

**ASSESSING THE QUALITY OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN MAHARASHTRA: A
COMPARATIVE STUDY OF PUBLIC AND PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES**

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ABSTRACT

The quality of higher education is a crucial factor influencing the academic success of students, institutional reputation, and national development. In Maharashtra, both public and private universities contribute significantly to the higher education system, yet they exhibit noticeable differences in their educational quality. This study aims to assess and compare the quality of education in selected public and private universities in Maharashtra, with a focus on teaching effectiveness, infrastructure, student satisfaction, and academic outcomes. Data was collected through a structured 25-item questionnaire distributed to students, faculty, and administrators at four universities (two public and two private) across the state. The survey covered key factors such as faculty qualifications, teaching methodologies, campus facilities, extracurricular activities, and support services. Statistical analysis, including mean scores, percentile distributions, and t-tests, was conducted to evaluate the data and compare the responses between public and private institutions. The results show that private universities generally outperform public universities in terms of infrastructure, teaching quality, and student satisfaction. Private universities also demonstrate higher levels of engagement and innovation in their educational practices. In contrast, public universities, while offering more affordable education, face challenges such as overcrowded classrooms, outdated curricula, and limited resources. The study suggests that improving the quality of public universities requires focused efforts to modernize infrastructure, improve faculty development, and introduce more student-centered teaching methods. Additionally, the findings highlight the need for policy changes to bridge the gap in educational quality between public and private institutions. The study concludes by offering recommendations for both types of universities to enhance their educational offerings and meet the evolving demands of the job market and society.

Keywords: Higher Education Quality, Public Universities, Private Universities, Teaching Effectiveness, Student Satisfaction

1. INTRODUCTION

Higher education plays a pivotal role in shaping the future of individuals and nations. It contributes significantly to economic development, social mobility, and cultural enrichment. In India, the state of Maharashtra is home to some of the country's most prominent educational institutions, offering a mix of public and private universities. The diversity in these institutions has led to varied educational outcomes, particularly in terms of teaching quality, infrastructure, student satisfaction, and overall academic performance. The demand for higher education in Maharashtra has risen steadily, prompting universities to reassess their offerings, including curriculum design, teaching methods, and student support services. Public universities in Maharashtra have traditionally been the backbone of the educational system, providing affordable education to a large number of students. However, they often face challenges such as overcrowded classrooms, outdated infrastructure, and limited resources, which can adversely impact the quality of education. On the other hand, private universities have gained prominence over the past few decades by offering modern facilities, better faculty-student ratios, and more flexible academic programs. These universities typically have more financial resources, enabling them to invest in advanced infrastructure and technology, which enhances the overall learning experience. Despite the rapid growth of private universities, public universities remain central to higher education in Maharashtra, offering opportunities to students from diverse backgrounds. However, questions have arisen regarding the quality of education offered by public institutions compared to their private counterparts. While private universities are often perceived to offer better quality education, the higher costs associated with them create a barrier for many students. Therefore, it is essential to assess and compare the quality of education in public and private universities to understand the differences and identify areas for improvement in both sectors.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Deshpande (2020) examines student satisfaction in Indian universities, with a focus on the differences between public and private institutions. The study identifies several factors that influence student satisfaction, including teaching quality, campus facilities, and faculty engagement. Private universities are found to have higher levels of student satisfaction due to better infrastructure, personalized attention, and more engaging teaching methods. Public universities, while more affordable, tend to face challenges such as overcrowded classrooms and outdated curricula, which negatively impact student satisfaction.

Sharma (2020) investigates the academic outcomes of students in public and private universities in India. The study focuses on graduation rates, academic performance, and employability after graduation. Private universities, which typically have smaller class sizes and modern teaching methods, show better academic performance and higher graduation rates. Public universities, on the other hand, face challenges such as limited resources and large class sizes, which contribute to lower academic outcomes.

Sanyal and Martin (2017) explore the role of private universities in enhancing the quality of higher education in India. The paper highlights the rapid expansion of private institutions and their impact on the educational landscape. Private universities are often able to provide better teaching, infrastructure, and resources, which results in higher student satisfaction and better outcomes. Public universities, however, face systemic challenges, including bureaucratic inefficiencies and financial constraints.

Boudah (2015) provides a theoretical framework for understanding curriculum development and instructional design in higher education. The book emphasizes the importance of aligning curriculum with industry demands and student needs. The study highlights the difference in curriculum design between public and private universities, with private universities often adopting more industry-relevant, flexible, and updated curricula. Public universities, however, are typically more rigid and slower to adapt to changing educational trends.

Ghosh and Saha (2019) conduct a comparative study of the infrastructure facilities in public and private universities in India. They analyze various aspects of infrastructure, such as classrooms, laboratories, libraries, and campus amenities. The study finds that private universities generally provide better infrastructure, including state-of-the-art classrooms, modern laboratories, and better hostel facilities. Public universities, despite their large size and reach, often struggle with overcrowded classrooms and insufficient resources.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design:

This study uses a descriptive-comparative research design to assess the differences in educational quality between two public universities (University A and University B) and two private universities (University C and University D) in Maharashtra. The research focuses on four key dimensions of education quality: teaching effectiveness, infrastructure, student satisfaction, and academic outcomes.

Sampling: A random sample was selected from each university:

1. **Sample size:** 200 students, 40 faculty members, and 15 administrators from each university.
2. **Total sample size:** 960 participants.

Data Collection: Data was collected using:

Structured Surveys:

1. Students were surveyed on teaching quality, infrastructure, and satisfaction with academic programs.
2. Faculty and administrators were surveyed on academic resources, teaching quality, and institutional support systems.

Focus Group Discussions: Conducted with faculty and administrators to gain insights into the challenges and resources available at each university.

Variables:

1. **Independent Variable:** Type of university (public vs. private).
2. **Dependent Variables:** Teaching quality, infrastructure quality, student satisfaction, and academic performance.

Statistical Analysis:

Data was analysed using:

1. **Descriptive Statistics:** Mean, Standard Deviation.
2. **Inferential Statistics:** T-tests to compare means between public and private universities.
3. **Regression Analysis:** To assess predictors of student satisfaction and academic performance.

4. RESULTS

Table 1: Mean Teaching Quality Scores

University Type	Teaching Quality (Mean)
KBCNM University (Public University 1)	3.6
BAMU University (Public University 2)	3.8
Sandip University (Private University 1)	4.2
Sapkal University (Private University 2)	4.3

Interpretation: Private universities generally offer better teaching quality, which may be attributed to smaller class sizes, more innovative teaching techniques, and better faculty development programs.

Table 2: Mean Infrastructure Quality Scores

University Type	Infrastructure Quality (Mean)
KBCNM University (Public University 1)	3.2
BAMU University (Public University 2)	3.4
Sandip University (Private University 1)	4.0
Sapkal University (Private University 2)	4.1

Interpretation: Private universities consistently score higher in infrastructure quality, reflecting better investments in campus facilities, technology, and learning resources compared to public universities.

Table 3: Student Satisfaction Scores

University Type	Overall Satisfaction (Mean)
KBCNM University (Public University 1)	3.5
BAMU University (Public University 2)	3.6
Sandip University (Private University 1)	4.3
Sapkal University (Private University 2)	4.4

Interpretation: Students at private universities report significantly higher levels of satisfaction. This may be due to better teaching quality, modern infrastructure, and stronger student support services.

Table 4: Academic Outcomes (Graduation Rates)

University Type	Graduation Rate (%)
KBCNM University (Public University 1)	76
BAMU University (Public University 2)	78
Sandip University (Private University 1)	85
Sapkal University (Private University 2)	87

Interpretation: Private universities show higher graduation rates, which could be attributed to better student engagement, smaller class sizes, and stronger academic support systems.

5. DISCUSSION

The data clearly shows that private universities in Maharashtra provide higher-quality education across multiple dimensions, including teaching quality, infrastructure, student satisfaction, and academic outcomes. The higher levels of satisfaction and academic outcomes in private universities suggest that these institutions are more successful in creating an environment conducive to learning.

However, public universities remain an essential part of the higher education landscape, particularly because of their affordability and the diversity of programs they offer. The results of this study suggest that public universities could benefit from increased funding to improve infrastructure and faculty development. Public universities also need to focus on smaller class sizes, more personalized attention, and modern teaching methods to enhance the overall student experience.

The differences in infrastructure quality and teaching methods are particularly striking. Private universities invest more heavily in state-of-the-art facilities, which may contribute to their higher ratings for teaching quality and student satisfaction. Public universities, on the other hand, may need to adopt innovative pedagogical strategies and better utilize the available resources.

The findings from this study are consistent with those from previous research (Deshpande, 2020; Sanyal & Martin, 2017), which indicate that private universities tend to outperform public universities in areas such as infrastructure and student engagement. However, public universities still offer valuable educational opportunities, especially for students from lower-income backgrounds.

FINDINGS

1. Private universities generally scored higher in teaching effectiveness, with faculty members using more modern teaching methods and engaging students more effectively in the learning process. Public universities were found to use traditional teaching methods, with less student interaction.
2. Private universities had better infrastructure, including modern classrooms, well-maintained libraries, up-to-date technology, and sufficient study spaces. Public universities

faced challenges such as overcrowded classrooms, outdated technology, and inadequate learning resources.

3. Students in private universities reported higher satisfaction levels, particularly regarding campus facilities, teaching quality, and extracurricular activities. Public universities, while offering more affordable education, had lower satisfaction ratings due to limited resources and less engaging campus environments.
4. Academic support services (tutoring, counselling, career services) were more readily available and better organized in private universities. In contrast, public universities struggled to offer comprehensive academic support, which affected student learning and well-being.
5. Private universities showed higher levels of student engagement, with faculty members offering personalized attention, mentoring, and opportunities for research involvement. Public universities often had larger class sizes, limiting personal interaction between students and faculty.
6. Private universities were quicker to adopt modern teaching practices such as flipped classrooms, project-based learning, and online resources. Public universities were slower to integrate these practices into their curriculum, with many continuing to rely on traditional lectures.
7. Career placement services and internship opportunities were more robust in private universities, helping students secure employment more effectively after graduation. Public universities had less emphasis on career development, impacting students' post-graduation prospects.
8. Public universities faced bureaucratic inefficiencies that slowed down decision-making and implementation of reforms. This resulted in a lack of innovation and slower response to changing educational needs compared to more flexible private universities.
9. Faculty motivation was generally lower in public universities due to issues such as low salaries, lack of professional development opportunities, and limited institutional support. Private universities offered better career growth opportunities, motivating faculty to be more involved in teaching and research.
10. The study highlighted the need for government intervention and policy reforms to improve the quality of public universities. Recommendations included increasing funding for

infrastructure, providing more faculty development programs, and adopting best practices from private institutions to enhance overall educational quality.

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