

**HIGHER EDUCATION & ITS EFFECT ON SOCIETY****Dr. Vimmi Behal**

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**Abstract:** - People generally think of college education in personal terms. Students invest considerable time and energy, in addition to dollars, into building their futures through education. The prospect of wider opportunities and a higher standard of living leads families to save in advance, sacrifice current consumption opportunities, and go into debt in order to enable their children to continue their education after high school.

**INTRODUCTION****HIGHER EDUCATION IN INDIA**

“Education is more than just reading the sciences and reading bio technology or specializing in particular sphere. I think, the primary goal of our education has to be the development of the human being to be a better human being. All our aims, whether they are technological or scientific, must be towards the same end. When we are able to achieve and move towards this target we shall really see a betterment coming about in India...

” Rajiv Gandhi Indian tradition is steeped in the highest philosophical foundation laid by her ancient sages and seers in the course of their pursuit of the highest knowledge and excellence. Ancient records of this good Indian tradition testify that India had a highly developed system of higher education at par with the modern university system. Historically the earliest university in India dates back to 6<sup>th</sup> century BC and was set up in Takshashila, now in Pakistan. Later in fourth and fifth century AD the highly acclaimed universities of Nalanda and Vikramasila came in to existence. The modern higher education system is 150 years old with the first three universities being set up in Bombay, Calcutta, and Madras in 1857 under the British rule. The ‘Sutra Literature’ mentions the greatness of a teacher. A unique feature of Indian tradition is the unstained and undiluted respect and devotion towards the Teacher or Guru’.Guru,literally means “one who deserves and commands ‘Gaurava’or

‘Honour.’Gu means darkness and Rumeans removal and hence Guru is the one who removes darkness. Guru leads one from darkness unto light”

The broader societal benefits of investment in higher education receive less attention, but are fundamental to the well-being of our nation. State governments appropriate billions of dollars per year for public colleges and universities and the federal government provides grants, loans, and work assistance, as well as tax credits and deductions, to help students finance postsecondary education. Nonetheless, awareness of the ways in which we all benefit when educational opportunities increase is limited. It is impossible to evaluate the appropriate level of either private or public investment in higher education without a more concrete sense of the individual and societal benefits, in addition to the costs. Is the personal and public investment in higher education worth the cost? Is the investment adequate? This report examines the benefits to individuals and to society from our investment in higher education.

It also documents the uneven participation rates in higher education across different segments of U.S. society. The price tag on college makes frequent headlines, but the price tag on shortfalls in participation and success in higher education does not. Many people have a general sense that higher levels of education are associated with higher earnings and that college is a prerequisite for a comfortable middle-class

lifestyle. It follows logically that college graduates contribute more than others to the public treasury and also contribute in other important ways to social well-being. Similarly, it is no surprise that higher education reduces the probability of being dependent on society for support.

Strengthening these general concepts with specific information can increase our understanding of the contributions of higher education to both the equity and the efficiency of our society.

In the pages that follow, we describe a variety of the differences in the earnings, lifestyles, and behavior patterns corresponding to differences in levels of education. Some of the benefits of higher education documented in this report are widely cited; others are less well-known. We have attempted to bring generally available government statistics together with less familiar academic research in order to paint a detailed and integrated picture of the benefits of higher education and how they are distributed. Where possible, we have summarized complex analyses in a manner consistent with the straightforward presentation style of this report. We provide references to more in-depth and sophisticated analyses so that readers can pursue issues of particular interest.

Students who attend institutions of higher education obtain a wide range of personal, financial, and other lifelong benefits; likewise, taxpayers and society as a whole derive a multitude of direct and indirect benefits when citizens have access to postsecondary education. Accordingly, uneven rates of participation in higher education across different segments of Indian society should be a matter of urgent interest not only to the individuals directly affected, but also as a matter of public policy at the federal, state, and local levels.

This report presents detailed evidence of both the private and public benefits of higher education. It also sheds light on the distribution of these benefits by examining both the progress

and the persistent disparities in participation in postsecondary education.

**Benefits to individuals include:**

- There is a correlation between higher levels of education and higher earnings for all racial/ethnic groups and for both men and women.
- The income gap between high school graduates and college graduates has increased significantly over time. The earnings benefit to the average college graduate is high enough for graduates to recoup both the cost of full tuition and fees and earnings forgone during the college years in a relatively short period of time.
- Any college experience produces a measurable benefit when compared with no postsecondary education, but the benefits of completing a bachelor's degree or higher are significantly greater. As is the case for the individuals who participate, the benefits of higher education for society as a whole are both monetary and nonmonetary. Societal benefits include:
  - Higher levels of education correspond to lower levels of unemployment and poverty, so in addition to contributing more to tax revenues than others do, adults with higher levels of education are less likely to depend on social safety-net programs, generating decreased demand on public budgets.
  - College graduates have lower smoking rates, more positive perceptions of personal health, and lower incarceration rates than individuals who have not graduated from college.
  - Higher levels of education are correlated with higher levels of civic participation, including volunteer work, voting, and blood donation. Given the extent of higher education's benefits to society, gaps in access to college are matters of great significance to the country as a whole. This report shows that despite the progress we have made in improving educational opportunities, participation in higher education differs significantly by family income, parent education level, and other demographic characteristics.

**EFFECT OF HIGHER EDUCATION**

Much of the benefit of higher education accrues to individual students and their families. For members of all demographic groups, average earnings increase measurably with higher levels of education. Over their working lives, typical college graduates earn about 73 percent more than typical high school graduates, and those with advanced degrees earn two to three times as much as high school graduates. More educated people are less likely to be unemployed and less likely to live in poverty. These economic returns make financing a college education a good investment. Although incurring debt should always be approached with caution, even students who find it necessary to borrow a sizable share of the funds required to pay for college are likely to be financially better off relatively soon after graduation than they would be if they began their full-time work lives immediately after high school.

Society as a whole also enjoys a financial return on the investment in higher education. In addition to widespread productivity increases, the higher earnings of educated workers generate higher tax payments at the local, state, and federal levels, and consistent productive employment reduces dependence on public income-transfer programs. Because the individual outcomes affect others, it is not possible to neatly separate the benefits to individuals from those shared by society as a whole. For example, all workers benefit from the increased productivity of their coworkers, and unemployment causes the most damage to those who are out of a job, but also results in a loss to the entire economy.

In addition to the economic return to individuals and to society as a whole, higher education improves quality of life in a variety of other ways, only some of which can be easily quantified. Moreover, the economic advantages already mentioned have broader implications. For example, in addition to increasing material standards of living, reduced poverty improves the overall well-being of the population, and the

psychological implications of unemployment are significant. In addition, adults with higher levels of education are more likely to engage in organized volunteer work, to vote, and to donate blood; they are more likely to be in good health and less likely to smoke; and they are less likely to be incarcerated. The young children of adults with higher levels of education are read to more frequently than other children; they have higher cognitive skill levels and better concentration than other children. All of these areas affect social expenditures, in addition to general well-being. The indicators included here do not provide a comprehensive measure of the benefits of higher education. They do, however, provide an indication of the nature and extent of the return on our investment in educational opportunities.

**CONCLUSION**

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