

The Progress of Education in India

Vani Kant Borooh

The Progress of Education in India

A Quantitative Analysis of Challenges
and Opportunities

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Cover image: Pattern adapted from an Indian cotton print produced in the 19th century

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Of learning as of virtue, it may be affirmed, that it is at once honoured and neglected. Whoever forsakes it will for ever look after it with longing, lament the loss which he does not endeavour to repair, and desire the good which he wants resolution to seize and keep.

Samuel Johnson: Idler #94 (2 February 1760)

In memory of my mother, Priyalata Boroob (1924–2015)

PREFACE

The theme of this book is education, and in large part higher education, in India. Its main purpose is to chart the progress of education in India between 2007 and 2014. Consistent with my *métier* as an academic economist, its tenor is analytical and based upon a rigorous examination of data. These data are from two sources: the National Sample Surveys carried out under the aegis of the Government of India's Ministry of Statistics and the Indian Human Development Survey conducted jointly by the National Council of Applied Economic Research and the University of Maryland. In interrogating these data I have drawn heavily upon the methodology of economics and statistics to shed light on a selection of educational outcomes in India. After setting out some of the salient issues in international higher education in [Chapter 1](#), [Chapter 2](#) analyses the likelihood of different social groups attending higher secondary and higher education institutions. [Chapter 3](#) examines learning outcomes of children aged 8–11 years with respect to tests in reading, writing, and arithmetic. [Chapter 4](#) deals with the Indian government's policy of reserving places in higher educational institutions for members of India's "backward classes" and quantifies the benefits that these policies have conferred upon the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. [Chapter 5](#) uses Bayesian methods to justify the use of reservation policies in order to offset inequalities in the inter-group distribution of economic resources. However, it argues that reservation should be based on economic need and not, as is the case in India, upon caste background.

In writing this book, I am grateful to Nidhi Sabharwal for several illuminating discussions on the topic of higher education in India and to two anonymous reviewers for comments and suggestions that substantially improved the original proposal. Thanks are also due to my publisher, Palgrave Macmillan – in particular to Anna Reeve, Gemma Leigh, and Thomas Coughlan – who encouraged me to write this book and supported me in doing so. Notwithstanding these debts, I remain solely responsible for the book: for the analysis reported in it, for the views expressed therein and, indeed, for all its shortcomings.

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Vani Kant Borooah

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