



## GROWTH AND COMPOSITION OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN INDIA

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### ABSTRACT

#### KEYWORDS:

*Higher Education, Enrolment, Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER).*

*Higher education plays a key role in the process of socio, economic, cultural and technical development of a country. It also improves an individual's quality of life. The main objective of this paper is to examine the progress and present scenario of higher education in India in terms of universities and other higher educational institutions and student's enrolment. There is a substantial progress in the Indian higher education system during the last seven decades. However, the growth of universities and colleges and its enrolment is not uniform across the different managements, different courses over the period. The demand for private universities and private unaided colleges has been increasing rapidly. As a result, the private unaided management in respect of institutions and enrolment not only increased faster but also undermined the government sector. The Gross Enrollment Ratio in higher education in India is 25.8 Percent in 2017-18. However, GER is very low in India when compared to many countries in the world. Student's enrollment in higher education had increased phenomenally in recent years. Female participation in higher education also increased considerably. Hence, gender gap is very low in higher education as a whole but in case of technical and professional courses the gap is quite more.*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Higher education is widely perceived as a crucial vehicle for socio, economic, cultural and technical development of a country. It also improves an individual's quality of life through expand their knowledge and skills. Higher education is widely considered as a merit good as it produces a huge set of externalities. There has been a substantial progress and tremendous changes in higher education in India in recent decades particularly increase in number of universities and higher educational institutions and students, mushroom growth of private universities and colleges, huge demand for technical and professional courses, new model of public private partnership and large inequalities in accessibility of higher education. Therefore, the present paper is an attempt to study the progress of higher education system during the last seven decades in India with the following objectives.

#### 1.1. Objectives

1. To study the growth of higher education system in India in terms of universities and colleges from 1950-51 to 2017-18.

2. To examine gross enrolment ratio and the enrollment trends in higher education across different courses and social groups in India.

#### 1.2. Methodology

The present study is based on secondary data only. The main data sources are UGC annual reports and MHRD reports for various years. Statistical tools like percentages are used for the study.

This paper consists of five sections. The first section presents introduction, objectives and methodology. The second section describes the related review of literature. Third section deals with the progress of higher education in India in terms of institutions. Section four covers the enrolment of students in higher education in India and the last section provides conclusions.

### 2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Agarwal (2006) argues that the mushroom growth of technical and professional education in India is largely due to increasing penetration of private sector in technical and professional courses. Consequently, private institutions account for a disproportionately large share of professional

enrolment. According to him, as high as 78 per cent of professional enrolment was in private institutions in 2006 as against of only 22 per cent in public institutions.

World Bank (2010) states that the growth of private sector in higher education in India has helped the expansion of higher education system, as gross enrolment ratio has increased from 6 per cent in 1990 to 18 per cent in 2010. However, it still falls short of the world average at 27 per cent, have alone the developed nations like USA and Russia at 95 per cent and 76 per cent respectively.

Ernst and Young (2011) reveal that the number of universities has grown three-fold increasing from 184 in 1990-91 to 556 in 2010-11 and of colleges six-fold from 5,748 to 33,623 during the same period in India. Similarly, the students' enrolment has also rose three times, increasing from 49 lakhs in 1990-91 to 1.46 crore in 2008-09.

According to the Planning Commission (2012) the gross enrolment ratio for rural areas is disproportionately low at 11 per cent compared to 30 per cent for urban areas. Similarly, it is 11.6 per cent regarding the scheduled Castes, 7.7 per cent for the Scheduled Tribes and 14.8 per cent for the other Backward Castes against 20 per cent for Other Castes. These disparities have been widened due to enormous growth of privatization and commercialization in higher education in India.

Chhapla (2013) felt that the distinguishing feature of the current scenario in Indian Higher education is the meteoric rise of technical and professional institutions. Their number has grown considerably during the recent decades.

Ghuman (2014) shows that in 2012 out of 33,682 institutions of higher learning, 20,121 were privately-owned and managed, which constitute 62.41 per cent of the total. Private institutions have increased mainly in the field of 'sunrise' disciplines such as engineering and management.

Kamalakar,G (2014) observed that the number of colleges and universities have registered a significant growth between 1950-51 and 2004-05. The number of universities has increased from 28 to 348 and the number of colleges has risen from 578 to 17625 whereas enrolment in higher education has increased from around 1.8 lakhs to 1.04 crores.

Sabu,P.J , Raju,K.V (2015) stated that there has been a substantial growth in enrolment of women students in higher education in India. The proportion of women enrolment increased from 10 percent in 1947-48 to 41.5 percent in 2010-11. Similarly, the number of women colleges also show increasing trend. However, the enrolment of females in higher education is low compared to male enrolment.

### 3. GROWTH OF HIGHER EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS IN INDIA

The present Indian higher education system is the third largest in the world after United States and China. India has made a substantial progress in terms of expansion of universities and higher educational institutions during the last seven decades. There were only 27 universities and 578 colleges in 1950-51 and had increased to 903 universities and institutes of national importance and 39050 colleges by 2017-18 (Table.1). There has been a significant increase in the share of state private universities as part of total universities from 60 (12.3 percent) universities in 2000-01 to 263 (29.1 percent) universities by 2017-18. India has 367 state universities, 123 deemed to be universities, 46 central universities and 263 private universities and 104 institutes of national importance in 2017-18. Out of the total 123 deemed to be universities in 2017-18, Government deemed universities are 33, private aided are 10 and highest number of 80 deemed to be universities are private.

**Table. 1: Growth of Higher Educational Institutions in India from 1950-51 to 2016-17**

Year	Central Universities	State Universities	Deemed to be Universities	State Private Universities	Institutions of National Importance	Total	Colleges
1950-51	3	24	0	0	0	27	578
1960-61	4	41	2	0	2	49	1816
1970-71	5	79	9	0	9	102	3277
1980-81	7	105	11	0	10	132	4738
1990-91	10	137	29	0	11	185	7346
2000-01	42	256	130	2	60	488	12806
2010-11	43	265	130	80	56	523	35539
2017-18	46	367	123	263	104	903	39050

Source: AISHE Report of MHRD and UGC Reports (various Years)

#### 3.1 Higher Education under Public and Private Managements in India

Higher education is a merit good. Therefore, it is the responsibility of the government to make provision for higher education in India. However, Private education is also had a long history and it is not a new phenomenon in India. But, what is new about it is its rapid growth and its changing character in recent years. The inability of government to invest heavily in education sector necessitates inviting private capital both domestic and international. Government has already opened higher education to domestic private sector in a big way.

It is observed from the table 2 that higher education under different managements in India, the relative importance of a particular management varies from time to time. The role of government sector was dominant in 2000-01, while that of

private sector was low. 44.4 percent institutions were under the government sector and 13 percent institutions were under government aided whereas 42.6 percent were under the private unaided sector in 2000-01. After that, the proportion of government higher educational institutions has been declining continuously. By 2017-18, the proportion declined to 22 percent. Out of the total 39050 higher educational institutions in India in 2017-18, 65 percent of institutions are under private unaided management and 13 percent are Private aided and government institutions are only 22 percent in 2017-18. The similar trend is observed in case of enrolment in higher education in India. In respect of enrolment, 46.3 percent of students enrolled under private unaided management institutions whereas in government institutions, it is only 32.7 percent in 2017-18.

**Table. 2: Higher Education under Public and Private Managements in India- 2017-18**

Management	% of Institutions		% of Enrolment	
	2000-01	2017-18	2000-01	2017-18
Government	44.4	22.0	43.9	32.7
Private Aided	13.0	13.0	23.2	21.0
Private Unaided	42.6	65.0	32.9	46.3
All	100.0 (12806)	100.0 (39050)	100.0 (8399443)	100.0 (36642378)

Source: 12<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan and MHRD-AISHE-2017-18.

Note: Figures in the Bracket indicate total institutions and enrolment.

#### 4. GROSS ENROLMENT RATIO IN HIGHER EDUCATION IN INDIA

Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) is a statistical measure used in the education sector. GER in higher education is the ratio of enrolment in higher education to the population in the age group of 18 – 23 years. It is an indicator of the level of

higher education in India. The Gross Enrollment Ratio in higher education in India has increased from six percent in 1990-91 to 24.5 percent in 2014-15 and further rose to 25.8 Percent by 2017-18 (Table.3).

**Table. 3: Gross Enrolment Ratio in Higher Education in India from 1990-91 to 2016-17**

Year	1990-91	2000-01	2010-11	2014-15	2017-18
GER	6.0	11.0	17.9	24.5	25.8

Source: MHRD- AISHE Reports and UGC Reports (various Years)

The gross enrolment ratio in higher education in India varies across social groups. The national GER is 25.8 percent in 2017-18, out of which GER for male is 26.3 percent and

for females, it is 25.4 percent. For Scheduled Castes, it is 21.8 percent and for Scheduled Tribes, it is 15.9 percent (Table.4).

**Table. 4: Gross Enrolment Ratio across various Social Groups in Higher Education in India (2017-18) (Percent)**

	Male	Female	Total
All Categories	26.3	25.4	25.8
SCs	22.8	20.0	21.8
STs	16.6	13.9	15.9

Source: Same as Table 1

#### 4.1 Growth of Enrolment in Higher Education in India

Enrollment is a key indicator of progress of higher education. An analysis of data indicates that enrollment in higher education had increased from 2.63 lakhs in 1950-51 to 3.66 crore in 2017-18 and this indicates an increase by about 140 times (Table.5). The proportion of women enrolment to

the total is increased substantially from 10.9 percent in 1950-51 to 47.6 percent in 2017-18. The innovative strategies and interventions of both the central and state governments to provide access to higher education and steps taken to increase universities and colleges have resulted in considerable increase in enrollment in higher education and also increase the women proportion.

**Table. 5: Students Enrolment in Higher Education in India from 1950 -51 to 2017-18**

Year	Students	% of Women
1950-51	173696	10.9
1960-61	556559	16.2
1970-71	1953640	21.9
1980-81	2831563	27.2
1990-91	4924868	32.0
2000-01	8399443	39.4
2010-11	18670050	41.5
2017-18	36642378	47.6

Source: Same as Table 1.

#### 4.2 Enrolment across Various Social Groups

Higher education is uneven with multidimensional inequalities in enrolment across population groups in India. The total estimated student enrolment is 3.66 crores, out of which nearly 52.4 percent are male and rest 47.6 percent are female students. SC student enrolment is 14.4 percent of the

total enrolment and the male-female ratio is more or less similar to the All Category. On the other hand, students belonging to ST category constitute only 5.2 percent of the total student enrolment and male female ratio is similar to All Category. 35 percent of the total students belong to BCs with 52 percent of male BC students (Tables 6 & 7).

**Table. 6: Enrolment across Various Social Groups in Indian Higher Education 2017-18**

Social Group	SCs	STs	BCs	OCs	ALL
Enrolment %	14.4	5.2	35.0	45.4	100.0

**Table. 8: Enrolment – Gender Wise in Higher Education 2017-18**

Social Group	Male	Female	All
SCs	52.5	47.5	100.0
STs	52.3	47.7	100.0
BCs	52.0	48.0	100.0
OCS	52.5	47.5	100.0
ALL	52.4	47.6	100.0

Source: MHRD-AISHE-2017-18,

### 4.3 Students Enrolment: Level Wise and Course Wise

Total enrolment in higher education in India in 2017-18 is 3.66 crore and female proportion is 47.6 percent of the total enrolment. Out of the total enrolment in higher education in India regular mode students are 88.9 percent and distance mode enrolment constitutes about 11.1 percent (Table.8). The highest proportion (79.2 percent) of students is enrolled in Undergraduate level programme and 11.2 percent students are under post graduate programmes. Just only 0.4 percent students are enrolled in Ph.d, certificate and integrated courses

The distribution of students enrolment across courses is presented in table.10. It is observed from the table that out of the total students' enrolment, 35.2 percent students had been in the faculty of Arts, followed by 16.9 percent in

Science and 13.2 percent in Commerce in 2017-18 (Table.9). But it is 45.1 percent in Arts, 19.9 percent in science and 18 percent in commerce in 2002-03. It can be said that the importance of these courses have been declining in recent decades. Thus more than 65 percent of the total enrolment had been in the three faculties of Arts, Science and Commerce while the remaining 35 percent had been in the professional faculties recording the highest percentage in Engineering/technology 16.2 percent, followed by four percent each in Medical Courses and education (Teacher Training courses). Though agriculture is the main occupation in India, the enrolment in Agricultural Courses had been only 0.8 percent and Veterinary Science, it is a miniscule 0.1 percent. thus, it is evident from the course-wise distribution of enrolment that the ratio of professional to non-professional enrolment has been about 1:2.

**Table. 8: Enrolment at various Levels in Higher Education in India (2017-18)**

Level of Education	Students	Women	Regular Mode
Ph.D	0.4	41.0	99.9
M.Phil	0.1	58.9	100.0
Post Graduate	11.2	53.6	71.7
Under Graduate	79.2	46.7	90.9
P. G. Diploma	0.7	46.2	70.1
Diploma	7.4	29.6	95.9
Certificate	0.5	56.1	69.3
Integrated	0.5	40.4	99.9
All	100.0 (36642378)	47.6	88.9

Source : MHRD-AISHE-2017-18.

Note: Figures in the Bracket indicates total enrolment in higher education.

**Table. 9: Students Enrolment – Course Wise in 2017-18 (Percent)**

Course	Students		% of Female	
	2002-03	2017-18	2002-03	2017-18
Arts	45.1	35.2	45.4	54.8
Commerce	18.0	13.2	36.7	49.2
Science	19.9	16.9	40.2	49.8
Education	1.4	4.0	50.6	64.3
Engineering	7.5	16.2	22.3	28.6
Law	3.2	1.6	20.8	34.5
Management	-	3.4	-	39.5
Medicine	3.3	4.0	44.7	60.6
Computer Science	-	3.3	-	46.3
Agriculture	0.6	0.8	20.2	28.3
Veterinary Science	0.2	0.2	16.9	32.8
Others	0.9	1.2	37.9	46.3
All	100.0 (9227833)	100.0 (36642378)	40.1	48.1

Source: UGC Report 2003-04 and MHRD -AISHE-2017-18.

Note: Figures in the brackets indicate total number of students.

#### 4.4 Students Distribution between General and Professional courses

Students' enrolment in Professional courses is more (68.3 percent) in Private unaided institutions than in Government (22.7 percent) at UG level. The similar trend is observed in case of PG level also. But the share of enrolment in Professional courses at UG level in Private unaided institutions is higher

when compared to the same type of unaided institutions at PG level. On the contrary, students enrolment in general courses in government institutions both at UG and PG levels are much higher than the students enrolment in private unaided institutions (Table.11). Female participation in professional courses is lower in comparison to general academic courses at both UG and PG levels (Table.12).

**Table. 11: Students Enrolment in General and Professional Courses at UG and PG Levels**  
Percent

	Government	Private Aided	Private Unaided	All
<b>UG Level</b>				
General Courses	48.0	22.1	29.9	100.0
Professional courses	22.7	9.0	68.3	100.0
<b>PG Level</b>				
General Courses	68.4	17.3	14.3	100.0
Professional courses	40.2	7.1	52.7	100.

Source: MHRD -AISHE-2017-18.

**Table. 12: Women Enrolment in General and Professional Courses at UG and PG Levels**  
Percent

	Government	Private Aided	Private Unaided	All
<b>UG Level</b>				
General Courses	49.0	52.9	50.4	
Professional courses	40.6	44.4	36.6	
<b>PG Level</b>				
General Courses	57.6	63.7	60.1	
Professional courses	43.6	56.5	44.0	

Source: MHRD -AISHE-2017-18.

#### 5. CONCLUSION

The growth of higher education in India has been phenomenal both in the number of universities, colleges and enrolment during the period of last seven decades. The Gross Enrollment Ratio in higher education in India has increased about 20 percent between 1990-91 and 2017-18. Higher education was considered to be primarily the responsibility of the public sector. However, privatization of higher education in India has been a matter of debate since economic liberalization in 1991. There after a dramatic demand for higher education and consequently greater pressure on governmental resources. Hence, the government had no other way but to allow and encourage private sector. There has been a substantial growth in enrolment of women students in higher education in India. The proportion of girls enrolment increased from 10.9 percent in 1950-51 to 47.6 percent in 2017-18. The demand for professional and technical education is growing rapidly. Mushroom growth of technical and professional education in India is largely due to increasing penetration of private sector in technical and professional disciplines. Consequently, private institutions account for a disproportionately large share of professional enrolment.

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