

A STUDY OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN INDIA (1950-2014)

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1. **Introduction:** Education is the backbone of every society to sustain economic growth. A good higher education system is essential for national, social and economic development of any country. There is a need of value based higher education system which empowers youth for self-sustainability by inculcating employment skills and hence reducing poverty. Since independence, we are facing challenges to establish a great and strong education system. Enough has been done but a lot more remains to be done. Various governments tried to establish new education policies in the system but ended up making cosmetic changes only. Consequently even after 66 years of independence we are facing lot of problems in our education system. The overall scenario of higher education in India does not match with the global quality standards. There is an absence of a well-informed reform agenda for higher education in the country. Time has now come to walk the talk. or else India's youth will be left behind in the global race.¹

1.1 History of Higher Education in India

India has always been a land of scholars and learners . In ancient times also, India was regarded all over the world for its universities like Takshila, Nalanda and Vikramshila and its scholars. In 1854, establishment of modern universities in India was first recommended by British Colonial administration; universities in Bombay, Calcutta and Madras were set up in 1857.²

In the post –independence period, the government has made significant efforts for the growth and development of Higher Education. Radhakrishnan Commission (1948-49),Kothari

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Commission (1964-66), Rammurti Commission(1990), National Policy of Education(1986),National Knowledge Commission(2005),Yashpal Committee(2009),and the bill for the National Commission on Higher Education and Research are the important landmarks in higher education.³

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1.2 Meaning of Higher Education :Study beyond the level of secondary education. Institutions of higher education include not only colleges and universities but also professional schools in such fields as law, theology, medicine, business, music, and art. They also include teacher-training schools institutes of technology etc. At the end of a prescribed course of study, a degree, diploma, or certificate is awarded.⁴

1.2.1 Figure: Higher Education Institutions(Universities And Colleges) in India

Type of institution	Number	E. g.
Central Universities	44	University of Delhi
State Universities(Public)	306	University of Mumbai
State Universities(Private)	154	Amity University
Deemed Universities(Private or public)	129	Tata Institute of Social Sciences
Institute of National Importance (Public)	67	Indian Institute of Technology
Total Degree Granting Institutions	700	

Source: RashtriyaUchcharSikshaAbhiyaan,survey conducted by MHRD 2012-13⁵

There are four broad categories of higher education institutions in India, centrally funded institutions, state funded institutions, deemed institutions and private institutions.

Central University:

A university established or incorporated by a Central Act.

State University:

A university established or incorporated by a Provincial Act or by a State Act.

Private University:

A university established through a State/Central Act by a sponsoring body viz. A Society registered under the Societies Registration Act 1860, or any other corresponding law for the time being in force in a State or a Public Trust or a Company registered under Section 25 of the Companies Act, 1956.

Deemed-To-Be University:

An Institution Deemed to be University, commonly known as Deemed University, refers to a high-performing institution, which has been so declared by Central Government under Section 3 of the University Grants Commission (UGC) Act, 1956.

Institution Of National Importance:

An Institution established by Act of Parliament and declared as Institution of National Importance.

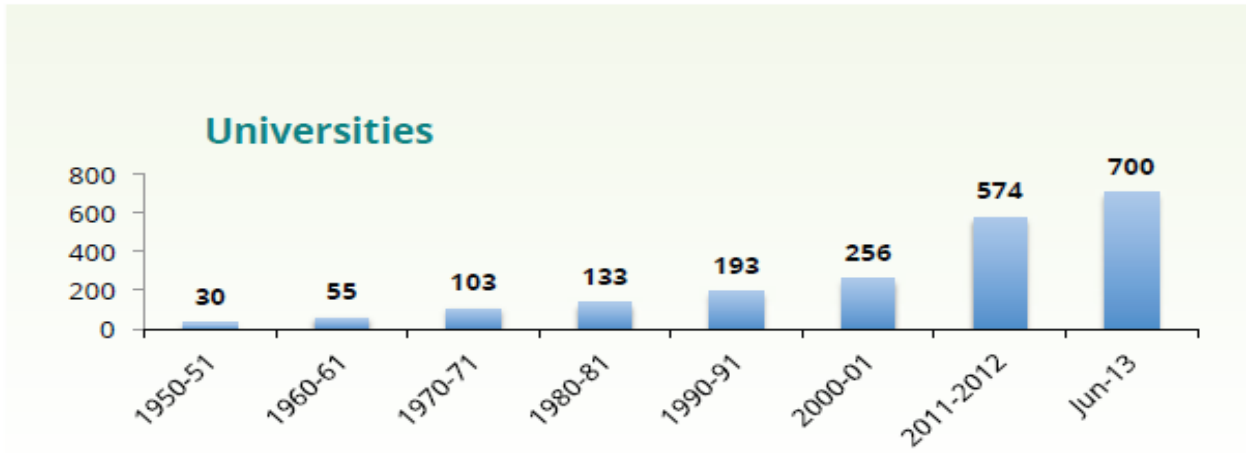
Institution Under State Legislature Act:

An Institution established or incorporated by a State Legislature Act.

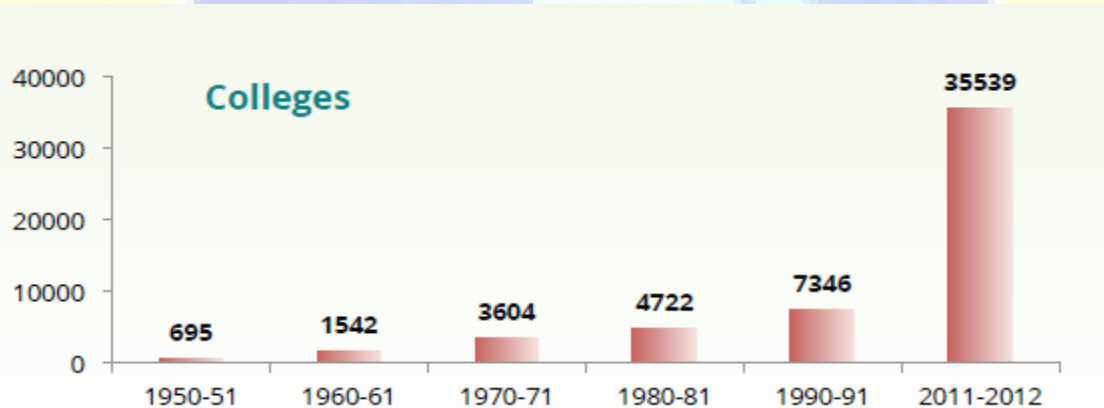
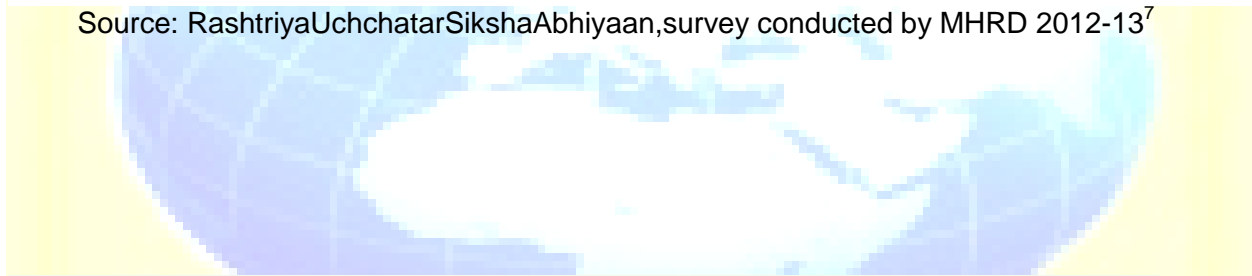
2 :Trends In Growth of Higher Education in India

Since independence, the number of colleges and universities has registered a significant hike. From 1950-51 to 2014-15, while the number of universities has increased from 30 to 700, the number of colleges has grown up from 695 to 35,829. The decadal growth in the number of universities and institutions was much higher in the 1950s and 1960s, primarily because of the relatively small number of such institutions existing, since planned expansion of higher education began after independence. In the 1970s and 1980s, growth of institutions of higher learning was relatively slow, it picked up in the 1990s onwards . This has happened because of increased demand for higher education and participation of the private sector, particularly in technical and professional education. This rapid expansion, however, hides the story of the stark inequality that prevails in access to higher education across states and union territories. Though the number of colleges and institutions related to higher education has increased but there is disparity in the growth of higher education at the national level In India. Some states(Uttar Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu and Madhya Pradesh) have much higher level of education institutions whereas higher education institutions are absent in Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Lakshadweep.⁶

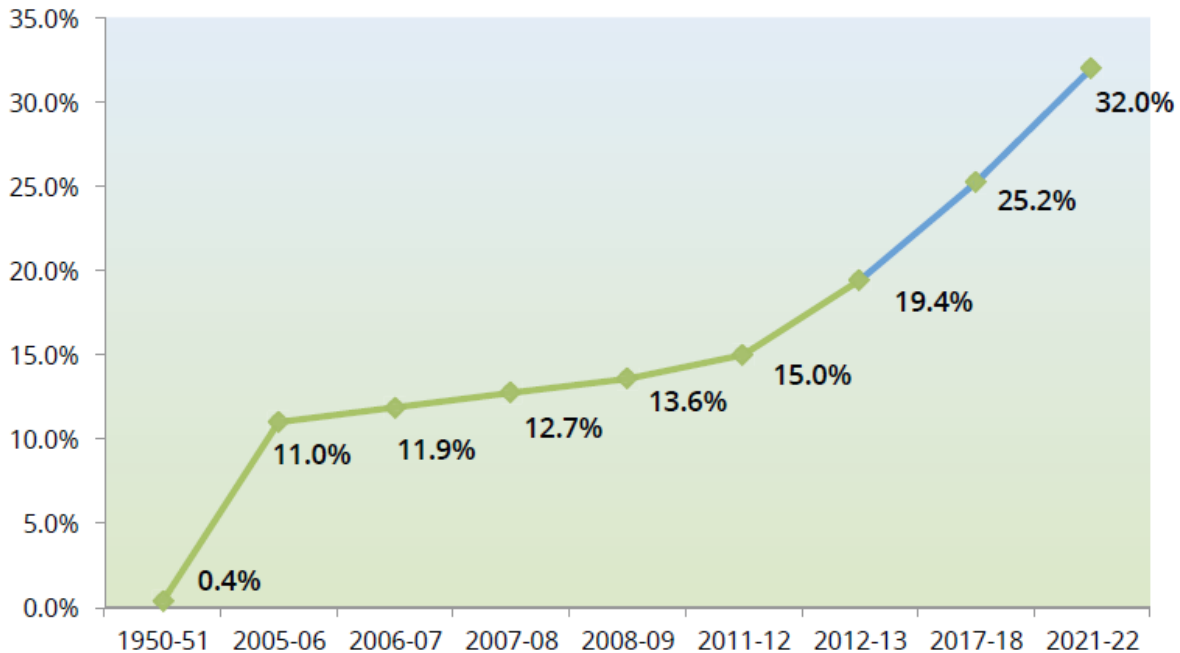
Figure :2.1 Growth of Universities And Colleges in India



Source: RashtriyaUchchatarSikshaAbhiyaan,survey conducted by MHRD 2012-13⁷



Source: RashtriyaUchchatarSikshaAbhiyaan,survey conducted by MHRD 2012-13
Figure :2.2 India's Gross Enrolment Ratio Over Time



Source: RashtriyaUchchatarSikshaAbhiyaan,survey conducted by MHRD 2012-13

Table shows that three years after independence India's Gross Enrolment Ratio was only 0.4% , in 2012 -13 it was 15 % and in 2021-22 it is estimated to be increased to 32% .We have risen to 700 Universities and 35,829 colleges in the year 2014-15. India's GER is far below those of most developed countries and even below that of the other BRICS nations (Brazil, Russia and China).However ,as the low GER very aptly indicates , increase in the number of institutions has still remained inadequate to meet the increased demand for higher education.⁷

- The top 7 States in terms of highest number of colleges in India are Uttar Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu and Madhya Pradesh
- College density, i.e. the number of colleges per lakh eligible population in the age - group 18 - 23 years) varies from 6 in Bihar and Daman & Diu to 61 in Puducherry as compared to All India average of 25.
- In UTs of, Andaman & Nicobar Islands, Dadra & Nagar Haveli, Daman & Diu and Lakshadweep, there are no Universities.

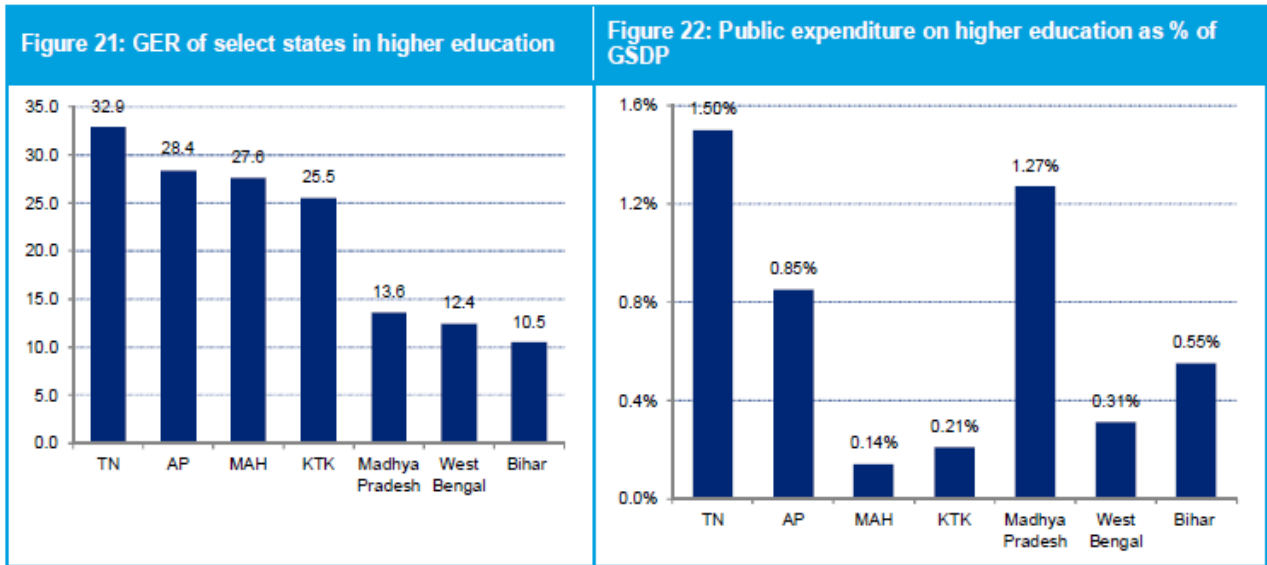
- 73% Colleges are privately managed; 58 % Private - unaided and 14% Private aided. Andhra Pradesh has more than 80% Private - unaided colleges, whereas, Bihar has only 6.3 % and Assam 9.5 % Private - unaided colleges.
- Total enrolment in higher education has been estimated to be 29.6 million with 16.3 million boys and 13.3 million girls. Girls constitute 45% of the total enrolment.
- Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in Higher education in India is 21.1, which is calculated for 18 - 23 years of age group. GER for male population is 22.3 and for females it is 19.8. For Scheduled Castes, it is 15.1 and for Scheduled Tribes, it is 11.0 % as compared to the national GER of 21.1.
- Distance enrolment constitutes 11.9 % of the total enrolment in higher education, of which 43.9 % are female students.
- About 80% students are enrolled in Undergraduate level Programme. 84058 students are enrolled in Ph.D. that is less than 0.3 % of the total student enrolment.
- Uttar Pradesh comes at number one with the highest student enrolment followed by Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu.
- Scheduled Casts students constitute 12.2 % and Scheduled Tribes students 4.4% of the total enrolment. 30.05% students belong to Other Backward Classes. 3.9% students belong to Muslim Minority and 1.9% from other Minority Community.
- The total number of teachers is 1337726. Out of which more than half about 61 % are male teachers and 39 % are female teachers.

2.3 Regional disparities

There are significant regional variations in enrolments in higher education across the country, which has been duly highlighted in RUSA (Rashtriya Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyaan). For instance, most of the southern states have a high GER, while states like Bihar, West Bengal and Madhya Pradesh have a relatively less GER due to low institutional density. The public expenditure on higher education is also highly uneven amongst states; the states with lower capacities and poorer

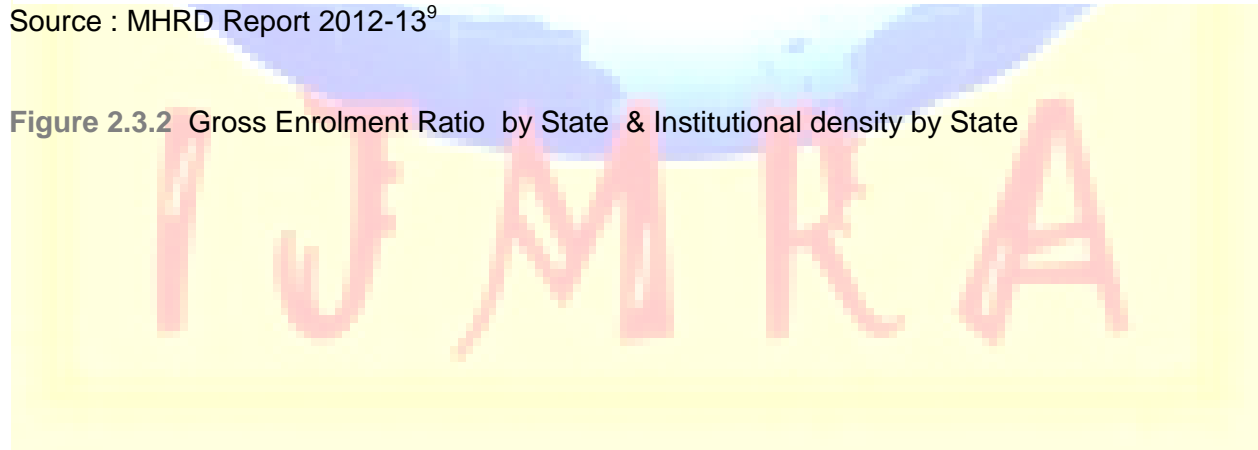
infrastructure may have to allocate more to catch up to the leading states and the national targets. There is clearly a need to give special focus on states with lower GER in terms of increasing the institutional reach and providing financial assistance to increase spending on higher education.⁸

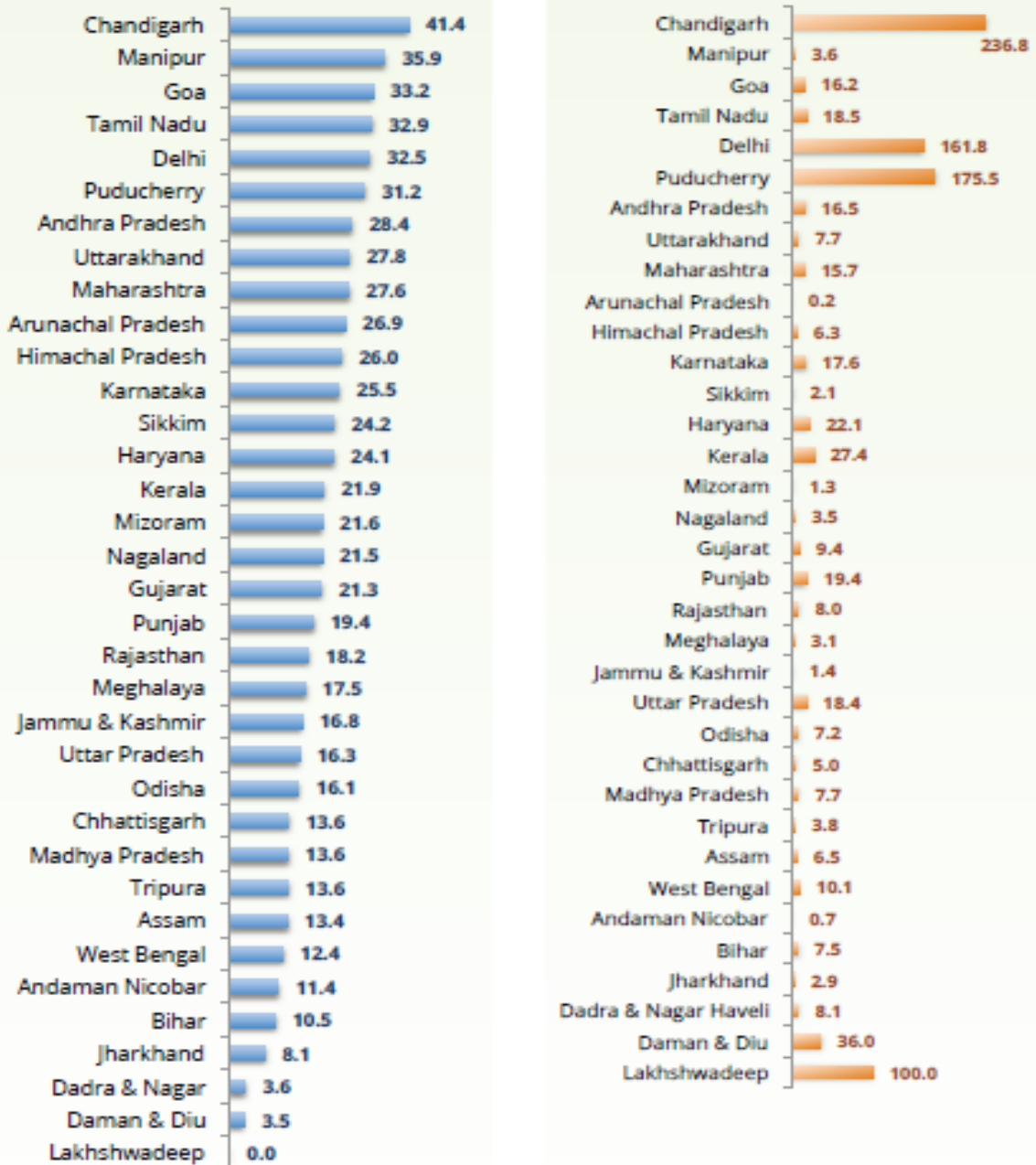
Figure :2.3.1 Gross Enrolment Ratio of Selected states of India



Source : MHRD Report 2012-13⁹

Figure 2.3.2 Gross Enrolment Ratio by State & Institutional density by State





Source: Annual Status of Higher Education of States and UT's in India,2013¹⁰

Table: 2.3.3Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in Higher Education¹¹

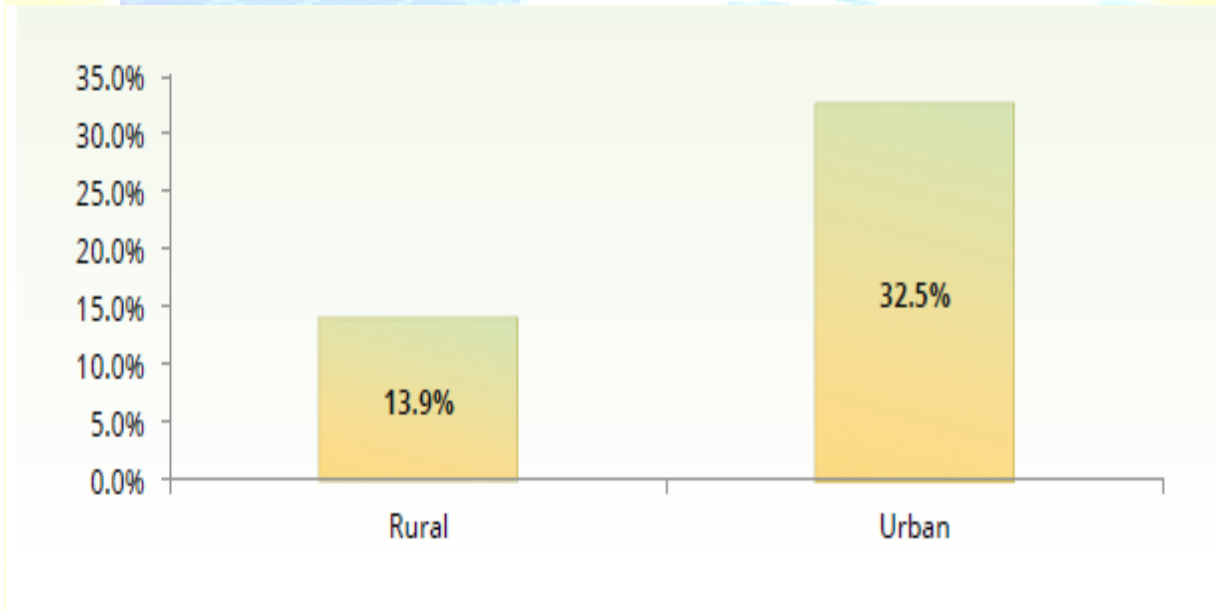
	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14
Male	20.8	21.6	22.3
Female	17.9	18.9	19.8
Total	19.4	20.4	21.05

Source: All India Survey on Higher Education 2013

Table shows that there is also a wide gender disparity; GER for males was 21.6% while that for females was 18.9 % in the year 2011-12. And in the year 2013-14 GER for males was 22.3% and for females was 19.8 %.¹¹

2.4 Location-wise distribution of Institutions

Figure:2.4.1 GER in rural and urban areas:



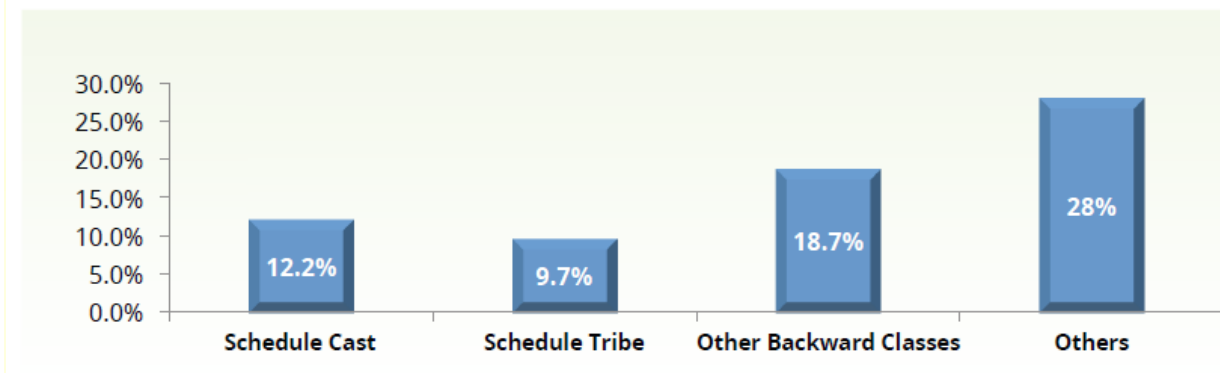
Source: RashtriyaUchcharSikshaAbhiyaan,survey conducted by MHRD 2012-13

GER amongst rural areas (13.9%) is much below the national average, while the GER in urban areas is more than twice that of rural area. The GER and the distribution of institutions across rural and urban areas are much skewed. The GER in rural areas is almost half as that of urban areas , especially amongst women. With the mushrooming of private colleges and universities without any central or state planning, the balance between urban and rural spread of institutions

is increasingly tilting towards urban areas. While India is tending towards urbanization, 68.8% of the population still resides in rural or semi-urban areas. And even though development of educational hubs has its advantages, the rural areas should not remain deprived of access to higher education institutions. Therefore, increasing institutional reach in rural areas must also be addressed in a targeted manner.¹²

2.5 GROSS ENROLMENT RATIO IN HIGHER EDUCATION And Inter Caste Disparities

Figure .2.5.1 GER (18-23) and Inter Caste Disparities



Source: Ministry of Human Resource Development Report, 2013-14

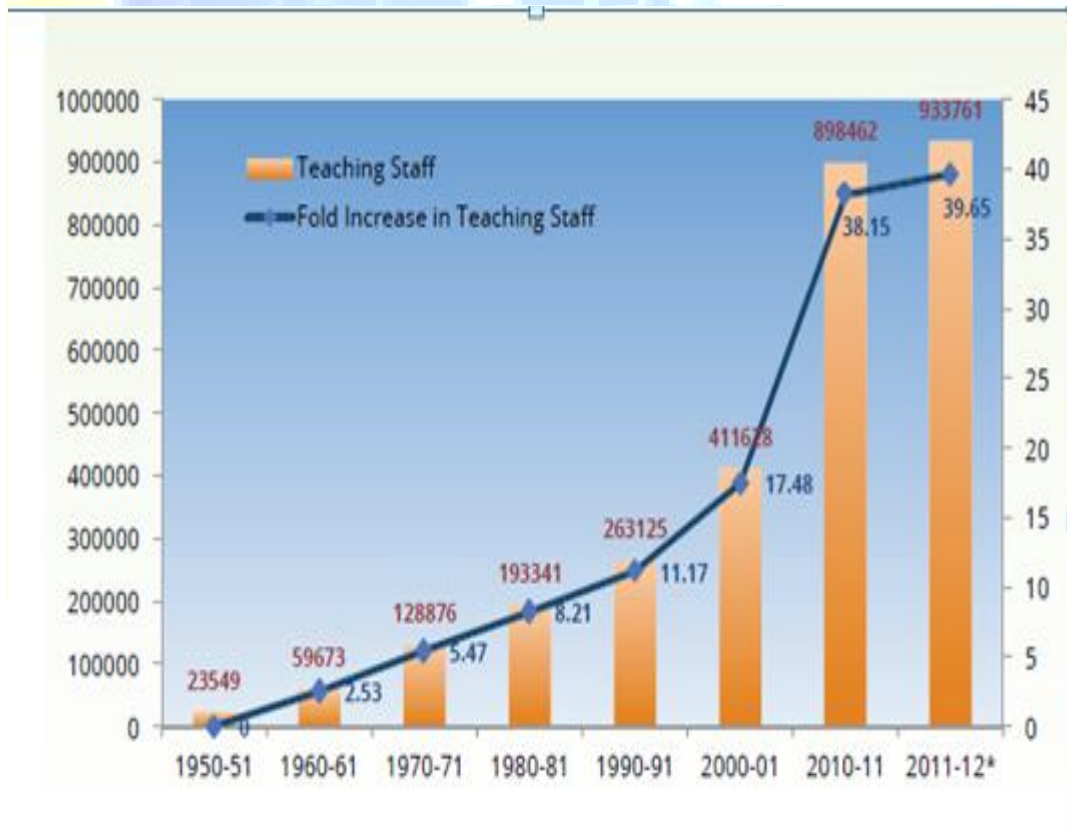
Figures show the varying GER levels across religions, physical location and social groups. GER in rural areas across the board is lower than that in urban areas. Communities that are economically stronger (such as Jains and Zoroastrians) have a high GER. Muslims have the lowest GER amongst various groups. The biggest percentage increase in GER in moving from rural to urban area is seen amongst Muslims and Hindus. In addition to very low access to higher education in general, there are wide disparities between various social groups.¹³ The GERs for SCs, STs and OBCs are far below the average GER and those of other social groups. the GER for SCs is higher than the GER for STs. This may be because ST communities are often physically distanced from educational institutions. States of Haryana, Punjab and Goa are examples of states where there are very few rural or inaccessible areas and thus the ST GER is also very high. There are some states such as Delhi and Bihar where the ST population is negligible, thus the GER is skewed and very close to zero. However, many other states such as

Gujarat, Tamil Nadu, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Uttar Pradesh have very low ST GERs despite a fair proportion of ST population¹⁴

The GER for SCs is higher on an average. States like Nagaland, Mizoram, Goa, Lakshwadeepetc have very small SC populations, hence the skewed GER. Again, states with a fairly sizeable SC population but low GERs are Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, West Bengal, Rajasthan etc.¹⁵ Bihar, Assam and Gujarat are again the lowest performing states when it comes to inclusion of OBCs, while others like Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh have higher OBC GERs.¹⁶ This may be because of the fact the economic strength and societal positioning of SC and OBC populations vary widely across states.. Since access to higher education is closely linked to resource availability, the SC and OBC GERs vary widely.¹⁵

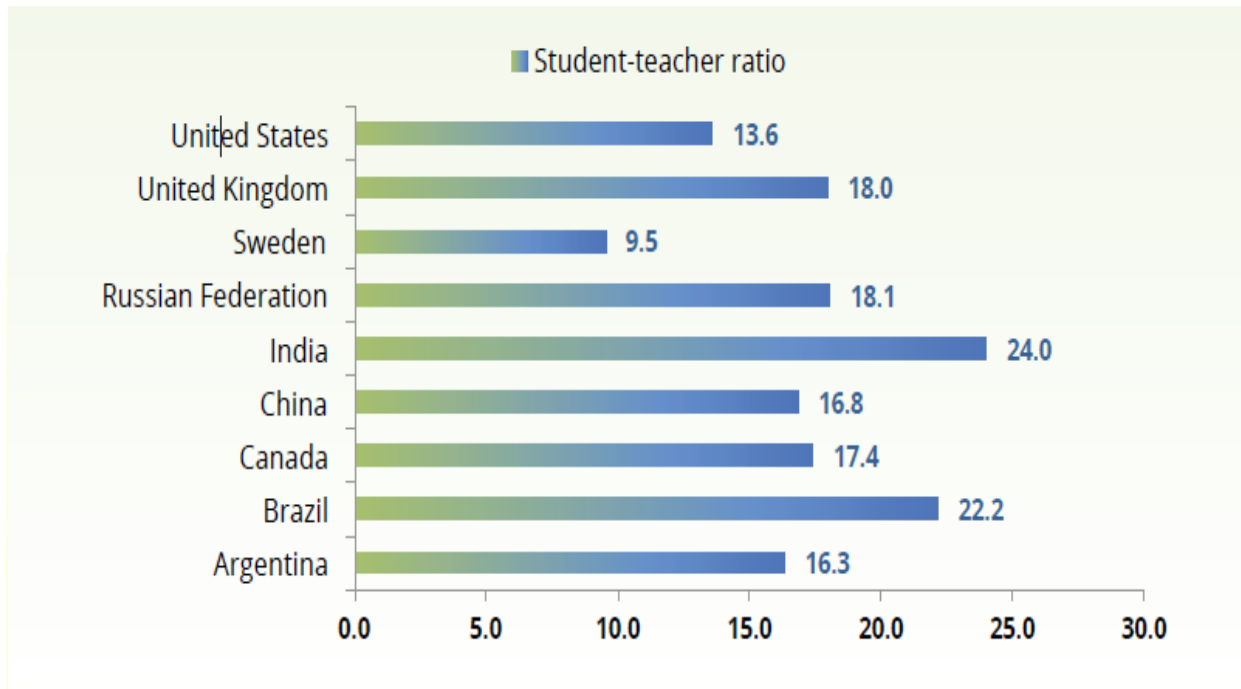
2.6 Growth of Teaching Staff in Universities and Colleges¹⁶

Figure: 2.6.1 Growth of Teaching Staff in Universities and Colleges



Source: University Grants Commission, Higher Education at a glance 2013

Figure 2.6.2 Student-teacher ratio in selected countries:



Source: University Grants Commission, Higher Education at a glance 2013

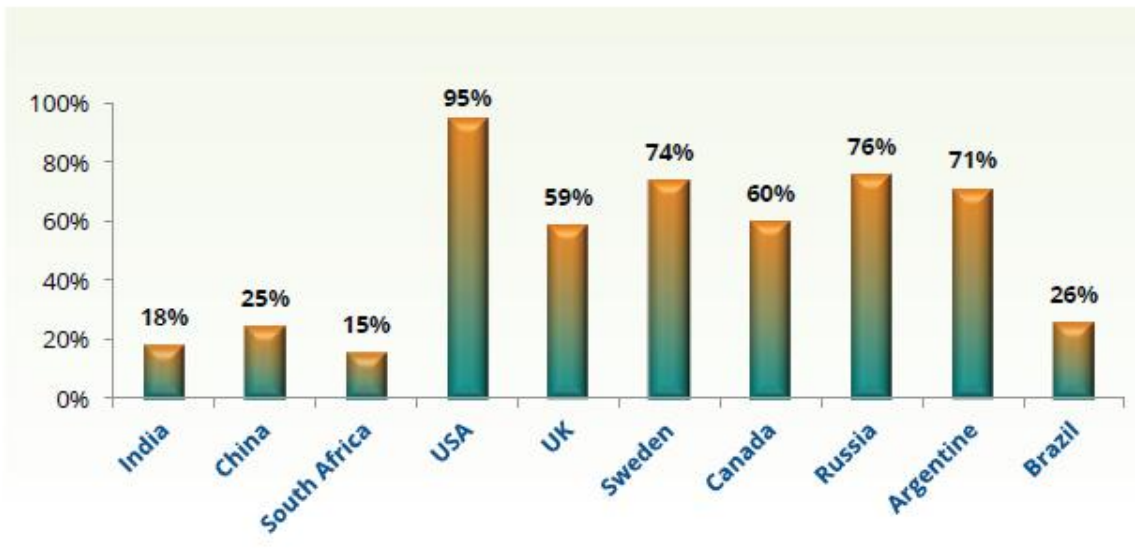
The direct impact of increasing student numbers and slow growth in the faculty numbers is seen on the student teacher ratios. Figure highlights the student teacher ratios in selected countries. The student teacher ratio in India (24:1) is very low as compared to other countries, 9.5:1 in Sweden; and 13.6:1 in the United States. A low student teacher ratio indicates the burden on a single teacher of teaching multiple students as well as the lack of time that each student gets. Apart from this simplistic effect, in an institution of higher learning, less number of and overburdened teachers are also unable to pursue any research or encourage their students to do so. Consequently, the culture of questioning and reasoning cannot be inculcated as a part of higher education in most institutions.¹⁷

There are multiple reasons for low student teacher ratios. Even though the student intake of colleges and universities has increased over time, due to the fear of taking up an almost life-long financial burden of paying the faculty, most institutions hesitate in creating new faculty positions¹⁷. In addition to the low number of sanctioned faculty positions, faculty vacancy even in sanctioned strength is an extremely serious problem. Due to various reasons such as

ban on recruitment, lack of funds, and reluctance of states to bear the long-term salary burden, a large number of faculty positions are not filled.¹⁸

2.7 International comparisons

Figure :2.7.1 GER of selected countries

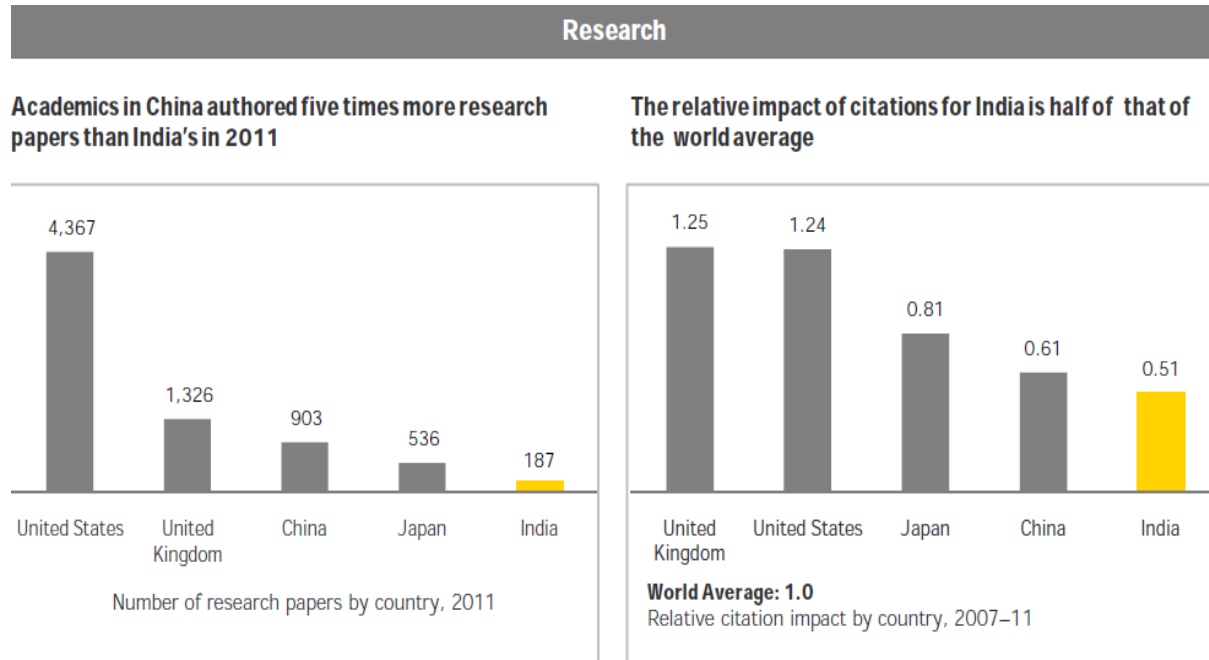


Source: FICCI Higher Education Report 2012

Table shows the international comparisons of enrollment of students in higher education institutions of India. India has a very low GER of 19.4%, indicating that less than a fifth of the population in the age group of 18-23 years has access to higher education in India. Illustrated in the Figure, India's GER is far below those of most developed countries and even below that of the other BRIC nations (Brazil, Russia and China).¹⁹

2.8 STATUS OF RESEARCH IN INDIA:

Figure:.2.8.1 Status of Research In India:



Source: FICCI Higher Education Report 2012

India's higher education institutes are poorly connected to research centres. Enough time and funding is not given for research as compared to other countries. According to the recent article of Times of India, India's investment in science has lagged behind that of China, the US and South Korea. While India invested 0.88% of its GDP in science research, the US invested 7-8% and South Korea 3-4%. More than 25% of India's R&D goes into basic research, which has weak connection to economic growth. China spends only 5% in basic research^{21,22}.

3. Challenges & Recommendations: 3.1 The challenges identified by researcher through empirical study /data are^{23,24}

Penetration of higher education in India remains low: Only about 21 percent of students go for higher education from the country. If India were to increase that figure of 21% to 30%, then it would need another 800 to one thousand universities and over 40,000 colleges in the next 10 years.

(1) **Inadequate Facilities:** There are a large segment of the Indian populations who only have access to a rudimentary form of primary education and do not have access to higher levels of education namely.

- Secondary Education
- Adult Education
- Vocational Education
- University and Higher Education
- Technical Education

(2) The low quality of teaching and learning: The system is beset by issues of quality in many of its institutions: a chronic shortage of faculty, poor quality teaching, outdated and rigid curricula and pedagogy, lack of accountability and quality assurance and separation of research and teaching.

(3) Constraints on research capacity and innovation: With a very low level of PhD enrolment, India does not have enough high quality researchers; there are few opportunities for interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary working, lack of early stage research experience; a weak ecosystem for innovation, and low levels of industry engagement.

(4) Rising demand for education: The number of students aspiring for education is becoming larger day by day, making it impossible to develop the traditional infrastructure to sustain this; leveraging technology by developing e learning systems can help meet these growing demands.

(5) Cost of education: The cost of higher education is also very high which is affordable by only higher and upper –middle income groups whereas large part of the population remains unprivileged.

(6) Method of assessment is exam oriented: The general education system is focused only on examinations rather than training students for the future and really testing their knowledge. Because of this, students are forced to take tests that show only their retention powers, not their actual capacity or knowledge. So engineers today cannot do actual work in technology and management students have no clue as to business realities. Today, students are not professionally-oriented and they take examinations for the sake of passing them rather than to gain knowledge, or do research in the subject. In our colleges, we may have infrastructure and good faculty, but there is no motivation to do research. Rapidity of exams and the over- use of

objective type tests stymies the innovative spirit of the student and makes paper pushing more important than pedagogical teaching and learning.

3.2 Recommendations:²⁵

- India has to improve on all factors which are important for higher education system by setting committees or organizations so that they can keep track and improve on these factors. Thus, the suggestions of these committees and organizations must be implemented.
- India has to take better steps to improve gross enrolment ratio by increasing public spending on education.
- The Governmental control over Universities must be reduced, so that the University autonomy and accountability are strengthened and academic decisions are taken on merit.
- Students involvement in the area of University / College governance should be encouraged.
- Private institutes and Universities must follow a minimum standard to give degrees.
- Provision of improved curriculum and teaching-learning material.
- Attention to teacher capacity building.
- Increased focus on specification and measurement of learner achievement levels.

Conclusion : In spite of the significant progress in past few years, India's higher education system is still in danger with several challenges with its relatively low Gross Enrollment Ratio. The Central government and the State governments should make provision to promote higher education. All universities and colleges should be given the autonomy to start self-financing courses, particularly in new and emerging areas where job opportunities exist. Higher education is clearly a major contributor to economic growth and national development, therefore, must address the rights of all citizens. A new vision of what higher education can achieve is required, combined with better planning and higher standards of management. As discussed previously the ST's GER is comparatively lower than Sc's because they live in remote areas and to combat this problem the Govt. should open Colleges and Universities in remote areas also and

provide them with better facilities. The Universities and Colleges should provide sufficient employable skills so that employability can improve. In the era of globalization there is more weightage for competitiveness. India's higher education should be more reliable, competent so that the coming generations can be more competent to face the challenges in their life.

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