



# Quality Of Higher Education In Odisha: Assessment By Students

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## Abstract

Education, widely regarded as the key to human and societal development, has raised critical issues and emancipated the human thought process in the pursuit of human liberty and dignity. In this sense, a quality higher education should enable personal accomplishment and enlightenment, constructive civic life, and productive human resources for nation building. With this context in mind and the view of educational quality indicators in mind, this paper conducts an empirical analysis of students' perceptions of the quality of higher education in the state of Odisha. The study used a structured questionnaire to conduct a comparative study of 209 students from two colleges in the Puri district. The paper concluded that higher education in Odisha is average, and the quality of higher education is hampered by structural and functional mechanisms, specifically the curriculum structure, libraries, and laboratory facilities, and the function of classroom and teaching facilities. According to the students' opinions, it will be improved by the self-assessment of teachers and management, proper vision, and the facilitation of desirable educational skills among the teachers by the government.

**Key words:** quality education, higher education, student assessment, higher education in Odisha, quality indicator, infrastructure, study environment, and quality teaching.

## I. Introduction

Education is viewed as the gateway to the all-round development of human beings and society. Elementary and secondary education meet the basic needs of daily life for the common man, but higher education takes humankind ahead in the competitive world, raises critical issues and facilitates critical knowledge about society, creates innovative ideas, and helps in the growth of nations. A quality higher education must enable personal accomplishment and enlightenment, constructive public engagement, and productive contribution to society. It must prepare students for more meaningful and satisfying lives and work roles, and enable economic independence. Thus, high-quality university and college education must aim to be

both a pleasure and an opportunity to which all citizens must have access if they so desire. It is observed that India's higher education system is the third largest in the world. But the emphasis has largely been on the quantitative expansion of the university system. When we look at the qualitative outcome, it is still a matter of concern. In a competitive world, the quality of higher education needs to improve. The quality of higher education plays a significant role in the nation-building process.

## II. Quality Indicators of Higher Education

There are various dimensions of quality in higher education. If an educational institution produces high-quality human resources, it can be said that their quality of education is high. The indicators of quality in higher education include the student-teacher ratio, availability of reading materials and teaching aids, teachers, books, journals, and other documents in libraries, infrastructure, curriculum, access to information technology, quality research, employability, etc. Where quality is better in institutions, excellence would come automatically. The notion of quality is closer to the concepts of efficiency, performance, and productivity. Ensuring quality in higher education is among the foremost challenges being faced in India today. According to NAAC (June 2010), not even 25 percent of the total higher education institutions in the country were accredited. Among those accredited institutions, only 30 percent of the universities and 45 percent of the colleges were found to be of sufficient quality to be ranked at the "A" level.

The educational system has acquired a dualistic character. It operates with strong class biases. In a highly unequal society like India, there is a huge disparity in the quality of education provided by educational institutions to students. 75 percent of Indian students are going to public institutions, and their quality of education is very poor. Only a small number of economically well-off students about 25 percent go to quality institutions run by private organizations. The former, larger group, is from the lower social strata, whereas the latter is from the elite class.

### III. Higher Education in Odisha

Odisha's population of 419.7 lakh (Census Report, 2011) is concentrated in rural areas, with only 17 percent living in urban areas. The SC and ST populations constitute 17.1 percent and 22.8 percent, respectively, in Odisha. The 18 to 23 age group has 47.1 lakh people, with 23.4 lakh men and 23.7 lakh women. While 13.4 percent have completed secondary education, there has been no access to any educational institution for 6.79 percent of the population. The literacy level is 72.9 percent, comparing well with the national level of 73.0 percent.

The Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) for the 18-23 age group in Odisha is 16.3 percent (18.4 percent male and 14.3 percent female), compared to overall India's GER of 20.4 percent (21.6 percent male and 18.9 percent female). In Odisha, the highest number of students (74.47 percent) are enrolled in under-graduate studies, followed by enrolment in diploma courses (12.42 percent) and post-graduate studies (9.96 percent). Male enrolment (52.94 percent) is higher than female enrolment (47.06 percent).

According to UGC, among Odisha's 33 universities, there are 22 state/public universities, 1 central university, 3 deemed universities, and 8 private universities. Odisha has 20 government degree colleges, 16 teacher education institutes, 277 non-government-aided composite colleges, and 289 non-government-aided degree colleges, according to the Higher Education Department, Odisha. According to the NAAC (National Assessment and Accreditation Council, September 28, 2021), in Odisha, 14 universities and 393 colleges are accredited.

The total number of teachers in Odisha is just under 96,919<sup>1</sup>(2015). In regular and distance modes, the PTR (Pupil Teacher Ratio) in Odisha is 25; and for regular courses, it is 23, compared to the national PTR of 26 and 23, respectively<sup>2</sup>. Odisha has a big network of Government Colleges. The colleges are established by the Government of Odisha but are affiliated with the autonomous universities. The total expenditure on higher education by the government of Odisha is approximately Rs. 1,200 crores, which represents 0.5 percent of its Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP). Although there are several studies done on the quality

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<https://www.google.com/search?q=total+no+of+primary+school+in+odisha&oq=total+no+of+primary+school+in+odisha&aqs=chrome..69i57j33i160j33i22i29i30.15580j0j15&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.dailypioneer.com/2021/state-editions/aishe-20-report--higher-edu-a-priority-of-naveen-govt.html#:~:text=Further%2C%20Pupil%2Dteacher%20ratio%20in,opener%20for%20the%20BJD%20Government.>

of higher education from the perspective of external agencies and researchers, the objective of this particular study focuses on the views of students on the quality of higher education.

#### **IV. Methodology**

The research design of the study is analytical in nature. The study used both secondary and primary sources of data. Books, journal articles, digital sources, and government reports are examples of secondary data. As for primary sources, data has been collected from the field. The tools of data collection included a questionnaire and group discussion for collecting data from students to get information on the quality of education. The field for the study was colleges belonging to the Kakatpur Block headquarters of Puri district in Odisha. It is located in the district's rural area. The study was based on stratified random sampling and covered B.A. final (third) year students of the two colleges at Kakatpur, namely Mangala Mahavidhyalaya and Netrananda Shaoo Women's College. The total number of samples in the study was 209. Out of that, 53 are male students and 156 are female students. Both colleges are non-government-aided degree colleges. The views from the field are given below. The study used a semi-structured questionnaire for data collection.

#### **V. Students' perspectives on Odisha's infrastructure for quality higher education**

It was found that the Mangala Mahavidyalay building is better than NS Women's College. Every department of Mangala College has its own rooms. Sciences and other practical subjects have a separate hall or laboratory. In this college, separate class rooms are assigned for intermediate and graduation students. 80 percent of students have said their classroom is good, very good, or excellent. The office section of the building is also divided according to their activities. This college has a separate room or hall for the official staff, the examination section, and the Student Administrative Management System (SAMS). The college has separate girl's common rooms, boy's common rooms, and staff common rooms. Besides, this college has a canteen, a boy's hostel, and a girl's hostel.

In the case of N.S. Women's College, over 64 percent of students have said their college building is not good. The actual state of the college building is deplorable. This college has five departments but not a similar number of classrooms. Both intermediate and graduation classes were held in the same rooms at different times. After August 2015 the separation of intermediate and degree colleges, now the degree

college has only four rooms assigned to degree courses, out of those three rooms, one is used for class, one is used for the principal chamber, and one is the staff common room. Both the intermediate college and the graduation college were on a single campus. The college is not fulfilling the common requirements of students, teachers, and office staff. The college area is very small, and the A building is like a personal building. There is no girl's common room, no hostel for students, and no separate staff common room.

#### **a. Class Room Facilities**

Over 80% of Mangala College students said their classroom facilities are good, very good, or excellent. That college has sufficient rooms for teaching purposes. But many classrooms have no connection with an electric power supply; these classrooms have not been properly renovated, and the building walls have not been plastered since 2006. Even after one decade, these second-floor buildings are not complete. It does not have windows and doors. For the summer season, students and teachers in the classroom don't have problems as Kakatpur is situated in a coastal area. But in the winter and rainy seasons, it is difficult to manage classes in this building due to rainwater entering the classroom in the rainy season and bitter cold in the winter season. Even this has affected the health of the students.

The management is indifferent to these classroom problems due to a lack of financial availability. On the other hand, the college is constructing a structure to house class rooms. Here, the college administration wants more classrooms for students, but these are being built in haphazard ways. They said that after building this new classroom, other buildings would be repaired. But the furniture, like desks and chairs for students, official staff, and teachers, is quite satisfactory in this college.

In the case of N.S. Womens College, 36 percent of students said their classroom facilities are good or very good. But as per my observation, the actual situation is very bad. Their class rooms are not renovated properly. No single window or door is fixed, as a result of which the students and teachers are suffering in the summer as well as in the winter. Even in this classroom, there is no electricity. There is not enough furniture for students and other official requirements. In this college, administrative work, examination work, and management work are going on a single table.

**b. communication, sanitation, and other facilities**

The communication facilities of Mangala College are very good in comparison to NS Womens' College. On one hand, Mangala College has a big campus. Roads are very good on the college campus. The distance from the college campus to the market road is very good. The sanitation at the college is very good, and the students and teachers are active about maintaining sanitation on the college campus. Students, teachers, and other staff use both the ladies' and boys' toilet because there has not separate toilet for them. I discovered two drinking water fountains on the college campus. One is near the library, and another is in the college canteen. On the other hand, N.S. Womens' College has no good communication facilities. There is no pacca road from the main road to the college. This college has one tube well for the entire building that is used by both degree and intermediate departments. The quality of the water has more iron content, which is not good for health. There is no outside water supply to the college, and there is no ladies' toilet. There is only one toilet in the entire college, which is used by intermediate, graduation, and college staff. It does not have canteen facilities either.

**c. Laboratory facilities**

At Mangala College, over 60 percent of students say that laboratory facilities are good, very good, or excellent. In that college, all science departments have their own laboratory. In the arts streams, practical subject departments like education and psychology have their own laboratory. The equipment in the laboratory is good. Whereas, in N.S.Womens College, there are five departments: education, psychology, history, political science, and sanskrit. In these departments, although two departments are practical subjects, namely education and psychology; there is no single teacher in these subjects. But the psychology teacher comes to college only once a month. Even this college does not have separate laboratory rooms.

**d. Library facilities**

At Mangala College, over 90 percent of students said that library facilities are very good, good, and excellent. There are two library rooms in that college: one is the stock room, and the other is the reading room. In that library, books and hard copies of journals are available. Every departmental book is available according to the college syllabus structure. The library employs two people: one who is in charge of

distributing books to students and organising the library's books, and another who is in charge of maintaining discipline in the reading room. In the case of N.S. Women's College, 66% of students said the library was "good," very good," or "excellent." But in that college library, it is combined with the intermediate college library. A small room was used for the purpose of a library in that college. That room is used for two purposes: one is the staff common room, and the other is the library stock room. There are no reading room facilities. There are no sufficient books for students in N.S.Womens College. Books are not arranged properly in this library, and there are no journals.

#### e. **Regularity of classes**

In Mangala College, over 70 percent of students said that the regularity of classes is very good, good, or excellent. In this college, every student in every department is attending class regularly. But the commerce classes are not regular because of a shortage of teachers, and only two teachers are in the entire department. These teachers are teaching both intermediate and graduation classes. Teachers are insufficient to cover all three years of graduation classes and two years of intermediate classes. Some teachers at this college engage in private tuition classes. In contrast, classes at N.S.Womens College are irregular. In this college, education is affected due to the shortage of classrooms for graduation students; there is no teacher for compulsory subjects as well as for education departments. Besides, the other four departments have one teacher each. Even so, they are not regulars in college.

### **VI. Students' suggestion for improving quality of education Improving the quality of the syllabus**

Students have not expressed a unified opinion on how to improve the quality of the curriculum. Around half of the students suggested removing extraneous items from the syllabus and simplifying it, as well as changing and updating the syllabus every five years to reflect societal needs.

#### a. **Improving extracurricular facilities**

A common statement was found regarding the improvement of extracurricular facilities at both colleges: motivation should come from the teachers by creating awareness among the students, as well as more facilities for N.C.C at college. The college should hold an annual function that includes singing and dancing.

**b. Improving class room facilities**

Students proposed ICT facilities such as the installation of projectors, the expansion of college buildings for classroom purposes, the provision of electricity in classrooms, and so on, to improve classroom facilities. 22 percent of students said that new classrooms should be built for each department.

**c. Improving library facilities**

On the students' views on improving the library facilities, in the case of Mangala College, over 80 percent of students say the library facilities are good and they have no suggestions for their college. Students are urged to have journals and magazines in the college library. Students are demanding that we build a new library with big reading rooms. In the case of NSW College, students suggested that the library's book collection be expanded and that library staff visit the library on a regular basis.

**d. Improving laboratory facilities**

Regarding improving laboratory facilities, Mangala College students suggested that the intermediate and graduation laboratories should be separated. They have also suggested that sufficient instruments should be available in the laboratory. They advocated for the establishment of an active demonstration class and the appointment of a knowledgeable technician in the laboratory. Whereas, the majority of students (51.2 percent) said that laboratory facilities were not needed in their courses at Mangala College. In the case of N.S.Womens' College students, they said they didn't have any suggestions.

**e. Improving the quality of ICT facilities**

Regarding the suggestion for improving the quality of ICT facilities in both colleges, requiring computers with internet facilities was the common view of both colleges' students. The largest proportion of students (46 percent) said that they didn't have any ideas for giving suggestions about ICT.



#### f. Improving teacher effectiveness

In terms of improving teacher quality, students believe that teacher training programmes are critical for quality improvement. It is essential that the principal develop a mechanism for a monthly progress report on teachers' performance. Even 41.6 percent of students are unaware of teacher quality. Some students said, teacher training programme must be facilitated by the government for the improvement of teacher quality.

#### g. Improving the quality of teaching

Students agree that ICT is essential for improving teaching quality; they also advocate for the appointment of more teachers, student-centric teaching, providing a sufficient salary, teachers having clear-cut and vast knowledge for their teaching area, teachers following more books, teaching clearly and making it simple, teachers being regular and on time, and teachers being friendly towards students.

### V. Conclusion

The Twelfth Plan has highlighted expansion, equity, and excellence as the major concerns in higher education. Furthermore, adequate financial assistance, government support, proper policy implementation, administration and local governance support, and teachers are required for the expansion of any educational institution. Both Mangala College and N.S.Womens College need quality improvement according to the above indicators.

Mangala College is an integrated college with regular intermediate and graduation programmes and P.G.-level distance education courses. Arts, sciences, commerce streams, and vocational courses are also available at the intermediate level. Except for vocational courses, the other three streams are active at the graduation level. A university affiliated with Utkal University, Bhubaneswar offers distance education courses in social sciences and literature at the postgraduate level. In this college, most teachers teach both intermediate and graduate-level courses. Every department or stream has sufficient teachers, except the commerce department, where only two teachers are teaching both intermediate and graduation level courses. So the requirement for teachers in the commerce department is essential. The expansion of the

commerce department is essential in terms of class rooms, the appointment of more teachers, and keeping more books in the library for the students and teachers. According to NAAC, this college was considered a B-grade college in December 2016<sup>3</sup>. These deficiencies are identified by the standing committee as well. However, this college admits commerce students on a nearly equal footing with students from other streams. Due to a lack of teachers, the commerce classes are not going regularly. But commerce teachers are giving private coaching to the same students who are taking admission in this for the purpose of earning extra money. Here, students are taking admission and keeping contact with teachers to get better marks in examinations. College management is not so careful with the commerce stream. College and state government administrations should address the deficiencies identified by the NAAC and this study. The expansion of this stream should be given priority.

On a comparative basis, Mangala College has expansion issues related to only one department, whereas in N.S. Women's College the expansion issues relate to the total college's education system in all respects. There is only one graduation stream at N.S. Women's College. It is observed that it does not have sufficient buildings for class rooms, teachers, or furniture. This college does not have any other streams except arts, and there is no library at all. Before considering the equity and quality of this college's education system, total expansion is required. College management should be active about the expansion of all the facilities. This condition is not taking place due to a lack of financial support from the state government and the lack of motivation of management and teachers.

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20th Meeting of the Standing Committee '16th December 2016'

<sup>3</sup> 20th Meeting of the Standing Committee '16th December 2016'