

The Changing Process, Logic and Trend of Indian Higher Education Policy: An Analysis Based on the Framework of Historical Institutionalism

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Abstract: Since its independence, India's higher education policy has undergone over seven decades of development and evolution, continuous adjustment and improvement. Today the country has a relatively complete policy system. Based on the framework of historical institutionalism and Indian higher education policy reforms from 1947 to 2021, this article divides its policy evolution into three stages: the beginning, reform and development, and reform integration. The policy changes were examined by analyzing influential government documents and associated measures taken in higher education. From a structural perspective, it is concludable that the reform of the political system provided a backdrop for its evolution, and gradual transformation of the economic system laid the market foundation for it to take its current form. Additionally, changes in social and cultural concepts provided ideological roots. From a historical perspective, it is evident that its evolution was deeply influenced by the central government, higher education institutions, and individual students. In fact, a significant path dependence was developed, and key nodes in the educational network provided opportunities for reform of the Indian higher education system. Therefore, this study recommends that the reform of Indian higher education policy should continue to expand unswervingly in order to improve the quality of education in India, give full role to the demographic dividend, and ultimately promote the development of India as a nation.

1. Introduction

Since India achieved independence in 1947, the government has promulgated a series of policies to promote the development of higher education in terms of systematization, standardization, and institutionalization, gradually forming a government-backed, system-based, law-guaranteed developmental framework for higher education. By constantly standardizing and improving policies, India has achieved its goals of expanding the scale of higher education, establishing multiple higher education institutions at all levels, implementing various measures to promote equity, initiating effective quality assurance projects, and training a large number of high-qualification professionals.

By 2020, India's gross enrolment ratio in higher education institutions had reached 26.3%.^[1] It had the second highest number of post-secondary students of any country in the world.^[2] India's higher education policy system has greatly improved its development of human resources, facilitating modernization of the economy and the reform and development of the political system.^[3]

Despite these advances, Indian higher education has also faced many obstacles in the process of its development; the new policy system is imperfect, implementation has been uneven, and promotion has been poor.^[4] An in-depth analysis of the internal relations of these policy changes can help ensure the sustainable development of Indian higher education. However, existing studies focus on the interpretation of a single policy text without historical analysis and theoretical explanation of the policy's evolution.^[5] Historical institutionalism, by which we may explore the multivariable relationships between causes and effects, provides an analytical tool with which to clarify the context and internal logic of higher education reform while also incorporating the historical dimension.^[6] Therefore, this study uses the analytical framework of historical institutionalism to investigate the context of changes in higher education policy in India after independence, examining its dynamic social system and the logic behind the changes from historical and chronological perspectives. We use multiple variables to determine the path dependence and identify key nodes, suggesting a way forward for policy decision making in the future. Overall, this research provides a useful reference for the reform of India's higher education system in the new era.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Analytical Framework

As an important school of thought related to politics and the new institutionalism, historical institutionalism is a major analytical paradigm of contemporary political science.^[7] It integrates macro-level analysis and micro-action research on the laws of institutional change and the dynamic mechanisms underlying them, and its propositions can be examined from both structural and historical points of view to reveal the multiple variables involved in the evolution of institutional logic and their functional relationships.^[6] In exploring the forces that promote the development and continuance (or not) of institutions, attention must be paid to path dependence and key nodes in the process of policy development to provide a rich explanation of how these different variables are connected.^[8]

The Danish scholar Nelson proposed four theoretical pillars of historical institutionalism: historical chronological order, multiple motivations, path dependence, and key nodes, which objectively and clearly set forth his analytical framework.^[9] Among others, the concepts of continuity and stage of time contribute to the emergence of historical chronological order, revealing the evolution of systems. In the formation and evolution of policies, complex political, economic, social, and cultural factors are involved.^[10] Once implemented, policies have a lasting impact on government actions and individual decisions.^[11] Long-term stability goes hand in hand with path dependence; the relationship is self-reinforcing.^[7] However, in the short term, key historical nodes are volatile and easily fractured, which can mean that the original balance can be broken and policy changes implemented.^[12]

The Indian higher education policy system was formed via a certain historical process. In fact, many of its current dilemmas are external manifestations of contradictions embedded deep in its history, and path dependence and key nodes have also been influential throughout its evolution. From a historical point of view, policy changes in Indian higher education are highly compatible with the position and process of historical institutionalism. Thus, this study integrates the main views of historical institutionalism with Nelson's theory of reference to construct an analytical framework representing the approach of this study to investigate changes in Indian higher education policy

(Figure 1). This study attempts to transcend the limitations of studies that focus on a single policy text and a specific structural background, instead providing a comprehensive, in-depth, and dynamic analytical perspective on changes in Indian higher education policy.

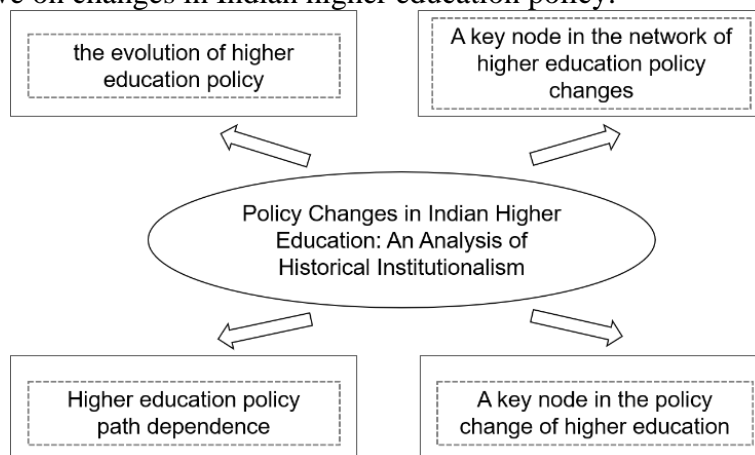


Figure 1: Analytical framework of policy changes in Indian higher education based on historical institutionalism.

2.2. Research Methods

This study focuses on policy texts on higher education issued by the Ministry of Human Resources Development, the University Grants Committee, the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce & Industry (FICCI) from 1947 to 2021. To track the historical evolution of Indian higher education and identify policy texts related to our topic, we searched literature databases such as the Web of Science, Google Scholar, and CNKI, identifying 67 suitable policy texts. Using the analytical method common in bibliometrics of entering key words according to the principles of representativeness, comprehensiveness, and hypothesis, we manually selected a minimum of three key words for each text related to higher education policy.^[13] Based on co-word frequency statistics, we created a co-word matrix database of high-frequency subject words at each stage, drawing a relationship diagram of co-occurring networks of key words using methods from social network analysis and calculating the degree of centrality and contribution of each word. Finally, we performed a visual analysis of the hot spots at each stage of the system's history to identify common subject words and examine their potential relationships.

3. Results

3.1. Evolution

Historical institutionalism involves not only the past but also understanding the lasting influence of various factors embedded in historical contexts and the complicated causality among them.^[14] Therefore, this study first outlined the historical logic behind the changes in Indian higher education policy. As an important part of the Indian education system, changes in higher education policy are closely related to the reform of the system. Scholars have divided the stages of Indian higher education reform according to different criteria.

For example, Shi Xiaoguang (2009) divided the reform experience into three stages based on stages of Indian economic development, namely, the colonial period (early 19th century to 1947), the planned economy period (1950s to 1980s), and the era of marketization and globalization (1990s to 2021).^[15] Arkalgud Ramaprasad (2016) examined the ontology of the system and divided its history

into two stages: 1947-1989 and 1990-2016. Considering reform trends and key events in the history of Indian higher education policy, and combining them with changes in the external environment such as economic reform, this article divides the history of Indian higher education policy after independence into three stages: the initial stage of reform, focusing on scale (1947-1989); the stage of reform and development, focusing on quality (1990-2011); and the integration stage, aiming at fair and high-quality development of the education system (2012-2021).

3.1.1. 1947-1989: The Initial Stage Focusing on Scale

In the early years of Indian independence, the gross enrolment rate in higher education institutions was only 0.9%. The first Nehru government prioritized the reform and development of higher education, but at the time, the higher education system was faltering, and the relevant support systems, especially the government management systems, were lacking. Therefore, in 1948, the Government of India established the University Education Commission^[16] and formulated a series of policies.^[17] As a result, the number of higher learning institutions increased from 606 in 1950 to 7,523 in 1989.^[18]

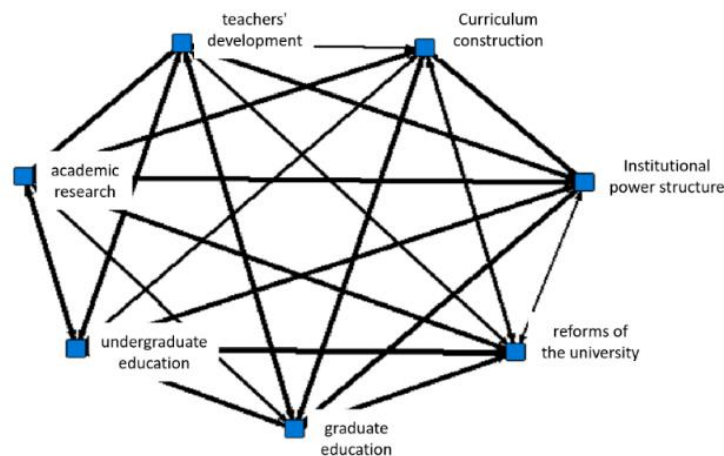


Figure 2: 1947-1989 Co-occurrence network diagram of keywords of Indian higher education policies.

Table 1: Centrality of Indian higher education policy analysis from 1949 to 1989.

Name	Degree	NrmDegree	Share
Undergraduate education	52.000	86.667	0.153
Academic research	51.000	85.000	0.150
Graduate education	50.000	83.333	0.147
Institutional power structure	50.000	83.333	0.147
Curriculum construction	46.000	76.667	0.135
Teachers' development	46.000	76.667	0.135
Reforms of the university	45.000	75.000	0.132

Figure 2 and Table 1 show the co-occurrence network of key words related to Indian higher education policy from 1947 to 1989. As indicated by the seven most important key words in the figure, the Indian higher education policy at this stage was highly geared toward undergraduate and graduate education, university reform, teacher development, and private funding. The expansion of higher education through public institutions in India was the focus of the content of policies at this stage. Between 1947 and 1969, for example, national universities, affiliated colleges, national institutes, and autonomous colleges were powerful instruments for the expansion of Indian higher education. Since 1970, the expansion of higher education has been achieved through privately funded colleges.

Beginning in the 1980s, the Indian government faced a growing demand for higher education, but was unable to meet the needs of society through public institutions, and began to realize the importance of developing private institutions to meet its policy objectives in response to the increasing demand for higher education. During this time, the Indian government further expanded the system of private institutions to meet the needs of students and society. In terms of value orientation, attention was paid to the scale and quantity of higher education institutions and private universities. Institutional power structures were emphasized, and governance and personnel policies were the main tools to achieve various goals. Regulations, capital, and infrastructure were seen as secondary tools. This period featured the rapid expansion of Indian higher education led by the central government during the period of the planned economy.

3.1.2. 1990-2011: Reform and Development for Quality

In the 1990s, Indian society entered a new period of historical development. In 1991, in order to overcome economic difficulties, India launched a movement toward privatization, marketization, globalization, and liberal economic reform.^[15] This time, the National Education Policy (formulated in 1986) required re-evaluation and adjustment, and therefore a quality assurance mechanism was developed.^[19] The private higher education system expanded dramatically during this period, making a significant contribution to meeting the higher education needs of the Indian society. From 1990 to 2011, the number of higher education institutions and enrollment in them increased dramatically; the number of universities in India increased by about six times and the number of colleges by about 10 times, while the number of university students increased by about 17 times, with overall enrollment increasing from 8.8 million to 28.5 million.^[20]

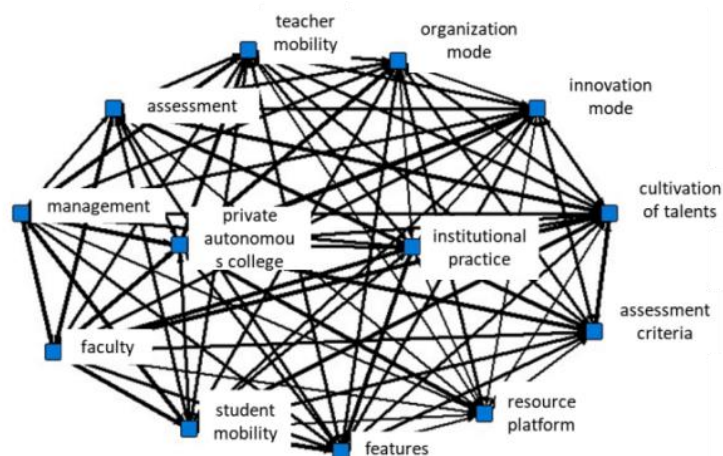


Figure 3: 1990-2011 Co-occurrence network diagram of keywords of Indian higher education policies.

As shown in Figure 3 and Table 2, terms such as "private autonomous college", "evaluation", "teacher force", and "talent cultivation and quality" have a relatively high degree of centrality and occupy important positions in the network. They appear together with other words in the same policy texts more frequently, texts covering hot topics related to policy. In terms of policy content, the Indian government engaged in vigorous development of private universities, taking a market-oriented and global approach, not unlike its approach with economic reforms.^[21] However, the expansion of private universities was plagued by quality assurance problems. To alleviate these problems, the Indian government set up a national assessment and certification commission. The resulting five-year plans^[22] were important to ensure the quality of higher education.^[23] These five-year plans prioritized the development of various reforms and guarantee measures. In terms of policy objectives, the

government focused on establishing higher education policies compatible with a social market economy and the adoption of a series of evaluation techniques to ensure the implementation of planned reforms. These reforms involved continuous optimization of talent training, teaching services, and other aspects of higher education, with the intention of creating high-quality institutions. In terms of value orientation, these reforms emphasized the combination of expansion and quality assurance to meet the fundamental needs of Indian society in terms of social and economic development. In terms of tools with which to implement these policies, the Indian government adopted a series of measures to stimulate the development of private universities, reducing the emphasis on centralized supervision and focusing on governance, personnel, and decentralized supervision. At this stage, Indian higher education achieved remarkable results in terms of quality assurance, quantity, scale, and structure. Compared to the situation in 2001, the number of universities increased to 642 in 2011 and the number of colleges to 34,852, an increase of 141% and 213%, respectively. ^[20]

Table 2: Centrality of Indian higher education policy analysis from 1990 to 2011.

Name	Degree	NrmDegree	Share
Private autonomous college	199.000	69.097	0.086
Faculty	194.000	67.361	0.084
Cultivation of talents	187.000	64.931	0.081
Management	186.000	64.583	0.080
Student mobility	185.000	64.236	0.080
Teacher mobility	181.000	62.847	0.078
Assessment	181.000	62.847	0.078
Assessment criteria	179.000	62.153	0.077
Quality	178.000	61.806	0.077
Innovation mode	173.000	60.069	0.075
Organization mode	172.000	59.722	0.074
Institutional practice	159.000	55.208	0.068
Resource platform	148.000	51.389	0.064

3.1.3. 2012-2021: Integration for Equitable Access

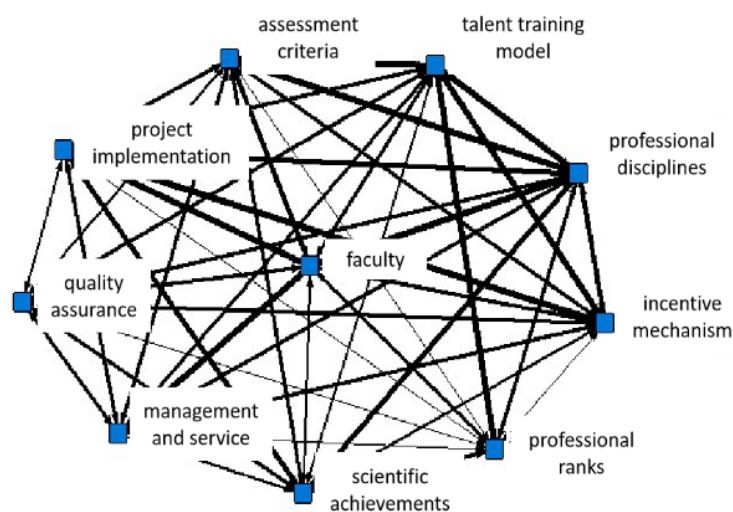


Figure 4: 2012-2021 Co-occurrence network diagram of keywords of Indian higher education policies.

For historical reasons, the issue of equal access to Indian education has always been very prominent, and successive governments have launched a series of policies to address it. Since 2007, the Indian government has adjusted the enrollment quota of disadvantaged groups in central educational institutions, providing academic assistance, scholarships, and other support to disadvantaged students. ^[24] Between the 1970s and 1990s, the proportion of students of the listed caste in higher education rose from 7% to 7.8%, and the proportion of students of the listed tribals from 1.6% to 2.7%. ^[25] At the beginning of the 21st century, India adopted the strategy of promoting the privatization of higher education, and at the same time, further increased the opportunities for students of lower classes and vulnerable groups to receive higher education, thus increasing access to higher education.

Table 3: Centrality of Indian higher education policy analysis from 2012 to 2021.

Name	Degree	NrmDegree	Share
Professional disciplines	161.000	89.444	0.110
Talent training model	156.000	86.667	0.106
Faculty	153.000	85.000	0.104
Fair	151.000	83.889	0.103
Assessment criteria	151.000	83.889	0.103
Incentive mechanism	150.000	83.333	0.102
Management and service	147.000	81.667	0.100
Scientific achievements	139.000	77.222	0.095
Quality assurance	133.000	73.889	0.091
Professional ranks	127.000	70.556	0.087

As shown in Figure 4 and Table 3, "discipline and specialty", "talent cultivation mode", "fairness", and "quality assurance" are the main key words in this stage, and the centrality is evident. In terms of policy content, the reform of private higher education in India was still advancing at this stage. In 2012, the number of registered students in private higher education institutions represented 58.9% of the total. ^[26] Throughout Indian history, equity issues have been prominent; therefore, the government established a scholarship system to promote social justice and create higher education opportunities for lower class and underprivileged people. The National Education Policy (2020) further addressed the issue of equity in Indian higher education. These measures were not only intended to equalize students' access to higher education, but also to aid and favor areas with weak economic systems, thus ensuring that every region of India would have at least one high-quality institution of higher education. In terms of policy objectives, the Indian government planned the development of higher education with consideration of talent cultivation, governance reform, scientific research, and financial security, with expansion, equity, and excellence as the goals. In terms of value orientation, the policy during this period paid equal attention to equity and excellence, and further emphasized that equality in terms of social development is better than excellence. It also emphasized changes in the relationship between the state, the market, and higher education institutions, indicating that the government had given up direct control in favor of macro-control under the influence of globalization. During this period, India's gross enrolment rate in higher education increased from 18.1% in 2012 to 26.3% in 2020, and the number of students in higher education increased from 22 million to 35.9 million.

3.2. Variables

Higher education is the key to sustainable development in any country. Since India gained independence, the government has worked to establish a unique higher education policy system in

India that takes into account basic national conditions and changes in economic development, historical background, political structure, and other factors. Looking at the historical context of the evolution of Indian higher education policy, we see that this policy was affected by multiple causal variables and that the fundamental structure that promotes reform is characterized by the interaction of these variables. This interaction is reflected in the embeddedness of the policy itself within the political, economic, and cultural context of Indian society, which affected its gradual implementation. In the process of change, the policy of Indian higher education differed at different stages and was deeply affected by multiple political, economic, social, and cultural factors.

3.2.1. State Institutional Reform: the Political Background

After India achieved independence, federalism became predominant and a top-down higher education management system was operated cooperatively by the central government and local and state governments.^[27] In 1950, however, the Indian constitution endowed the federal government with power to develop the education system, which greatly weakened the autonomy of local state governments. Therefore, the promulgation and implementation of higher education policies are, to this day, concentrated in the central government. During the period just after the achievement of independence, funding for higher education from Indian state governments came from taxes levied by the central government and distributed in accordance with a population base formula. In effect, this was a way for the central government to take over the allocation of funds, effectively reducing the autonomy of local state governments.

This move led to negative consequences and a lack of resources for educational infrastructure in various regions.^[5] It was not until Indira Gandhi came to power in 1966 that she began to realize that India's racial hierarchies were holding back higher education at the local level. Through research, she absorbed the views of all parties, looking at the problem from the civilian position to formulate a higher education development policy. She decided that the Indian central government would give more autonomy to local federal governments and universities, putting the central and federal governments on an equal footing in terms of higher education policymaking. In terms of management, the central government shifted from command and control to steering and assessment, endowing local institutions and universities with greater autonomy to make their own decisions. In terms of responsibility between the two levels of government, the federal government continued to fund elite higher education, while local federal governments became responsible for increasing access to university education for more disadvantaged groups. In 1980, the government of India decided to reserve 27% of higher education degrees for students from disadvantaged groups and 49.5% of higher education degrees for scheduled castes, scheduled tribes, and other disadvantaged groups.^[28] In 1998, with the advancement of political democratization and the decentralization of governing power in India, local federal governments gained the power to participate in the governance of Indian higher education. Thus, the reform of the national political system provided a basis for changes in higher education policy.

3.2.2. Economic Transformation and Development: the Market Foundation

The economic policy of a country with a mixed economy calls for the nationalization of vital industries for the nation. National plans are prescriptive for the public sector and instructive for the private sector. For years, the value consensus of a highly centralized planned economy and the guidance of Indian national leaders reinforced the government's preference for the status quo. Most private colleges, which comprise the majority of private higher education institutions, relied on the financial support of the central government. Financial aid from the central government weakens the autonomy of colleges and universities. However, necessary economic changes led to a new round of

privatization and reform in higher education in the late 1980s.

Nationalization is characteristic of the evolution of private higher education in India. When privatization-oriented economic reforms began in 1991, Indian GDP increased annually by an average of more than 6%.^[29] To meet the needs of the transition of the social economy from a planned economy model to a marketization model, the ability of the state to utilize and create knowledge had to be enhanced. In 1993, the government specifically formulated a policy framework for private investment in higher education; the Indian Private Universities Act of 1995 provided the legal framework for this change. In the early 1990s, the prevalence of economic liberalization and new managerialism created an external environment for governance reform in Indian higher education. Internal decentralization of the government system, integration of market regulation and control, increased social participation, expansion of university autonomy, and other changes made it so that the original one-way relationship between the government and universities was replaced by more complex, multidirectional interactions among members of society, government, market players, and universities.

In recent years, in order to cope with the trend towards economic globalization and the needs of the knowledge economy, the domestic and international landscape of India has changed, and the demand for highly skilled personnel is increasing. Attracting students with an innovative spirit, achieving goals related to production, learning, and research, and promoting the internationalization of talent training have become priorities. Colleges and universities in India face challenges to reform existing teaching and governance modes to meet economic and societal needs. Higher education must be in tune with the new era in order for many goals to be achieved.^[30] The fourth goal of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) scribed “Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all” would be on the right track to be implemented by various stakeholders in education for development.

3.2.3. Changes in Social Culture: the Ideological Roots

From a cultural perspective, many ideas and concepts in both ancient and modern Indian culture are beneficial to the national unity, social harmony, and equality of all living beings. These social and cultural concepts have been a subtle driving force in the development of Indian society. At the same time, they also reflect the ideological roots of the evolution of higher education policy. However, India’s unique caste system, which includes gender discrimination and other elements, has also seriously hindered the development of higher education; serious discrimination has occurred against students from listed castes, listed tribes, and other groups in terms of access to and quality of higher education. To rectify this situation, successive Indian governments have paid varied attention to the rights of students from disadvantaged groups to receive higher education. In the years after independence, the Indian government reserved 15% and 7.5% of the admission quota for students from listed castes and listed tribes who had long been oppressed and discriminated against. From 1963, the government reserved 27% of the admission quota for other members of the lower classes. Recently, great efforts have been made to pursue equity in higher education in India. In particular, the 2020 National Education Policy further emphasized the need to build a high-quality, fair, harmonious, and excellent higher education system. This policy established various measures to increase the fairness of higher education in terms of gender, region, and race. The sustainable development of the Indian higher education system has benefited from the influence of this policy.

3.3. Path Dependence and Key Nodes

3.3.1. Path Dependence

Although the reform of Indian higher education has been achieved through the introduction of new policies, this does not mean that all actors have taken the initiative to adapt to change and respond positively to those policies.^[31] Both promoters and implementers of policies inevitably fall into the rut of previous thinking.^[32] Historical institutionalism holds that the longitudinal historical sequence of events over a long period has stability and continuity, and that early events and institutional paradigms in history have a profound impact on the development of institutions in later periods, thus forming a path-dependent effect.^[33] Thus, India has enjoyed a certain continuity in the implementation of its higher education policies over the years. Only through the continuous operation and formation of fixed patterns in the education system can the desired social effects be realized. Therefore, at different stages of the development of India's higher education system, although specific policy designs were constantly changing, the underlying institutional logic remained unchanged.

The path dependence theory of historical institutionalism provides a basis for us to understand the history of Indian higher education policy. The path dependence of Indian higher education policy is manifested by rational choices made by the central government, higher education institutions, and individual students.

3.3.1.1. The Central Government

Successive central governments in power in India after independence prioritized the development of higher education, issuing various policies to exert federal macro-control and implement continuous standardized supervision and management. For a long time, higher education policies were formulated and promulgated by various functional departments of the government, representing the will of the nation, the Ministry of Human Resource Development, the University Grants Committee, the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce & Industry, FICCI and others. Thus, the Indian higher education policy system is in effect composed of a series of related policies on higher education institutions, college teachers and students, evaluation systems, and funding. These policies are coordinated to promote a virtuous cycle in the development of higher education in India. To ensure the smooth implementation of numerous additional policies and avoid high exit costs, the central government has followed existing paths for review and improvement of the system. For example, from 1968 to 2020, three national education policies were implemented, improved, and perfected, and the "five-year plan" scheme were implemented.

3.3.1.2. Higher Education Institutions

Higher education institutions mainly refer to schools that implement higher education and scientific research institutes with postgraduate enrollment and education qualifications. Since India achieved independence, higher education institutions have shown significant path dependence in terms of their management systems, school operations, talent training, and scientific research. In the early years of Indian independence, influenced by the planned economy, the central government was sovereign over all institutions of higher education. The government's mandatory plan has regulated the schools and management of higher education institutions since India achieved independence. These organizations learnt how to survive in the system more effectively, adopting various strategies to seek benefits and avoid disadvantages, and relying on the government to reduce their development costs and risks. Although the first National Education Policy in 1968 further expanded the autonomy of all kinds of public school, only a few higher education institutions really implemented the reforms of university operations from within their own systems. Since institutional change increased the cost

of running a school and caused some uncertainty, these institutions were reluctant to make changes, instead considering their own interests. Since India achieved independence, this is also the reason why most Indian higher education institutions have long been characterized by unitary teaching and management systems, imperfect operating mechanisms, and low educational outcomes.

3.3.1.3. Individual Students

As direct beneficiaries of higher education policies, Indian students have the right to participate in policy discourse and should be among the actors in the formulation and implementation of higher education policy.^[34] As individual students, they have the “rational-economic man” mentality. More precisely, they pay attention to the advantages of receiving an education, value their own current interests, and pursue maximization of expected benefits. In the process of participating in higher education programs, they weigh the pros and cons of their learning and assess the expected returns from their learning; when the expected returns deviate from reality, they invest limited time and energy into achieving immediate benefits. Thus, their participation in their own learning and enthusiasm are inadequate, and they lack the power to appeal to the existing system. They are not sensitive enough to policies. They believe that policymaking is a function of the government and that they have no obligation to participate in it. Therefore, they accept existing policies and try their best to maintain the status quo.

3.3.2. Key Nodes

In the history of higher education policies in India, path dependence ensured the continued development of higher education policies, and key nodes provided important opportunities for innovation. The question is, why was path dependence strong in one historical period and institutional innovation strong in other periods? Historical institutionalism holds that system shortcomings are gradually exposed in the process of development. Once various conflicts within a policy framework reach a critical threshold point, the original policy falls into crisis, which may lead to qualitative changes. This threshold critical point is called a key node, the point at which institutional rupture may occur. It is the junction of old and new policies, the point at which new policies emerge that are more in line with the current need for institutional development. From the beginning of India's independence to the turn of the century, India's higher education policy experienced the following key nodes: the establishment of the University Education Committee in 1947, the first comprehensive National Education Policy of 1968, and the Second National Education Policy of 1986.

First, India's first official proposal on the development of higher education was the establishment of the University Education Committee in 1947. This committee made provisions for the organization, management, and teaching standards of university education, embodying the new government's plan to develop higher education while changing the colonial “brand”. This committee explored the localization of higher education policy.

Second, in 1968, India enacted its first comprehensive National Education Policy, which prioritized the autonomy of universities, expanded the scale of higher education, established a few universities with international standards, and improved the level of teaching and scientific research in Indian universities to meet the needs of society. This policy became a programmatic document for the reform and development of higher education. It laid down the principles of reform and established a plan for the development of higher education. It suggested strategies for running higher education institutions well, adhering strictly to educational standards and paying attention to the training of postgraduates. It occupies an important position in the history of India's higher education system. Its purpose was to promote the progress of the country and raise civic awareness while promoting cultural identity and unity of all ethnic groups. It emphasized the reconstruction and improvement of

the Indian educational system. Science and technology were prioritized, traditional moral values were promoted, and the close relationship between education and life was honored. This policy became the foundation for the development of India's higher education system in the new era. The 1968 National Education Policy laid the principles for future development in terms of equal opportunities. It was essential for the economic and cultural development of the country and for realization of the ideals of a socialist society.

Third, the Second National Education Policy was approved by the Indian parliament in 1986. The 1986 policy provided an effective path for the reform of India's higher education system oriented to the 21st century. The new policy was based on the 1968 National Education Policy and formulated in accordance with the needs of the times; in content and spirit, the two policies are basically the same. The 1968 National Education Policy laid out a comprehensive national education development strategy. It emphasized research, equal access to schools for every Indian citizen, and interregional mobility. The state invested resources to support the establishment of cooperative networks in various fields of scientific research. At this time, the government focused on the autonomy of university institutions, many of which underwent reorganization and internationalization. Similarly, with high quality and excellence as primary goals, the 1986 policy was a turning point in Indian higher education, preparing the system for the knowledge economy era. The government at the time identified India's higher education system in the late 20th century as an important way of cultivating professional talents. The strategic framework for the development of higher education was established on the basis of public financial support and the 1986 policy.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

Since India's independence, higher education policy has achieved remarkable results. However, under the existing arrangement, the federal government, higher education institutions, and individual students lack the impetus to change or to maintain the momentum, resulting in the system being locked in an ineffective path. At key nodes, Indian higher education policies must undergo reform to ease constraints and achieve institutional innovation. In the current era of economic globalization and the knowledge economy, and from the perspective of national development, India must continually expand the scale and quality of its higher education system, paying full attention to demographic issues and striving to serve national interests. Improving quality and efficiency will be important to the future development of higher education in India.

First, higher education in India should be developed for the entitlement and benefit of Indian citizens, and the internationalization of higher education should be further promoted. Fairness and equal access to higher education opportunities should always be given top priority, and the allocation of higher education resources should also be fair so that all students in the population of higher education age can benefit equally. Strengthening the local governance of higher education systems is also necessary. Other goals may include reorganization of higher education institutions, which are small institutions of higher education: the university has a single curriculum and enrolls fewer than 100 students per year, ensuring that each region has a minimum of one high-quality institution of higher education so as to improve the chances of admission. The development of India's society, especially the implementation of major national strategies, cannot be separated from the support of highly educated talent in India. In addition, the Indian government must pay more attention to quality issues in the education system; clearly, quality should come before quantity. Especially considering the economic situation in Indian society and the large population base, lack of education is likely to become an enormous burden. The uneven development of the higher education system and the socioeconomic and cultural system can only increase the gap in social development and cause more social problems. Efforts should be made to hire the best possible faculty with consideration of

internationalization, innovative multidisciplinary education, and student support centers. Universal access to higher education is the best way to develop high-quality Indian talents for the benefit of Indian society. Indian higher education must undergo major reforms to bridge the gap between the current learning state of Indian university students and the necessary results.

Second, the reform of higher education policy must develop in accordance with the reform of the market economy. Currently, the goal of Indian higher education policy is not only to solve policy problems, but also to give the Indian government a clearer understanding of the ultimate goals of higher education. The most recent iteration of the National Education Policy (2020) clearly states the goals of equity, high quality, and excellence in higher education, which means that equity and excellence have been elevated in the context of higher education services provided by the government of India to its citizens. At the same time, this policy proposes three changes, namely, from serving the elite to serving the masses, from focusing on scale and quantity to focusing on quality, and from focusing on the development of domestic higher education to focusing on international education with a global perspective. The Indian government must prioritize innovation to achieve these goals.

Third, in terms of value orientation, the Indian government should turn its attention to higher education services and to the combination of promoting equity and improving quality. As the reform of higher education enters the integration stage, the fairness and openness of India's higher education system to disadvantaged groups must be emphasized. For cultural and historical reasons, Indian society still has a large number of vulnerable groups, including women and children, and some serious social and educational problems. The government should focus on the needs of underdeveloped areas in terms of investment and policy, and give greater priority to promoting equitable access to basic higher education services for all citizens. However, the Indian government must also improve efficiency and allocate funds to the most important fields, the most critical links, and the most in need. For example, training teaching staff, improving scientific research, and providing more scholarships and grants are all areas that need development.

Fourth, in terms of policy tools, the government must encourage collaborative participation and understand the importance of reasonable allocation of resources, constantly optimizing the op-level design of India's national policy. Furthermore, various market forces may influence their decision-making, facilitating institutional change. In addition, the autonomy of higher education institutions must be increased, and the quality of faculty in-house training must be ensured.

Higher education institutions are restricted by government authority. In India, there is a lack of vitality in schools, and many goals have not been achieved effectively. However, with the integration and reform of the economic and political systems, higher education institutions can be given full control to take initiatives, dare to break through the shackles of the system, and challenge and stimulate innovation. Students' internal motivation must be stimulated, their awareness of their own right to speak up must be strengthened, and student-centered higher education policy reform must be enacted.

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