



DAILY EDITORIAL ANALYSIS

TOPIC

**CHALLENGES OF PUBLIC HEALTH
EDUCATION IN INDIA**

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CHALLENGES OF PUBLIC HEALTH EDUCATION IN INDIA

Context

- The demand for skilled public health professionals faces numerous challenges, ranging from a lack of standardization in training to limited job opportunities for graduates.

About the Public Health Education in India

- **Evolution:** Dates back to the colonial era when the focus was **primarily on epidemic control**.
 - ♦ **1932:** Establishment of institutions like the **All India Institute of Hygiene and Public Health (AIIPH)**, shift toward systematic public health training.
 - ♦ **Post-independence Era:** Institutions such as the **National Institute of Health and Family Welfare (NIHFW)** and various medical universities expanded their curriculum to include public health as a specialized field.
- **Current Framework:**
 - ♦ **Undergraduate Programs:**
 - **Bachelor of Public Health (BPH):** A foundational course that provides knowledge on epidemiology, health policies, and community health.
 - **MBBS with Community Medicine Specialization:** A component of the medical curriculum that introduces students to public health concepts.
 - ♦ **Postgraduate and Doctoral Programs:**
 - **Master of Public Health (MPH):** A specialized program available at institutions like AIIMS, TISS, and IIPH, covering epidemiology, health systems, and policy-making.
 - **MD in Community Medicine:** Focuses on research, preventive medicine, and health administration.
 - **Ph.D. in Public Health:** Offered by universities to promote in-depth research on healthcare challenges in India.
 - ♦ **Short-Term and Online Courses:** To cater to working professionals, various organizations, including the Indian Institutes of Public Health (IIPH) and IGNOU, offer diploma and certificate courses in health management, epidemiology, and nutrition.
- India has seen a 60% increase in institutions offering public health education over the past decade.

Key Institutions Providing Public Health Education

- All India Institute of Hygiene and Public Health (AIIPH), Kolkata
- Public Health Foundation of India (PHFI) and Indian Institutes of Public Health (IIPH)
- Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS), Mumbai
- AIIMS (All India Institute of Medical Sciences), New Delhi
- National Institute of Epidemiology (NIE), Chennai

Key Challenges With Public Health Education in India

- **Lack of Awareness and Recognition:** Public health is often overshadowed by clinical medicine, leading to fewer enrollments in MPH programs.
 - ♦ Limited awareness about career opportunities in public health discourages students from pursuing this field.
- **Shortage of Faculty and Infrastructure:** Many institutions struggle with inadequate faculty trained in public health.
 - ♦ Infrastructure in public health training centers, especially in rural areas, remains underdeveloped.
- **Gaps in Curriculum and Practical Training:** The curriculum often lacks integration with real-world challenges, resulting in graduates with theoretical knowledge but limited practical exposure.

- ♦ Limited fieldwork and internship opportunities affect hands-on learning.
- **Regional Disparities:** Most renowned public health institutions are concentrated in urban areas, leaving rural and remote regions underserved.
 - ♦ Accessibility and affordability of quality education remain a concern for students from marginalized communities.
- **Lack of Standardization:** Public health education in India lacks a standardized curriculum, leading to inconsistencies in the quality of training across institutions. It affects the preparedness of graduates to address real-world health challenges.
- **Lack of Health Professionals:** According to a report by the **National Health Systems Resource Centre (NHSRC)**, India needs **over 1.5 million** trained public health professionals to address the growing healthcare needs, especially post-pandemic.
 - ♦ **WHO** estimates that **India has only one public health professional for every 10,000 people**, highlighting the need for more trained professionals.

Efforts Related To Public Health Education in India

- **Allocations (Union Budget 2024-25):**
 - ♦ **Increased Allocation for Health:** 1.23 lakh crore for the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoH&FW).
 - ♦ **Focus on Public Health Education** that includes the establishment of new medical colleges and the upgradation of existing institutions to address the shortage of healthcare professionals.
 - ♦ **Digital Health Initiatives** including telemedicine and digital health records, to improve accessibility and efficiency.
 - ♦ **Continued Support For National Health Mission (NHM)**
- **Literacy and Digital Health Education:**
 - ♦ **National Digital Health Mission (NDHM)** aims to digitize health records and improve public awareness about diseases and treatments.
 - ♦ **Mobile-based apps** like Arogya Setu, eSanjeevani, and MyGov Health have helped disseminate health information.
 - ♦ **Internet penetration** in rural India has increased to 38%, improving digital health education access.
- **Public Awareness Programs and Campaigns** like Mission Indradhanush, National Tobacco Control Program (NTCP).
- **Mental Health Awareness** under the National Mental Health Program (NMHP).

Opportunities and Future Prospects

- **Government Initiatives and Policy Support:** The **National Health Policy (2017)** emphasizes the need for public health training and research.
 - ♦ **Ayushman Bharat and the National Health Mission (NHM)** have created demand for trained public health professionals.
- **Growth of Online and Distance Learning:** Platforms like SWAYAM and initiatives by IGNOU provide affordable online public health courses, making education more accessible.
- **Expansion of Research and International Collaborations:** Collaborations with global public health institutions such as WHO, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, and Harvard TH Chan School of Public Health are improving research quality in India.
- **Emerging Career Opportunities:** Public health graduates are increasingly being recruited by government health departments, NGOs, international organizations (WHO, UNICEF), and private healthcare firms.

Way Forward

- **Standardization of Curriculum:** Establishing a central regulatory body, such as a Public Health Education Council, can ensure uniform training standards and faculty qualifications across institutions.

- **Expansion of Institutions:** Setting up public health schools in underserved regions can improve access to education and address regional disparities.
- **Integration of Practical Training:** Incorporating mandatory internships and fieldwork in government health programs can enhance the practical skills of students.
- **Creation of Public Health Jobs:** Introducing State Public Health Cadres and increasing recruitment in government health systems can provide dedicated employment opportunities for graduates.
- **Encouraging Private Sector Participation:** Incentivizing private hospitals and industries to hire public health professionals can expand job opportunities and foster collaboration between sectors.
- **Increased Funding:** Allocating more resources to public health education and research can strengthen the sector and support the development of a skilled workforce.

Conclusion

- The challenges facing public health education in India are significant but not insurmountable.
- By addressing issues such as standardization, funding, and job creation, the country can build a strong public health workforce capable of meeting its healthcare needs.
- A collaborative approach involving the government, academia, and the private sector is essential to achieve this goal and ensure a healthier future for all.

Source: TH

Mains Practice Question

- [Q] Examine the key challenges facing public health education in India. How can these challenges be addressed to strengthen the public health workforce and improve healthcare outcomes in the country?

