

# Exceptional Book on India's Education Framework

## India's Education Paradox: National Policies and Regional Insights

**Bhaskar Parichha**

**I**ndia's Education Paradox: National Policies and Regional Insights by Debdas Banerjee is an fascinating book on education. Banerjee is a Fulbright Post-Doctoral Fellow at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and a former professor at the Central University of South Bihar and the Institute of Development Studies Kolkata.

Says the blurb, 'Education is championed as a fundamental human right. However, in India, inequality in education contributes the most to the overall inequality index. India's Education Paradox critiques the growing interpersonal and interstate educational inequalities along with the falling standards in education, through previous education policies, and in the way analyses the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. Contesting the routine constructs of 'inequality' and 'efficiency' in education with the help of alternative paradigms, the author examines the subject in the context of wide-ranging regional economic disparities, to take us a step closer to understanding why India is at the crossroads between 'expanding up' and 'expanding out'. Enriched with recent

data, the volume offers new insights into designing policy agenda by centering the 'capabilities' approach, and delving into the social choice dilemma between correcting the distribution and improving the standard of education; and, between education as a public good and as a private good. Analyzing the neglected aspects of fiscal policies and federal issues in the creation of opportunities, the author suggests an effective evaluation of reforms to ensure maximum impact on educational development. Also offered is a comparative understanding of the vocational systems of countries such as Finland, South Korea and China, having varying types of governance.' The book critiques the growing interpersonal and interstate educational inequalities in India, along with the falling standards in education. It examines these issues through previous education policies and the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. Banerjee contests traditional constructs of inequality and efficiency in education by using alternative paradigms. He emphasizes the need to view equality in education through the lens of capability formation, drawing from Amartya Sen's human capability approach. The book highlights wide-ranging regional economic

disparities and their impact on education. It suggests that India is at a crossroads between expanding accesses to education (expanding out) and improving its quality. The author advocates for a capabilities approach to improve school attendance and educational outcomes. This involves focusing on enhancing students' abilities and opportunities rather than just increasing enrollment numbers. It also discusses vocational education and training, noting poor enrollment in such programs in India. It compares vocational systems in countries like Finland, South Korea, and China to provide insights into effective vocational education models. Banerjee critiques the policy of creating elite higher education institutions, suggesting that this approach creates "islands of excellence" while neglecting the broader educational landscape. He argues for strengthening all institutions to ensure social equity and regional equality.

The book emphasizes the need for effective fiscal policies and cooperative federalism to address educational disparities. It highlights the importance of collective responsibility between the central and state governments in financing education. This meticulously researched

publication is a comprehensive resource that presents the most up-to-date data and insights, specifically tailored for scholars and practitioners in the fields of education. In addition to serving as an essential reference for academics, this publication is also designed to be a valuable tool for journalists, non-governmental organizations, and policymakers. These stakeholders play a crucial role in shaping public discourse and policy decisions, and this work equips them with the necessary knowledge to understand the complexities of the education landscape in India. By addressing the intricate challenges faced by the education system, such as access, quality, equity, and funding, this publication aims to foster informed discussions and promote evidence-based solutions. It highlights the interplay between education and broader socio-economic factors, emphasizing the importance of a holistic approach to reform.

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