North Asian International Research Journal of Multidisciplinary

IRJIF IMPACT FACTOR: 6.012

ISSN: 2454-2326 Vol.12, Issue-1 January-2026

Index Copernicus Value: 58.12 Indian Citation Index

NAIRJC UGC-Aligned | HEI-Approved Peer Reviewed Refereed Journal (Under New UGC Guidelines)

DOI: doiglobal.org/10.2026/NAIRJCMD.047

MEDICAL EDUCATION AND MEDICAL COLLEGES IN INDIA: HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT AND INSTITUTIONAL DISTRIBUTION

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ABSTRACT

Medical education plays a fundamental role in strengthening the health-care system of a country by producing competent, ethical, and socially responsible medical professionals. In India, medical education has evolved from traditional systems of learning, particularly the gurukula tradition associated with Ayurveda, to a structured system of modern biomedical education introduced during the colonial period. The present article examines the historical development of medical education in India and analyzes the distribution of medical colleges according to period of establishment, geographical location, and management type. The analysis is based on the institutional data provided for the period from 1835 to 2015. According to the supplied dataset, 401 medical colleges were established during the study period, comprising 185 government and 216 non-government institutions. The decade-wise analysis indicates substantial growth after independence, with the highest number of institutions established during 2001–2010. State-wise analysis demonstrates considerable geographical variation, with Karnataka reporting the highest number of medical colleges (47), followed by Tamil Nadu (46) and Maharashtra (45). The data also indicate an increasing contribution from non-government institutions, particularly after the 1980s. The findings demonstrate the substantial expansion and diversification of medical education in India and highlight the importance of institutional transparency, technological integration, and reliable information systems for prospective medical students. Because the supplied tables contain a discrepancy in the reported total number of colleges, the findings should be interpreted with reference to the original source dataset.

***KEYWORDS**: medical education, India, medical colleges, medical education history, government institutions, private medical colleges, higher education, institutional websites*

1. INTRODUCTION

The health of a population is an important determinant of social and economic development. A strong health-care system requires an adequate number of competent health professionals who are capable of providing preventive, promotive, curative, and rehabilitative services to diverse sections of society. Physicians have a particularly important role in maintaining population health because they provide clinical services in urban and rural communities, support public-health programmes, respond to emergencies and natural disasters, and contribute to specialized and tertiary health-care services.

The quality of medical professionals is closely associated with the quality of medical education and training. Medical education therefore constitutes an essential component of the health-care infrastructure of a country. In India, medical education has undergone considerable transformation from traditional systems of knowledge transmission to modern, institution-based, technologically supported medical education.

The development of information and communication technologies has introduced another important dimension to medical education. Medical institutions increasingly use institutional websites and digital platforms to communicate information to prospective students and other stakeholders. Information concerning admission procedures, eligibility criteria, academic programmes, governing bodies, faculty members, infrastructure, fees, institutional policies, and academic performance can assist prospective students in comparing institutions and making informed educational choices.

Institutional websites can consequently be viewed as an important communication bridge between medical colleges and prospective students. The availability, accuracy, completeness, and accessibility of institutional information are particularly important in a highly competitive educational environment. Against this background, the present article examines the historical development and institutional distribution of medical colleges in India using the data provided for the period 1835–2015.

2. HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF MEDICAL EDUCATION IN INDIA

2.1 Ancient Medical Education in India

India possesses a long tradition of organized medical knowledge. Prior to the development of modern biomedical education, medical knowledge was transmitted through traditional systems, including Ayurveda. The traditional gurukula system emphasized close interaction between teacher and student and incorporated theoretical knowledge, practical training, discipline, and ethical values.

Ancient centres of learning such as Takshashila and Nalanda are frequently associated with the development and transmission of medical and other scholarly knowledge in the Indian subcontinent. Takshashila, in particular,

became an important centre of learning where students studied various disciplines under established teachers (Rajashree, 2014).

The traditional Indian approach to medical education was substantially different from the institutionalized system that subsequently developed under colonial rule. Nevertheless, the historical development of medical knowledge demonstrates that organized health-related education has deep roots in Indian society.

2.2 Emergence of Modern Medical Education

Western medical practices entered India through European contact and gradually developed into an institutionalized system during British rule. The development of hospitals and medical schools provided the foundation for modern medical education based on Western, or allopathic, medicine.

One of the important early developments occurred in Madras, now Chennai. A hospital was established within Fort St. George in 1664 to provide medical care to British personnel. The institution subsequently developed into the Madras General Hospital and became associated with the development of formal medical training in the region (Dorairajan&Pandyaraj, 2007).

Informal medical training was conducted at the hospital during the nineteenth century. In 1835, the existing medical training arrangements were reorganized into the Madras Medical School under the supervision of Dr. William Mortimer. The institution was subsequently attached to the Government General Hospital. Indian students were permitted to enter medical training from 1842, and the institution was later renamed Madras Medical College. Its first students graduated in 1852 (Mariappan et al., 2004).

Another major milestone occurred in Calcutta with the establishment of Calcutta Medical College in 1835. The institution played a significant role in the introduction and institutionalization of Western medical education in India. Medical education programmes initially had relatively short durations but were progressively extended as curricular and professional requirements developed.

The development of medical institutions in Madras, Bombay, and Calcutta was followed by the establishment of medical education programmes in other parts of the country. The establishment of universities in 1857 further strengthened the institutional framework of higher education and medical qualifications. Qualifications such as the Licentiate in Medicine and Surgery (LMS) and other medical degrees were introduced, eventually contributing to the development of the MBBS degree and the modern medical education system (Negandhi et al., 2012).

2.3 Development of the Medical Education System

The expansion of medical education continued during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Important institutions and organizations were established to support medical education, medical services, tropical medicine, public health, and professional regulation.

The Indian Medical Service was established in 1896. The School of Tropical Medicine in Calcutta was established in 1922, followed by the All India Institute of Hygiene and Public Health in 1932. The Medical Council of India (MCI) was established in 1933 as a statutory professional regulatory body.

These developments contributed to the gradual standardization of medical education and professional practice in India. The system expanded further after independence as the government recognized the need to increase the availability of trained physicians and health-care institutions.

3. MEDICAL REGULATION IN INDIA

3.1 Role of the Medical Council of India

For much of the period examined in the present dataset, the Medical Council of India served as the principal statutory regulatory organization for medical education and professional standards in India. Its functions included recognition of medical qualifications, recognition and regulation of medical institutions, maintenance of professional standards, and registration-related functions for medical practitioners.

The regulatory framework was intended to promote uniform standards in medical education and ensure that recognized medical institutions met prescribed requirements. The MCI also maintained information concerning recognized medical colleges and medical qualifications (Medical Council of India, 2015).

It is important, however, to distinguish the historical role of the MCI from the present regulatory framework. The National Medical Commission (NMC) was constituted under the National Medical Commission Act, 2019, which came into force on September 25, 2020. The Board of Governors that had been functioning in supersession of the MCI was dissolved following the establishment of the NMC.

The NMC currently functions as India's statutory medical education regulator and aims to promote access to quality and affordable medical education and ensure the availability of adequately trained medical professionals throughout the country.

Thus, references to the MCI in the present analysis should be understood in their historical context, particularly because the institutional data analyzed here relate to the period ending in 2015.

4. MEDICAL COLLEGES IN INDIA

The development of medical colleges has been a major component of the expansion of medical education in India. Medical colleges are administered through different organizational structures, including central and state governments, universities, trusts, societies, and private organizations. Some institutions have autonomous or deemed-university status.

The present analysis examines the supplied data from three perspectives: decade-wise establishment of medical colleges; state-wise distribution of medical colleges; and distribution according to government and non-government management.

5. METHODOLOGY

5.1 Research Design

The study adopted a descriptive, retrospective, quantitative research design. The analysis was based on secondary institutional data concerning medical colleges in India for the period from 1835 to 2015.

5.2 Data Source

The data were obtained from the institutional information supplied in the study material, which attributes the medical-college information to the Medical Council of India and related health-infrastructure sources. The dataset contains information on the year or period of establishment, state, and management category of medical colleges.

5.3 Variables

The principal variables examined were: year/period of establishment, geographical location, government or non-government management; andtotal number of institutions.

5.4 Data Analysis

Descriptive analysis was used to summarize the distribution of medical colleges. Frequencies and percentages were used to identify temporal, geographical, and organizational patterns.

6. RESULTS

6.1 Decade-Wise Establishment of Medical Colleges

The supplied data indicate that the development of medical colleges in India was relatively slow during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries but accelerated considerably after independence.

Table 1. Decade-Wise Distribution of Medical Colleges in India, 1835–2015

Sl. No.	Year	Government	Non-government	Total colleges
1	1835-1840	3	0	3
2	1841-1850	1	0	1
3	1851-1860	0	0	0
4	1861-1870	0	0	0
5	1871-1880	0	0	0
6	1881-1890	0	0	0
7	1891-1900	0	0	0
8	1901-1910	0	0	0
9	1911-1920	4	0	4
10	1921-1930	4	0	4
11	1931-1940	1	0	1
12	1941-1950	14	1	15
13	1951-1960	31	3	34
14	1961-1970	34	6	40
15	1971-1980	8	3	11
16	1981-1990	6	26	32

17	1991-2000	13	31	44
18	2001-2010	34	94	128
19	2011-2015	32	52	84
		185	**216**	**401**

Note: Values are reproduced from the supplied dataset

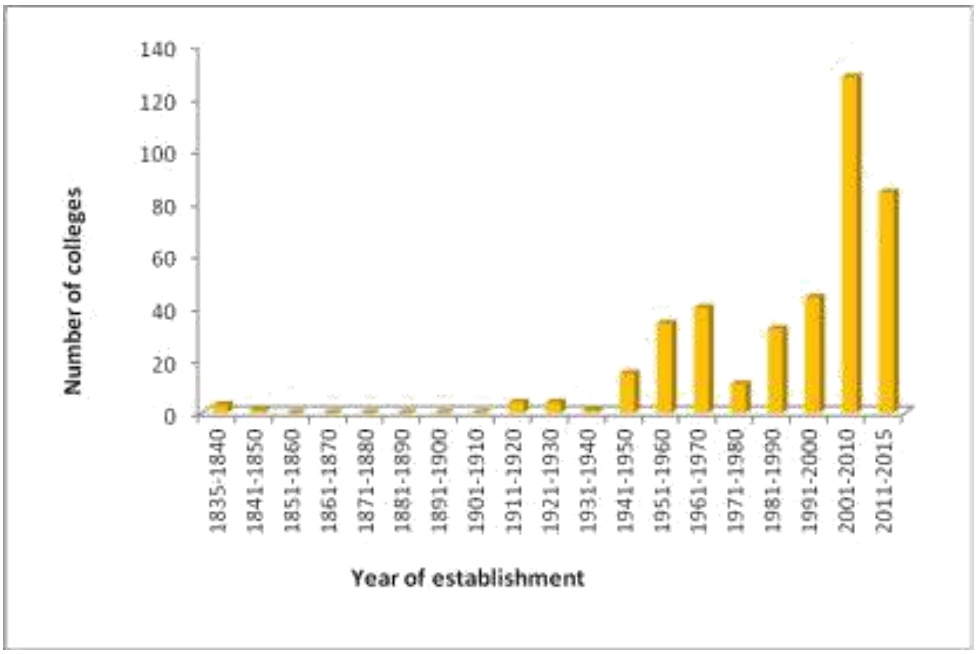


Figure 3. Graphical representation of medical colleges in decade–wise

The first major institutional development occurred during 1835–1840, when three medical colleges were established. One additional institution was established during 1841–1850. The data indicate no new medical colleges during 1851–1910. Establishment activity resumed during 1911–1920 and 1921–1930, with four institutions established during each period.

A substantial increase occurred after 1941. Fifteen medical colleges were established during 1941–1950, followed by 34 during 1951–1960 and 40 during 1961–1970. The number decreased to 11 during 1971–1980 but subsequently increased to 32 during 1981–1990 and 44 during 1991–2000.

The most substantial expansion occurred during 2001–2010, when 128 medical colleges were established according to the supplied data. Of these, 94 were classified as non-government institutions and 34 as government institutions.

A further 84 institutions were established between 2011 and 2015, including 52 non-government and 32 government institutions.

The data therefore demonstrate two major historical characteristics: first, the substantial expansion of medical education after independence and, second, the increasing contribution of non-government institutions during the later decades.

7. STATE-WISE DISTRIBUTION OF MEDICAL COLLEGES

The geographical distribution of medical colleges demonstrates substantial variation among states and union territories.

Table 2. State-Wise Distribution of Medical Colleges in India

Sl. No.	State	Government colleges	Non-government colleges	Total
1	Andhra Pradesh	12	14	26
2	Assam	5	1	6
3	Bihar	9	4	13
4	Chandigarh	1	0	1
5	Chhattisgarh	6	1	7
6	Delhi	6	2	8
7	Goa	1	0	1
8	Gujarat	9	13	22
9	Haryana	3	4	7
10	Himachal Pradesh	2	1	3
11	Jammu & Kashmir	3	1	4

12	Jharkhand	3	1	4
13	Karnataka	12	35	47
14	Kerala	9	21	30
15	Madhya Pradesh	6	7	13
16	Maharashtra	19	26	45
17	Meghalaya	1	0	1
18	Manipur	2	0	2
19	Orissa	3	5	8
20	Pondicherry	2	7	9
21	Punjab	3	7	10
22	Rajasthan	8	4	12
23	Sikkim	0	1	1
24	Tamil Nadu	22	24	46
25	Telangana	7	13	20
26	Tripura	1	1	2
27	Uttar Pradesh	14	18	32
28	Uttarakhand	2	2	4
29	West Bengal	14	3	17
		185	**216**	
		40		**401**

Note. Values are reproduced from the supplied dataset. State/territory names reflect the terminology used in the original data.

Karnataka had the highest number of medical colleges in the supplied dataset, with 47 institutions. Tamil Nadu ranked second with 46, followed by Maharashtra with 45. Uttar Pradesh had 32 institutions, while Kerala had 30 and Andhra Pradesh had 26.

The distribution also demonstrates differences in the relative contribution of government and non-government institutions. Karnataka, for example, had 12 government and 35 non-government institutions. Kerala had nine government and 21 non-government institutions, whereas West Bengal had a comparatively larger government component, with 14 government and three non-government institutions.

These differences indicate that the expansion of medical education has not occurred uniformly across India. Historical factors, population characteristics, health-care demand, state-level policies, availability of teaching hospitals, investment capacity, and the growth of private health-care organizations may have influenced the geographical distribution of medical colleges.

8. MANAGEMENT-WISE DISTRIBUTION OF MEDICAL COLLEGES

The supplied material also provides a separate classification of medical colleges according to management type.

Table 3. Management-Wise Distribution of Medical Colleges

Sl. No.	Type of college	Number	Percent
1	Government medical colleges	163	45.15
2.	Non-government medical colleges	198	54.85
	Total	**361**	**100.00**

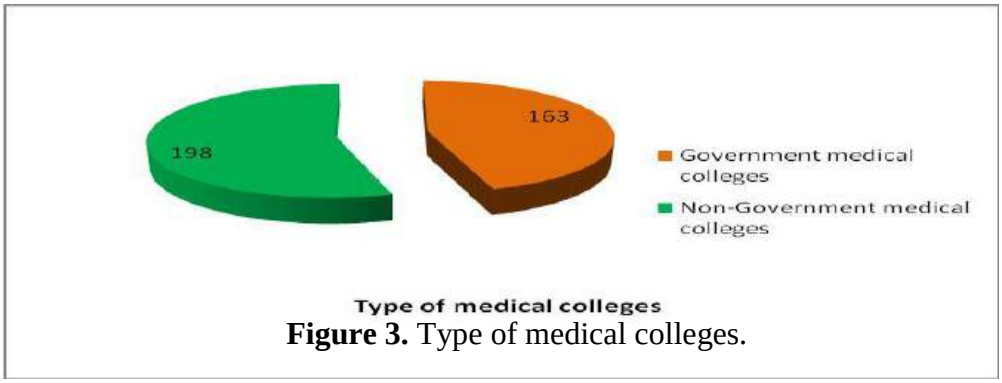


Figure 3. Type of medical colleges.

According to Table 3, non-government medical colleges constituted 54.85% of the reported institutions, compared with 45.15% government institutions. This suggests that non-government organizations had become an important component of medical education in India during the period under consideration.

However, an important data inconsistency must be acknowledged. Tables 1 and 2 report a total of 401 institutions, consisting of 185 government and 216 non-government colleges, whereas Table 3 reports 361 institutions, consisting of 163 government and 198 non-government colleges. Therefore, the management-wise percentages in Table 3 cannot be directly combined with the 401-institution totals in Tables 1 and 2 without access to the original database.

For scientific reporting, this discrepancy should be resolved by checking the original MCI dataset or institutional list before the data are used in a dissertation, thesis, journal article, or statistical publication. Until such verification is undertaken, the two datasets should be treated as separate reported figures rather than mathematically reconciled.

9. DISCUSSION

The findings demonstrate the long-term expansion of medical education in India. The historical development began with traditional systems of medical knowledge and subsequently incorporated Western biomedical education during the colonial period. The establishment of medical institutions in Calcutta, Madras, and other major centres created the foundation for the modern medical education system.

The decade-wise data indicate that the expansion of medical education was particularly pronounced after independence. Between 1941 and 1970, the number of newly established institutions increased substantially. This development may be interpreted in the context of India's growing requirement for trained medical professionals and the expansion of public-sector health infrastructure.

A particularly important finding is the rapid growth of non-government medical colleges after the 1980s. During 1981–1990, 26 of the 32 newly established colleges in the dataset were non-government institutions. During 1991–2000, non-government institutions accounted for 31 of the 44 new colleges. The trend became even more pronounced during 2001–2010, when 94 of the 128 institutions were classified as non-government. This indicates a major change in the organizational structure of medical education, with private and other non-government organizations becoming increasingly important providers of medical education.

The geographical analysis similarly reveals concentration in particular states. Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, and Maharashtra had the largest numbers of medical colleges in the supplied dataset. Such concentration may have implications for educational access and the regional distribution of medical professionals. A high number of

institutions in a state does not necessarily indicate equitable access to medical education, because institutional capacity, student intake, affordability, rural–urban distribution, and quality of education are also important determinants.

The increasing role of technology is another important consideration. Medical education is no longer limited to conventional classroom-based instruction. Digital learning resources, institutional websites, online admission systems, electronic databases, simulation technologies, telemedicine, virtual learning environments, and computer-assisted learning have transformed the educational environment.

Institutional websites are particularly relevant to prospective medical students. A well-designed institutional website can provide information regarding admission requirements, academic programmes, faculty, infrastructure, fees, affiliated universities, governing bodies, institutional policies, student services, research activities, and academic outcomes. Reliable digital information can reduce information asymmetry between students and institutions and may support more informed educational decision-making.

At the same time, the use of institutional websites introduces a requirement for transparency and accuracy. Information should be current, standardized, accessible, and presented in a manner that permits meaningful comparison between institutions. The regulatory environment also continues to evolve. The current NMC framework emphasizes quality and accessibility in medical education and maintains institutional information concerning MBBS teaching colleges.

10. IMPLICATIONS FOR MEDICAL EDUCATION

The findings have several implications for medical education policy and institutional management.

First, the substantial increase in the number of medical colleges demonstrates the expansion of educational capacity. However, numerical expansion should be accompanied by appropriate faculty, teaching hospitals, laboratories, libraries, clinical exposure, infrastructure, and quality-assurance mechanisms.

Second, the increasing contribution of non-government institutions highlights the importance of effective regulation. Growth in institutional numbers should not be evaluated solely in quantitative terms. Educational quality, affordability, student support, clinical training, ethical standards, and graduate competencies are equally important.

Third, the geographical concentration of medical colleges suggests a need to consider regional equity. States with fewer institutions may require targeted investment and policy interventions to ensure adequate access to medical education and, ultimately, to strengthen health-care delivery.

Fourth, technology should be integrated into medical education in a systematic manner. Digital resources can supplement traditional teaching methods and support lifelong learning, evidence-based medicine, simulation-based education, and communication between institutions and students.

Finally, institutional websites should be treated as an important component of educational communication. Medical colleges should provide accurate and regularly updated information concerning admission, curriculum, faculty, infrastructure, fees, accreditation or recognition status, academic performance, student facilities, and institutional governance.

11. LIMITATIONS

The present analysis has several limitations. First, it is based on the supplied secondary dataset rather than a newly collected institutional database. Second, the study period ends in 2015; therefore, the findings should not be interpreted as representing the current number or distribution of medical colleges in India. Third, the source material contains a numerical discrepancy between the total reported in the decade-wise/state-wise tables (401) and the management-wise table (361). Fourth, the supplied references do not contain complete bibliographic information for all cited sources, which limits the ability to construct a fully verified APA 7th edition reference list.

In addition, historical terminology and state names in the original dataset reflect the period and source from which the data were collected. Consequently, historical classifications should be interpreted in their original context.

12. CONCLUSION

Medical education in India has developed through a long historical process, beginning with traditional systems of medical knowledge and progressing toward modern institutionalized biomedical education. The establishment of medical colleges during the colonial period created the foundation for the modern medical education system, while post-independence expansion significantly increased the availability of medical education.

The supplied data demonstrate a particularly rapid increase in the number of medical colleges after 1940, with the most substantial expansion occurring during 2001–2010. The increasing contribution of non-government institutions represents one of the most important structural changes in Indian medical education. The state-wise

distribution further demonstrates considerable geographical variation, with Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, and Maharashtra having the largest numbers of institutions in the supplied dataset.

The development of medical education should, however, be evaluated not only in terms of the number of institutions but also in terms of educational quality, equity, infrastructure, faculty availability, clinical training, affordability, and regulatory compliance. In the contemporary educational environment, information technology and institutional websites provide important mechanisms for communicating institutional information and facilitating informed decisions by medical aspirants.

The historical MCI framework discussed in the original material should also be distinguished from the present regulatory system, as the National Medical Commission replaced the previous MCI framework in 2020.

Future research should therefore update the institutional dataset, examine changes after 2015, compare government and non-government institutions using standardized indicators, and evaluate the quality, completeness, accessibility, and usability of medical-college websites.

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