009)”.

The first solution that comes to mind when thinking of an improvement on the Indian education system would be to begin compulsory education at an earlier age. This would assist in making school a more natural part of Indian life so that the youth might reconsider abandoning formal education. But of course, many children simply cannot access any schools or teachers due to living too far away from any educational centers. Major improvement in infrastructure would be required to bring children from rural residencies to a proper educational facility.

Increasing the quality of education would be the most important task to encourage education in India. Most children may not be getting enough out of their current education course and are simply wasting time by staying in an inefficient school that does not prepare them for the job market. But because of the poor education quality, it would be extremely difficult to hire teachers domestically. To acquire more qualified teachers, they may have to be hired from foreign countries if that is possible.

According to Sushrut Desai (a Senior law student at the government law college in Mumbai, India) the marginalization of women has majorly affected the educational opportunities of India. “For scheduled caste and scheduled tribe girls, the gender gap in education is almost 30 per cent at the primary level and 26 per cent at the upper primary stage. In India's most depressed regions, the probability of girls getting primary education is about 42 per cent lower than boys, and it remains so even when other variables, such as religion and caste, are controlled.
It will take a bold and creative policy to bridge this gap. Acknowledging this, the Indian Government has made female education a priority”

This major flaw could be avoided by conducting proper centralization within the wider Indian education system. Federally removing exclusion of students based on their place in the caste system, gender, race or religion would make it much easier to obtain a greater number of educated Indian citizens. But due to divided and unrestricted education systems, it can make obtaining a proper education as a women or lower born caste member nearly impossible.

Many students may be leaving school due to the grading system, In the past it was required to obtain at least 99% to get the equivalent to an “A” but this was lowered to 90% in a 2015 education reform. But a further decrease in standards may improve the numbers of participating students, at the cost of educational quality. But I believe some amount of education, even if poor, would be better than children dropping out of school.

Indian students are held back by many challenging issues, such as a regressive, self-defeating tradition of preventing women’s education, harrowing lack of the infrastructure required to bring students to school and inefficient grading and teaching systems. But there is great promise in the future of India in continued education and cultural reforms to bring more opportunities and of higher quality.

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