

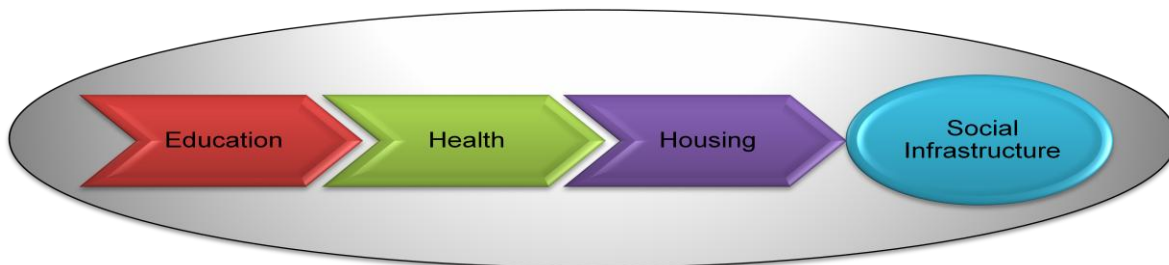
Social Infrastructure

Importance of Social Infrastructure

Education, health and housing facilities are the core elements of social change which serve as a base for the process of social development of an economy. They provide indirect support by building the social sector of the economy.

Economic growth refers to an increase in the real national income of a country. Enhanced productivity of human beings contributes to increasing labour productivity, encourages innovations and creates ability to take in new technologies. Higher income builds a high level of human capital which leads to the growth of income. India has recognised the importance of human capital in economic growth. Trained and educated on sound lines, a large population can itself become an asset for the growth of an economy.

Infrastructure can be classified as social infrastructure and economic infrastructure. Social infrastructure refers to the main elements of social change which serve as a base for the process of social development of a country. It contributes to economic processes indirectly and from outside the system of production and distribution. Examples: Hospitals, educational institutions, sanitary conditions and housing facilities. Economic infrastructure refers to all such elements of economic change which serve as a foundation for the process of economic growth. Examples: Transport, communication and energy. Thus, one infrastructure supports the other. Hence, they both are related to each other.



Education

Role of Education in Economic Development

- Education increases the accessibility of people to modern and scientific ideas.
- It increases efficiency and the ability of people to absorb new technology.
- It creates awareness of available opportunities and mobility of labour.
- It helps people to gain knowledge, skills and attitude which would enable them to understand changes in society and scientific advancements.
- Investment in education is one of the main sources of human capital which facilitates inventions and innovations.
- Available educated labour force facilitates the adaptation of advanced technology in a country.

Steps to Achieve Growth in Education

- Navodaya Vidyalaya Samiti was launched in 1987–88 for the establishment of residential schools to provide advanced quality education to children in rural areas.
- Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan is a scheme which aims to provide elementary education to all children between the ages of 6 to 14 years. It also organises school camps to increase the enrolment in elementary education and practises the mid-day meal scheme to encourage attendance and retention of children with improved nutritional status.
- Kendriya Vidyalayas were set up by the Central Government in 1965 to provide educational facilities to the children of transferable Central Government employees. The National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) functions as an apex institution to provide academic improvement of school education.
- Indira Gandhi National Open University was established in 1985 to facilitate educational opportunities for school dropouts, housewives, employed and unemployed people. The University Grants Commission (UGC) was set up in 1956 to determine the standards in higher education.

Education is regulated by the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) and the University Grants Commission (UGC). Six campuses of the Indian Institute of Technology are located at Mumbai, Delhi, Kanpur, Kharagpur, Chennai and Guwahati.

Over six decades, the institutional capacity in higher education has been improved. There were only 25 university level institutions in 1950, but the number has increased to 467 in 2009. During the planning period, the number of colleges has increased from 700 to 25,951. The educational plan outlay has increased from Rs 151 crore in the first plan to Rs 43,825 crore in the tenth plan. About 50% of the 11th plan outlay was allocated for elementary education and literacy, 20% for secondary education and 30% for higher and technical education. The 12th plan proposed to set up new institutes at a cost of Rs 2500 crore and planned to cover a minimum of 50% students through various financing schemes in higher education.

Bottlenecks in the Education System

The quality of education in India is very poor. The educational policies of 1966 and 1986 emphasised on educational expansion and improvement in all the sectors. Also, these policies suggested that disparity in access to education be eliminated. However, the success in this regard is limited.

To achieve a noticeable rate of growth in the educational sector, our government has been promising to spend 6% of GDP annually for the last four decades. However, the current level of educational expenditure is not more than 3.8% of the GDP. There are regional and gender inequalities in the investment of educational expenditure. It also noticed that the government has not been able to achieve the objective of provide free and compulsory education to all children in the age group of 6 to 14 years.

Health System

Health is an essential requirement for making efficient and active workforce. It reduces the production loss caused by worker's illness. During 1950–51, the death rate was as high as 27.4 per thousand per annum. However, it has declined to 7.4 per thousand in 2009. Infant mortality rate has declined from 146 to 53. The life expectancy rate has increased from 36 years to 63.5 years. Deadly diseases such as malaria, TB, small pox and cholera are under control. There has been large-scale expansion of medical facilities since 1951. There are 35,071 hospitals and dispensaries in 2009. Both government and private sector has 9,14,543 hospital beds in 2005.

Causes of Poor Health in India

- High birth rate: Because of a rapid growth of population, providing safe and sufficient drinking water supply and proper sanitation for the community becomes very difficult. This leads to many health risks in society.
- Malnutrition: Malnutrition results in innumerable health problems and serious health issues among children.
- Insanitary conditions and housing facilities: Poor households are surviving in crowded and insanitary places. They face the problem of contaminated food and water, and live in sub-standard dwellings lacking in space, air and sunlight.

Drawbacks of the Indian Health System

- According to the budget allocation, expenditure on the health sector is 4.2% of the total expenditure, which is low when compared to that of other developed and developing countries.
- Measures to fight against AIDS are not satisfactory in our health system.
- Public health facilities are used by less than 20% of the population.
- The percentage of doctors available in Private Health Centres (PHCs) is 38%, and the stock of medicines sufficient for PHCs is only 30%.
- There is a lack of access to specialised medical care such as paediatrics, gynaecology, obstetrics and anaesthesia.
- In rural areas, PHCs do not have diagnostic labs for blood testing.

Family Planning

Family planning means to have children by choice rather than by chance. It focuses on minimising the size of the family and proper spacing of children. The regulation of conception by preventive methods or devices to limit the number of offspring is called birth control. There are certain devices to control birth such as condoms, diaphragms, cervical caps, intrauterine devices and physiological devices.

Housing

According to estimates, the housing shortage in the country is about 31 million houses with a shortage of 20.6 million houses in the rural areas and 10.4 million houses in the urban areas. A scheme known as the Pradhan Mantri Gramodaya Yojana was launched during 2000–01 for the development of rural housing.