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## Community engagement in Indian higher education: Financial and partnership trends

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### ABSTRACT

Because of the size and complexity of higher education in India, there are a multitude of strategies for addressing financial partnerships and trends. India, as the world's largest democracy and a country with a recent colonial history struggles with the pressures of tradition on one hand and outside influence on the other. It is not possible to address all of the issues and strategies in one paper. Accordingly, this paper discusses three issues that relate to the funding of higher education in India: neoliberal economics, business/government relationships, and philanthrocapitalism and their impact on the formation of private universities in satisfying the need for increased participation in higher education in India.

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### 1. Introduction

India, as the world's largest democracy, plays an interesting role in the development of higher education as it weaves a future that is impacted by both globalization and Western influence. These trends have put pressure on the system as it moves toward an American compatible four-year degree while at the same time attempting to provide meaningful education to a broader range of students in an efficient manner.

The tension between higher education as a public good funded by the government or a private benefit funded by the individual serves as an undercurrent to the discussions regarding financing higher education in India. This tension is complicated by the growing income inequality in India as the majority of the gains of income since the 1980s have gone to the super rich (Basole, 2015).

In general, planning and funding of higher education in India is centralized and bureaucratic with complicated processes of accreditation and approval. This is especially complex when considering the large number of private universities and colleges in the Indian higher education mix. Adding to the complexity is the sheer size of India with a population greater than Europe and

nearly four times as large as the United States. Agarwal (2009, p. xxx) well describes this challenge:

Institutions of higher education . . . are embedded in the history and culture of a nation and are shaped by its contemporary realities, ideologies and vested interests. India's large size, long history and diverse culture and the complicated nature of Indian polity and policy process make Indian higher education a very complex enterprise.

India differs from many other countries in that only universities are authorized to award degrees. The universities award their own degree, and a college must be affiliated with a university in order to award a degree. The institutes of national importance also award degrees in their respective specialties, i.e. medicine, science, and engineering. There are five categories of institutions that can award degrees in India: central (national) universities, state universities, institutes of national importance, private universities, and deemed-to-be-universities. The first three are publicly funded and the last two are privately funded.

Currently, the cost of higher education varies greatly, even within the same category of institution. For example, in Tamil Nadu, five sample colleges had annual tuition for a BA in Economics ranging from 1000 Rupees at CBM College of Arts and Science (US \$15) to 39,590 Rupees (US\$584) at Madras Christian College.

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<sup>1</sup> 100 Indian Rupees (INR) = US\$1.48 on 30 June 2016 according to Oanda.com.

Similarly, in Bangalore, the annual tuition for a BA in Economics could be 71,000 Rupees (US\$1048) at Jain University, or a low of 300 Rupees (US\$4.43) at Dayanand Danku Paraga Gyan Uday Mahavidyalaya.<sup>1</sup>

Because of the size and complexity of higher education in India, there are multiple strategies for addressing financial partnerships and trends. India, with a recent colonial history, struggles with the pressures of tradition on one hand and outside influence on the other. Discussion with experts (Altbach, 2015; Johnstone, 2015) reveal that there is little creative or new financing on the public side of higher education, but there are some interesting alternatives on the private side. These private funding models that address meeting the needs of expanding higher education within the context of restricted public funding are outlined. Specific attention is given to the disadvantaged. Accordingly, this paper discusses three issues relative to the funding of higher education in India: neo-liberal economics, business/government relationships, and a relatively new concept, philanthrocapitalism, the philosophy of applying capitalistic style objectives and criteria to directing philanthropic enterprises.

1.1. General trends in financing higher education

Throughout the world the financing of higher education has become problematic over the last decades. These problems are the result of six trends that Johnstone (2009, 2015) refers to as dramatic changes. These changes are often discussed within the context of higher education in the developed economies of Europe

and North America but become even more problematic when considered within a developing economy such as India.

First, India has emerged as a significant international player in the world economy and is striving to improve and grow its higher education enrollments, institutions, and quality. This dramatic growth requires increased investment on a per unit basis. As a result of this growth, the drivers of increasing unit costs that are outlined by Johnstone are even more accentuated in a country such as India. For example, the percentage increase in investment in research is by necessity quite high in a country that is developing new research from a lower base of research productivity than that in a developed nation.

Second, unlike North America and Europe, which have experienced slow growth in higher education enrollment, India is projected to continue to experience more robust numbers of participants in higher education as its relatively young population enters the workforce. Because India has had a lower participation rate than the more developed nations, the potential for increased participation and therefore increased numbers is greater than in the West. Correspondingly, the Government's Twelfth and Thirteenth Five-year Plans set an ambitious target of a 32% Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in Indian higher education by 2022, significantly higher than the 15% target from 2012.

Third, India sees itself as a low cost contributor to the world's knowledge-based economy. As early as 2005 the World Bank endorsed India as a country well suited for such a role. At that time Dahlman and Utz (2005) stressed that the combination of a large number of English speakers educated in the sciences and the large

**Table 1**  
European countries with populations similar to Indian states.

Indian state	Population, 2011	European country with similar population	Population, 2015
Uttar Pradesh	199,281,477	Russia	142,098,141
Maharashtra	112,372,972	Russia	142,098,141
Bihar	103,804,637	Russia	142,098,141
West Bengal	91,347,736	Germany	82,562,004
Madhya Pradesh	72,597,565	Spain & Netherlands & Switzerland	72,281,874
Tamil Nadu	72,138,958	Spain & Netherlands & Switzerland	72,281,874
Rajasthan	68,621,012	France	64,982,894
Karnataka	61,130,704	United Kingdom	63,843,856
Gujarat	60,383,628	Italy	61,142,221
Andhra Pradesh	49,386,799	Spain	47,199,069
Odisha	41,947,358	Ukraine	424,646,131
Telangana	35,286,757	Poland	38,221,584
Kerala	33,387,677	Belgium & Greece & Czech Republic	32,897,000
Jharkhand	32,966,238	Belgium & Greece & Czech Republic	32,897,000
Assam	31,169,272	Greece & Czech Republic & Portugal	31,848,000
Punjab	27,704,236	Hungary & Serbia & Belarus	28,595,092
Chhattisgarh	25,540,196	Austria & Switzerland & Bulgaria	23,909,012
Haryana	25,353,081	Austria & Switzerland & Bulgaria	23,909,012
Jammu and Kashmir	12,548,926	Belgium	11,183,411
Uttarakhand	10,116,752	Portugal	10,610,014
Himachal Pradesh	6856,509	Bulgaria	7112,641
Tripura	3671,032	Bosnia and Herzegovina	3819,840
Meghalaya	2964,007	Lithuania	2998,969
Manipur	2721,756	Albania	2998,969
Nagaland	1980,602	Latvia	2031,361
Goa	1457,723	Estonia	1280,227
Arunachal Pradesh	1382,611	Estonia	1280,227
Mizoram	1091,014	Estonia	1280,227
Sikkim	607,688	Montenegro	621,556
Delhi (NCR)	16,753,235	Netherlands	16,844,195
Puducherry UT	1244,464	Estonia	1280,227
Chandigarh UT	5468,610	Finland	5460,592
Andaman and Nicobar Islands UT	379,944	Iceland	336,728
Dadra and Nagar Haveli UT	342,853	Iceland	336,728
Daman and Diu UT	242,911	Jersey and Isle of Man (UK)	249,252
Lakshadweep UT	64,426	Andorra	80,950

Sources: Created by the author with data from the Official 2011 Census of India and United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (2015).

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