

## **HIGHER EDUCATION IN INDIA: ISSUES AND CHALLENGES – AN OVERVIEW**

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**Abstract:** The great Philosopher, Aristotle says “Education is the creation of sound mind in a sound body. It develops man’s faculty especially his mind so that he may be able to enjoy the contemplation of supreme truth, goodness, and beauty”. Apart from formal education, man learns various habits, skills, knowledge, belief, art, law, morals, custom, practices, and so on in their everyday life; and thus, it is a complex whole. It may not end for a particular time rather it is a lifelong learning process.

The essence of Human Resource Development is education, which plays a significant and remedial role in balancing the socio-economic fabric of the Country. Since citizens of India are its most valuable resource, our billion-strong nation needs the nurture and care in the form of basic education to achieve a better quality of life. This warrants an all-round development of our citizens, which can be achieved by building strong foundations in education (MHRD, 2014); and in this regard, apart from basic education, Higher Education (HE) is very much essential for the overall development. It is a fact that India is a multi-complex society, and stratification, as well as cleavages and various barriers, are also well prevalent in this society. Occurrences of the violation, discrimination, exploitation, deprivation based on caste, community, sex, race, religion, creeds, etc. are going on continuously. In this regard, education may play an important role because education is the cradle of society. It may be treated as a ladder by which a person can move and reach from one roof to another quickly or slowly or as desired. It may break the cleavages as well as barriers to society rapidly. The Government of India is trying its best in various ways for its all-round progress. Keep in mind the above title, the present article tries to discuss the Higher Education scenario of India including various issues; and understand the problems and few suggestions for solving the problems.

### **Introduction**

Education is a systematic lifelong learning process. Man learns in his everyday life; various habits, experience, skill, knowledge, belief, art, law, morals, custom, practices, and so on; and thus, it is a complex whole. Education plays the most important role to make one a gentle, sober, well-civilized man and society too. According to a UNESCO study, “the physical, intellectual, emotional and ethical integration of the individual into a complete man/woman is the fundamental aim of education.”

“Education helps to develop this social self so that an individual may become an effective and useful members of society. Education enables an individual to make his life better both as an

individual and as a member of his society. Education now emphasizes the total development of an individual. This total development includes intellectual, social, moral, aesthetic, cultural, physical development” (Kumar, S., *et al.* <https://sol.du.ac.in/Courses/UG/StudyMaterial/16/Part1/ED/English/SM-1.pdf>, retrieved 4.12.2014 at 2.39 pm.). Many of the scholars defined education. Among them, Plato says “Education develops in the body and soul of the pupil all the beauty and all the perfection he is capable of”. Aristotle says “Education is the creation of sound mind in a sound body. It develops man’s faculty especially his mind so that he may be able to enjoy the contemplation of supreme truth, goodness, and beauty”. Pestalozzi defines “Education is the harmonious and progressive development of all the innate powers and faculties of man- physical, intellectual and moral.” Radhakrishnan says "Education according to Indian tradition is not merely a means of earning a living, nor it is only a nursery of thought or a school for citizenship. It is an initiation into the life of spirit and training of human souls in the pursuit of truth and the practice of virtue”. According to Rabindranath Tagore “The highest education is that which does not merely give us information but makes our life in harmony with all existence” (cited in Kumar, S., *et al.* retrieved 4.12.2014 at 2.39 pm.).

Higher education is called tertiary, or post-secondary education. It includes undergraduate and postgraduate education, as well as vocational education and training. Colleges and universities are the main institutions that provide tertiary education ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Education#Tertiary\\_.28higher.29](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Education#Tertiary_.28higher.29), retrieved 3.12.2014). But unfortunately, still a very a little percentage of India’s population has access to higher education as the country India is intertwined in solving the basic problems to enhance the accessibility to higher education for all. Moreover, for the overall development and progress of human society and in particular economic growth, high rates of education are necessary; and in this regard, apart from the basic level of education, higher education is also very essential.

Higher education is the chief instrument for ensuring the upward mobility of the people and the advancement of the country (UGC, Annual Report 2012-2013). The essence of Human Resource Development is education, which plays a significant and remedial role in balancing the socio-economic fabric of the Country. Since citizens of India are its most valuable resource, our billion-strong nation needs the nurture and care in the form of basic education to achieve a better quality of life. This warrants the all-round development of our citizens, which can be achieved by building strong foundations in education. The Department of Higher Education takes care of what is one of the largest Higher Education systems in the world, just after the United States and China. The Dept. of HE, on the other hand, is engaged in bringing world-class opportunities for higher education and research to the country so that Indian students are not finding lacking when facing an international platform. For this, the Government has launched joint ventures and signed MOUs to help the Indian student benefit from the world opinion (MHRD, 2014).

The prime mission of MHRD is to provide greater opportunities for access to Higher Education with equity to all the eligible persons and in particular to the vulnerable sections; and some important objectives of MHRD are:

- (i) To expand the Higher Education sector in allies' modes of delivery to increase the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in Higher Education to 15 per cent by 2011-12 to 21 per cent by 2016-17 and 30 per cent by the year 2020.
- (ii) To expand the institutional base of Higher Education (including technical, professional, and vocational education) by creating additional capacity in existing institutions, establishing new institutions and incentivizing State Governments and Non-Governmental Organizations/civil society.
- (iii) To provide opportunities for Higher Education to socially-deprived communities and remove disparities by promoting the inclusion of women, minorities, and differently-abled persons.
- (iv) To remove regional imbalances in access to Higher Education by setting up institutions in unserved and underserved areas.
- (v) To promote the development of Indian languages (MHRD, 2014).

Moreover, keeping in mind the title of this article, some major issues of Indian people, the scenario of higher education, objectives of the XII Plan and its difficulties, major issues and challenges, various Govt. policies related to higher education, etc. have been discussed briefly in this paper. With respect to Higher Education, most of the people of India are going through various problems in their daily lives that may cause serious hindrance to the progress of education. Therefore, before going to the discussion about Higher Education some important statistics, as well as issues of the people of India, are highlighted below briefly by which a person can understand easily the problem regarding the progress of higher education.

### ***India and its People at a Glance***

Census 2011 covered 35 States/Union Territories, 640 district, 5924 sub-districts, 7933 Towns and 640930 Villages. This country covers 3,287,263 km<sup>2</sup> geographical area. The total population of this country is 1210.6 million (1210569573) among which males are 623121843 and females are 587447730, and the sex ratio is 943. And yet 68.8 per cent of people live in rural India. The growth rate of the population in India during the last decade is 17.7 per cent (Rural-12.3%; Urban - 31.8%) and the population density is 382 per km<sup>2</sup>. The state Bihar occupies the first position with a density of 1,106 while the state West Bengal occupies the second position (1028). Out of the total population, the child population in the age group of 0-6 years stands at 13.58 per cent (164478150), while their sex ratio is alarming (919). The growth rate of the child population is 0.4 per cent in the last decade. The proportion of the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe population constitute 16.6 per cent and 8.6 per cent respectively of the total population of India (Census, 2011). Ranked in order of number of persons in each house Tamil Nadu (3.5) occupied the smallest size (1<sup>st</sup> rank), West Bengal (4.5) hold the 6<sup>th</sup> rank, and Uttar Pradesh (5.7) occupied the biggest size (27<sup>th</sup> rank) while the National average family size was 4.8 (NFHS-3).

The Effective Literacy Rate (age 7 years and above) in India is 73.0 per cent (Rural- 67.8%; Urban- 84.1%). The male Literacy rate in India is 80.9 per cent (Rural-77.2%; Urban-88.8%); and for the female it is 64.6 per cent (Rural-57.95%; Urban- 79.1%). In order of literacy rate the

state Kerala (94.0%) occupies the highest rank (1<sup>st</sup>); West Bengal (72.2%) Occupies 20<sup>th</sup> Rank and the lowest is in Bihar (61.8%), (35<sup>th</sup>); while the National average is 73 per cent (Census, 2011). Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) for Classes I to VIII, (6-13 years) was highest among the 28 States, in Manipur (155.0); the rank of West Bengal was 25 (90.1); while the lowest rank i.e. 28<sup>th</sup> was in Assam (84.0). And among the total States and Union Territories, it was worst in Daman and Diu i.e. 78.2. The National average was 104.3 (Economic Survey 2012-13 and Statistics of School Education- 2010-11).

The total number of workers in India is 481.7 million. Out of these 331.9 million workers are male and 149.9 million are female. The workers have registered a growth of 19.8 per cent, which is marginally higher than the overall population growth rate of 17.7 per cent during the decade. Among the total workers, 348.6 million workers are in the rural areas and 133.1 million, are in the urban areas. The female workers in rural and urban areas are 121.8 and 28.0 million respectively. The Work Participation Rate (WPR) for the country is 39.8 per cent. This is marginally higher than the corresponding WPR of 39.1 per cent in Census of 2001. Out of 481.7 million total workers, 75.2 per cent (362.4 million) are main workers and the remaining 24.8 per cent (119.3 million) are marginal workers. Amongst the 119.3 million marginal workers, 81.3 per cent (around 97 million) worked for 3 to 6 months whereas only 18.7 per cent (22.3 million) worked for less than 3 months. Out of 481.7 million total workers, 118.7 million are cultivators (CL) and another 144.3 million are agricultural labourers (AL). Thus nearly 55 per cent of the workers are engaged in agricultural activities. Out of one-in-two males and two of every three females are engaged in agricultural activities either as cultivators or as agricultural labourers. Of the remaining workers, 18.3 million are in household industries (HHI) and 200.4 million are other workers (OW), (Census, 2011). Moreover, a higher unemployment rate is well prevalent among the population of India while the average National unemployment rates stand at 50 ("Socio-Economic Profiles & Inter-State comparison of some Major States of India". Economic Survey 2012-13, Government of India. 2012–2013. p. 276. Retrieved April 21, 2014.). Presently 21.92 per cent of Indian people are living below the poverty line while for West Bengal it is 19.98 per cent and for Chhattisgarh it is 39.93 per cent which is the highest (Reserve Bank of India, Government of India. 2013). Ranked in order of percentage of families owning a house as per the Census of India 2001 Kerala (87.5%) hold 1<sup>st</sup> position; West Bengal (60.1%) occupied 6<sup>th</sup> position and the lowest (29<sup>th</sup>) is Tripura (11.9%); while in average 55 per cent of families of India owing houses and the rank is 15<sup>th</sup> ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indian\\_states\\_ranking\\_by\\_families\\_owning\\_house](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indian_states_ranking_by_families_owning_house)).

In respect of fertility rate (number of children born for each woman), Punjab, Himachal Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal (each has 1.7); Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Delhi, Maharashtra (each has 1.8) registered a low fertility rate below the crucial 2.1. Whereas it is high in UP (3.3) and very high is in Bihar (3.5) while the National average is 2.4 ([http://planningcommission.nic.in/data/datatable\\_0904/tab\\_137.pdf](http://planningcommission.nic.in/data/datatable_0904/tab_137.pdf), and Census of India, Government of India (2013). In order of percentage of children delivered in hospital, Kerala (100%) occupied the highest rank, West Bengal (43%) occupied 14<sup>th</sup> rank and Nagaland (12%) occupied the lowest rank (29<sup>th</sup>), while the National (41%) average rank was 15<sup>th</sup> (National Family Health Survey-3). The life expectancy at birth (for years 2002-2006) among the states in

India in 2004, Kerala had the highest (74.0) and Madhya Pradesh had the lowest (58.0) and for West Bengal it was 64.9 (7<sup>th</sup> rank) while the National average was 63.5 (UNDP, 2011, Human Development Index Report).

Ranked by the status of effective coverage of supplementary nutrition program for children is highest in Mizoram (69.8%), the rank of West Bengal (65.8%) was 4<sup>th</sup>, and Assam (5.9%) occupied the lowest rank, while the National average was 41 per cent (Planning Commission Government of India, 2011). Up till now a remarkable section of the households (14.5%) having no access to safe drinking water (Census, 2011). Many of the people of India are underweight (low Body Mass Index) while the National average for male 26.1 and for female 31.0. ([www.measuredhs.com/publications/publication-frind3-dhs-final-reports.cfm](http://www.measuredhs.com/publications/publication-frind3-dhs-final-reports.cfm), Retrieved from [http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Indian\\_](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Indian_states_ranking_by_underweight_people&oldid=620488023)

[states\\_ranking\\_by\\_underweight\\_people&oldid=620488023](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Indian_states_ranking_by_underweight_people&oldid=620488023)). All the above issues have been reflected in the UNDP Report (2014), because as per their report, the Human Development Index of India (HDI) is 0.586; out of 187 countries, India's rank is 135 that falls under the Medium Human Development category; whereas it is highest in Norway (0.944), (Official site of the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, India". Retrieved 20 July 2013). At per estimate of 2007-08, in India, it was highest in Kerala (0.790) and lowest in Chhattisgarh (0.358) and in West Bengal, it was 0.492 and the rank was 13 out of 23 States/Union Territories.

From the above statistics it may be summarized that gender inequality is well prevalent in all respects. Around 1/4<sup>th</sup> of the population belongs to SC/ST communities. Many of the people are non-worker and among the workers around 1/4<sup>th</sup> (55%) are marginal workers and most of the time a year they do not get any work. Further, more than half of the workers (55%) are engaged in agricultural sectors including cultivation and agricultural labour. More than 1/5<sup>th</sup> (21.9%) people are Below Poverty Line (BPL). Yet around 15 per cent people of India is debarred from safe drinking water, and 27 per cent of people are illiterate. In respect of the National average, the high fertility rate is well prevalent in many States. The average national life expectancy at birth is only 63.5. Most of the children are born/ delivered at the home etc. A greater section of the children (59%) is debarred from required nutrition. In many cases, the family size is larger than the national average. Many of the families have not their own house. Moreover, all the above scenario reflects on Human Development Index (0.586) as the rank of India is 135 out of 187 countries.

### ***Scenario of Higher Education***

India's higher education system, originally designed to serve the elite, will now have to serve the people. Innovation and change are required and understanding that change will be essential (Richard Everitt, Director Education & Society British Council India. p: 2. [http://www.britishcouncil.org/sites/britishcouncil.uk2/files/understanding\\_india\\_report.pdf](http://www.britishcouncil.org/sites/britishcouncil.uk2/files/understanding_india_report.pdf), retrieved 4.12.2014 at 6.00 pm). Higher Education sector has witnessed a tremendous increase in the number of Universities/Universities level Institutions & Colleges since Independence. The number of Universities has increased 34 times from 20 in 1950 to 677 in 2014. The sector boasts of 45 Central Universities of which 40 are under the purview of the Ministry of Human Resource Development, 318 State Universities, 185 State Private universities, 129 Deemed to be



Universities, 51 Institutions of National Importance (established under Acts of Parliament) under MHRD (IITs - 16, NITs – 30 and IISERs – 5) and four Institutions (established under various State legislations). The number of colleges has also registered a manifold increase in 74 times with just 500 in 1950 growing to 37,204, as on 31st March 2013, (MHRD, 2014).

According to the UGC Annual Report 2012-2013- (i) During the academic session 2012-2013, the total enrolment in all courses and levels in the regular stream was 215.01 lakhs including 93.06 lakhs women students, constituting 43.28 per cent. The maximum number of students had been enrolled in the state of Uttar Pradesh (33.65 lakhs), followed by Maharashtra (24.57 lakhs), Tamil Nadu (20.38 lakhs), Andhra Pradesh (20.14 lakhs), etc. (ii) The student enrolment at various levels was: UG 85.90 per cent; PG 12.15 per cent; Dip./Cert.1.11 per cent; and Research 0.84 per cent of total enrolment. (iii) Out of the total enrolment of students (215.01 lakhs), 37.94 per cent students were in the faculty of Arts, followed by Science 18.56 per cent and Commerce 17.50 per cent, thus constituting 74 per cent enrolment in just three faculties while the remaining 26.70 per cent enrolment was in professional faculties. (iv) The number of research degrees Ph.D. awarded during 2012-2013 was 17,531. Out of this, the Faculty of Arts had the highest number with 5642 Ph.D. Degrees, followed by the Faculty of Science with 5607 Ph.D. Degrees. These two faculties together accounted for 63.84 per cent of the total number. (v) The number of women students enrolled per hundred men students enrolled at all levels was 76.31 in the reporting year. (vi) In terms of percentages, the Women enrolment had been the highest in Goa (60.31%), followed by Daman and Diu (59.11%), Kerala (58.24%), Meghalaya (53.82%), Himachal Pradesh (50.67%), etc.; and Arunachal Pradesh had the lowest enrolment of 36.69 per cent. In absolute numbers, UP had been on the top with 14.28 lakhs women enrolment, followed by Maharashtra (10.76 lakhs), Tamil Nadu (10.02 lakhs), etc. (vii) The women enrolment had been the highest in the faculty of Arts (42.66%), followed by Science (19.07%) and Commerce (16.16%), constituting 77.89 per cent in the three faculties while the remaining 22.11 per cent in all the professional faculties. The maximum percentage of women enrolment in professional faculties had been in the faculty of Engineering/Technology (10.55%). (viii) During 2012-13, as many as 120 new women colleges had been established in various states, thus taking the total number of women colleges to 4386. (ix) In terms of strength of faculty, out of 9.51 lakh teachers, 82.54 per cent of teachers are in colleges, and the remaining 17.46 per cent in universities. The strength of the teaching faculty was increased slightly to 0.018 per cent from the previous year.

However, despite impressive growth, India's higher education gross enrolment ratio (GER) at 13.8 per cent is currently well below the global average of 27 per cent (2010 figures), (Ernst and Young, 2012, cited in British Council, 2014). Thorat (2013) mentioned that in 2008, of the total number of students in higher education, about 45 per cent were from rural areas and the rest from urban areas; 42 per cent were women and 58 per cent, men. Social composition comprised four per cent Scheduled Tribes, 13.5 per cent Scheduled Castes, 35 per cent Other Backward Classes and 48 per cent, the rest. Although a majority of students were relatively better off, there were poor students as well. About a fourth was from private institutions and the rest from government and private-aided institutions. The medium of instruction for about half of them were the regional languages and English for the rest.

Government data suggests that only one out of every seven children born in India goes to college. What's more, the nation suffers from both a crippling quantity, as well as quality, challenge when it comes to higher education. For instance, the QS World University Rankings, an annual listing of the world's top universities, had no Indian institutes in the top 200 of its recently released global list for 2013. Also, India has one of the poorest Gross Enrolment Ratios (GER) for higher education in the world (Singh, October 02, 2013. <http://thediplomat.com/2013/10/challenges-and-solutions-in-indian-higher-education/>). Out of total students, only around 6 per cent students study in Central Government institutes. Former Prime Minister of India, Dr. Manmohan Singh expressed his concern over the fact that two thirds (68%) of the country's universities and 90 per cent of its colleges are "of middling or poor quality" and that well over half of the faculty in India's colleges do not have the appropriate degree qualifications (Chronicle of Higher Education (CHE), July 6, 2007, A38). Gross Enrolment Rates in Post-higher Secondary Education in India by Social Groups 2004-05 (Age group 18-22 years); it had been recorded for STs, SCs, and Others 8.09, 8.40 and 15.68 respectively, while the total was 13.57. Gross Enrolment Rates in Post-higher Secondary Education in India by Religious Groups 2004-05 (Age group 18-22 years); it had been recorded for Hindus, Muslims, Christian, and Others 14.17, 8.29, 22.36, 16.30 respectively, while the total was 13.59. Gross Enrolment Rates in Post-higher Secondary Education in India by Poor and Non-Poor 2004-05 (Age group 18-22 years); it had been recorded for Poor, Non-Poor, and Total was 2.80 and 16.17 respectively, while the total was 13.59 (UGC Report, 2008: cited in Dubey, 2008:155, 157, and 173).

Regarding Status of Vacancies in Colleges, Chadha, *et al.* (2008, cited in UGC Report 2008: 205) mentioned that the situation is equally, if not more, grim for colleges. No fewer than 41.0 per cent of positions at the Lecturer level, and 18.0 per cent of those at the Reader level are lying unfilled. The situation in non-aided colleges is far more distressing, in this regard. As many as 52.0 per cent of vacancies at the entry level and 42.0 per cent of those at the level of Readers are lying unfilled. Nearly 42.0 per cent of entry-level positions are vacant in government colleges against 40.0 per cent in government-aided colleges, while, the corresponding figures for the Reader-level positions are 19.0 per cent and 16.0 per cent, respectively. In overall terms, the situation is alarming.

British Council expressed their views (2014) "Education in India is highly politicised and complex. Throughout the political system to the highest levels, the education sector is powerfully represented; reforms in education are controlled by political processes and interests at both central and state levels. Many education reforms, plans, and ambitions are highly contested. There is a complex interplay beneath the formal structures affecting the distribution of power and resources in education in India; underlying pressures, interests, incentives, and institutions can influence or frustrate future educational change. This is particularly complex in the higher education sector. .... Education is vital for India's competitiveness and economic growth, but also for social stability. The disparity between rich and poor is growing, and expectations on the part of young people and their parents are high. Geographical differences are vast, compounded by social divisions, and inequalities in education provision."

The former Chairman of UGC, Sukhdeo Thorat (2008) highlighted some issues in the UGC Report 2008: (i) "The NSS data for 2004-05 (the latest year for which the NSS data are

available) indicates significant rural and urban disparities- enrolment rate being 6.73 per cent and 19.80 per cent for the rural and the urban areas respectively – the GER in the urban areas being three times higher compared to rural areas. (ii) Inter-caste/tribe disparities are the most prominent. In 2004-05, the GER was about 11 per cent at overall levels. The GER among the SCs (6.30%), the STs (6.33%), and the OBCs (8.50 per cent) was much lower compared with the Others (16.60%). Thus, the GER for the SC/STs was three times and that of the OBCs about two times less compared with the Others. Between the SC/STs and the OBCs, however, the GER was lower among the former by about two percentage points. (iii) Also, there are wide gender disparities in terms of access to higher education. Access is generally lower for girls as compared to the boys – the GER being 12.42 per cent for the males and 9.11 per cent for the females. It needs to be recognized that although the enrolment rate is generally lower for the females compared to the males; the females belonging to the lower castes and some religious groups suffer more acutely in accessing higher education than other females. For instance, in 2004-05, as against the overall average of 9.11 per cent, GER among the females was 4.76 per cent, 4.43 per cent, 6.60 per cent, and 19.53 per cent points respectively for the ST, the SC, the OBC, and the Other females. Thus, the GER among the ST/SC females was about five times and that of the OBC females about three times less compared to the higher caste females. (iv) In the case of religious groups, Muslim women seem to be facing the most difficult circumstance. The GER among Muslim females was 5.8 per cent compared to 9.32 per cent for Hindu females, 12.7 per cent for Sikh females, and 16 per cent for Christian females. (v) Lastly, there are perceivable differences in enrolment rates among the poor and non-poor (irrespective of their caste, ethnic, religious, or gender backgrounds). The GER for the poor was 2.21 per cent as against 12.36 per cent for the non-poor. In the rural and the urban areas, the GER for the poor stood at 1.40 per cent and 4 per cent respectively, which was evidently quite low compared with 7.12 per cent and 27.15 per cent for non-poor respectively. Within the poor households, however, the GER was the lowest among the poor households belonging to the STs and the SCs, followed by the OBCs and the others. The GER for poor belonging to the STs, the SCs, the OBCs, and the Others stood at 1.55 per cent, 1.89 per cent, 2.30 per cent, and 3.58 per cent respectively. (vi) Differences in the GER are also equally evident across occupational groups in the rural and urban areas. The GER was 3 per cent for non-farm wage laborers and 1.41 per cent for farm wage labourers. Similarly, in the urban areas, the GER was only 3.26 per cent for casual labourers. Thus, both in the rural and the urban areas, the enrolment rates for wage (casual) laborers were the lowest, particularly, for the farm wage laborers. For the wage laborers, the GER was particularly low amongst the SC/STs compared with the Others. In other words, although the enrolment rates are the lowest among the poor casual wage labourer households in the rural and the urban areas; the rates are particularly low among the poor from the same group, and belonging to the SC/ST/OBCs. The enrolment rates for the ST, the SC, and the OBC agricultural labourers stood at 0.9 per cent, 0.01 per cent, and 0.93 per cent respectively. Similarly, the enrolment rates for the casual non-farm wage labourers in the rural areas stood at nil for the STs and the SCs and 0.52 per cent for the OBCs. In the urban areas, the enrolment rates for the poor casual labourers work out to 0.66 per cent for the STs, 2.61 per cent for the SCs, and 3.92 per cent for the OBCs”.



In this regard, British Council opined that (2014), “Together, these factors present three interrelated key challenges for education in India: expansion of the system, equity of educational opportunities and enhancement of the quality of teaching and research in Indian institutions”.

### ***Objectives of the XII Plan and Difficulties***

The main objective of the XII Plan is to expand enrolment in higher education with inclusiveness, quality, excellence, and relevant education along with necessary academic reforms in the university college system. There is a target of 30 per cent Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) by 2017 from 15 per cent in 2012 was set for the XII Plan. But most in many cases required infrastructures are lacking, and due to scarcity of teachers or non-qualified teachers etc., the above objectives are being hampered seriously.

Language being the most important medium of communication and education, its development occupies an important place in the National Policy on Education and Programme of Action. Therefore, the promotion and development of Hindi and other 21 languages listed in schedule VIII of the Constitution including Sanskrit and Urdu have received due attention. In fulfilling the constitutional responsibility, the Department of Higher Education is assisted by the autonomous organization and subordinate office (MHRD, 2014). In the Constitution of India, there are provisions in Article 350A<sup>1</sup> -Facilities for instruction in mother-tongue at the primary stage; and at the same time Article 351<sup>2</sup>- The directive for development of the Hindi language. It is the fact, in India, there are 122 Scheduled and Non-Scheduled Languages (2001); and according to the Ethnologue Report for India (2001), the number of individual languages listed for India is 452 (438 are living language and 14 have/having no known speakers). Through language, people are able to transmit culture from one generation to another. In particular, language makes it possible to learn from cumulative, shared experience. Without it, one could not inform others about events to which the others were not a party (Haviland, 1999: 43). Without language, we probably could not transmit or receive information so efficiently and rapidly, and thus would not be heir to so rich and varied a culture (Ember *et al.*, 2002: 218). Language is a very important part of the culture as well as a vehicle of culture and without it we fail to understand or convey the message to others. There are lots of languages as well as dialects are spoken by people in India. Each of the groups/communities has its own distinctive language/dialect, then why the prime attention is to be given to Hindi and the other 21 languages listed in schedule VIII of the Constitution in India. In this regard, a staunch supporter of mother tongue as the medium of education, Gandhiji said, “I must cling to my mother tongue as to my mother’s breast, in spite of its shortcomings. It

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<sup>1</sup>It shall be the endeavour of every State and of every local authority within the State to provide adequate facilities for instruction in the mother-tongue at the primary stage of education to children belonging to linguistic minority groups; and the President may issue such directions to any State as he considers necessary or proper for securing the provision of such facilities.

<sup>2</sup>It shall be the duty of the Union to promote the spread of the Hindi language, to develop it so that it may serve as a medium of expression for all the elements of the composite culture of India and to secure its enrichment by assimilating without interfering with its genius, the forms, style and expressions used in Hindustani and in the other

alone can give me life-giving milk.” However, it is the fact, apart from mother tongue many of the students are bound to learn four to five number of other’s languages as their mother tongue is not used in formal education which is seriously affecting the progress of education and in particular, the tribal education, as well as the education of the downtrodden people, is facing serious problems primarily due to these difficulties.

### ***Major Issues and Challenges***

Dubey (2008: 188) observed that “there are wide variations in post-higher secondary enrolment across states. The disparities among states in enrolment are more pronounced in the rural sector than in the urban sector. All the states have increased their GER over the years. However, the rate of increase is different across states, sectors, and gender. Varying degree of gender disparity is also observed in all states”. Thorat (2013) expressed his views that “the prime focus in our schools and higher education learning system seems to be only on preparing students for the job market. Civic learning and democratic engagement have not become the core component of our teaching”. Today, more than 20 state universities have more than 400 colleges affiliated with them. Although by an increasing number of affiliated colleges, the universities’ earning have increased, now most of their time is spent in conducting exams and declaring results. End result is that academics and research is degraded (<http://slugpost.com/2013/11/15/problems-solution-indias-higher-education-system/>, retrieved 4.12.14 at 5.33 pm). One of the most pressing problems is the unavailability of money or inadequate funding of Indian education programs or systems. Another aspect is the stress of the English language in the system. The English language is not the mother tongue of most Indian students. Shortage of qualified Indians in Indian education: Materialistic gains, incentives, and opportunities entice the qualified Indian educator away from this challenging field (Spang, 1970). According to the British Council, 2014, India’s higher education is faced with four broad challenges:

- (i) The supply-demand gap: India has a low rate of enrolment in higher education, at only 13.8 per cent, compared with 26 per cent in China and 36 per cent in Brazil. There is an enormous unmet demand for higher education. By 2020, the Indian government aims to achieve 30 per cent gross enrolment, which will mean providing 40 million university places, an increase of 14 million in six years.
- (ii) The low quality of teaching and learning: 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.
- (iii) Constraints on research capacity and innovation: With a very low level of Ph.D. enrolment, India does not have enough high-quality researchers.
- (iv) Uneven growth and access to opportunity: Socially, India remains highly divided; access to higher education is uneven with multidimensional inequalities in enrolment across population groups and geographies (British Council, February, 2014).

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languages of India specified in the Eighth Schedule, and by drawing, wherever necessary or desirable, for its vocabulary, primarily on Sanskrit and secondarily on other languages.

It is a fact that Indian society is a multi-complex society. Many groups of people are living here and their mother tongue is also different. In this regard, apart from others, particularly most of the tribal people face serious problems to learn other's languages. Because, besides their mother tongue, they have to learn many other languages such as Regional, State, National (Hindi) and Inter National language (English) also for pursuing their education. Due to the difficulties, they lose interest in education. Further, their home atmosphere, school atmosphere, and economic situation greatly hindered the development and progress of education as well as society too. However, in India, higher education is practiced mostly in 'English', and those who know better 'English', enjoy the facilities more. It is observed that those who are familiar with 'English', learn better, get interested, and enjoy the benefits more.

Primarily to promote girls' education Indira Gandhi Scholarship is given only to the Single Girl Child for pursuing PG studies. It is the fact most of the 'single girl child' come from comparatively good economic background families. However, if the motto is to promote girls' education then why it should not be for all the girl children and economic class will not be judged. It is also to be noted that 100 unemployed women, holding Ph.D. degrees may get fellowships for pursuing post-doctoral research on a full-time basis, for five years. But why they should not get a permanent job and how long they should continue it. Maulana Azad National Fellowship (integrated 5 year fellowships) is given to the students of minority communities to pursue only higher studies such as M.Phil. and Ph.D. As the higher education situation is very awful among the minorities and in particular Muslims, thus, to promote higher education why it should not be given at UG level to them.

Towards social equity and socio-economic mobility of the disadvantaged sections of the society, the UGC has been implementing coaching schemes for SC/ST/OBC (non-creamy layer/Minorities viz. remedial coaching at UG & PG level, coaching scheme for entry in services, and coaching scheme for preparing SC/ST/OBC/Minority candidates for NET/SET. Institutions having sufficient SC/ST/Minority Communities students are considered for financial assistance. General candidates with economically poor backgrounds are also allowed for such coaching classes. But it is the fact that in many cases practically it is not functioning properly.

To make colleges and universities more responsive to the needs and constraints of the disadvantaged social groups, the UGC had planned to establish an 'Equal Opportunity Cell' (EOC) in Colleges and Universities to oversee the effective implementation of policies and programmes for these groups and to provide guidance and counseling in academic, financial, social, and other matters. However, the reality is that most in cases the institutions ignore this matter and further, in many cases due to lack of infrastructure and ignoring tendencies the EOC is failing to pursue its necessary function. And the feature is more or less the same for the 'Centre for Differently Abled Persons' (CDAP) also.

Many of the students face big question marks over their future prospects. In this regard, it may be mentioned that due to the sudden formulation and implementation of policies by the UGC, many of the students and scholars of various institutes face a lot of serious problems in various respects. Many students are in macabre condition due to the sudden implementation of UGC regulation at different times in various ways. For example, large section of the scholars has been awarded Ph.D. before June, 2009 without doing coursework as then course work was not

mandatory, thus, these were valid Ph.D. But a larger number of scholars who have registered or in a situation just to submit their thesis before June 2009, all are victimized due to the New Ph.D. Regulation. Though the regulation was announced in 2009 by the UGC but it was actually implemented in several universities in 2011, and in particular, it is very correct for West Bengal then what about those who had already submitted their thesis or were preparing to submit it. Would they wait for more than 2.5 years or more for the new Ph.D. regulation; and was it possible? What about those who have been awarded Ph.D. degree as per Old Ph.D. Regulation after implementation of 2009 New Ph.D. Regulation (Ph.D. course work)? Again, what about those who after getting their Ph.D. degree without 2009 regulation cleared their NET, SET exam? Are they not qualified? However, there was no fault of the scholars but it is true that the concerned scholars are continuously being victimized and deprived of applying or getting the jobs as no Ph.D. benefits including marks for their Ph.D. degree are given to them and for this reason, automatically they are not being selected for an interview even; and it is only due to this sudden implementation of New Ph.D. Regulation by the UGC.

In the past three five-year plans, grants being given to central institutes have increased, but the share of state universities has almost remained the same. From the ninth to eleventh five-year plan, grants to central universities increased 15 times. At the same time, grants to state universities increased only three times. This disparity is creating problems in the quality, availability, and excellence of higher education in the country. Apart from financial problems, the universities are also facing troubles like political interference, mismanagement, and lack of accountability which are affecting education standards (<http://slugpost.com/2013/11/15/problems-solution-indias-higher-education-system/>, retrieved 4.12.14 at 5.33 pm).

Very recently again Thorat (2013) mentioned that "Occurrences of discrimination based on caste, gender, race, and religion are not disparate but a reflection of the ways in which our society works. Traditional values contradictory to democratic norms and practices continue to shape the behavior of our children and adults in their formative stages through socialisation in the family and society. ....Exclusionary behaviour also brings on discrimination, psychological and physical violence for the low castes and women. Thus, the nation's long-standing legacies of caste, gender, and class antagonism are replicated on campuses. A study by Prof. Mary Thornton and others of five higher educational institutions in India and the United Kingdom, in 2010, observed 'that separation of groups on the higher education campuses studied is pervasive and ubiquitous. While some such separation may be for supportive reasons, convenience or inertia, at other times it is due to overt discrimination on the grounds of race, region, nationality, caste, class, religion, age or gender'. In 2013, Samson Ovichegan, in a study on the experience of Dalits in an elite university in India, observed that 'this university is yet another arena in which the practice of caste division continues to exist. The university environment reinforces and maintains a divide between Dalit and non-Dalit. Dalit students do, indeed, experience overt and covert discrimination based on caste at this premier university'.... Yet untouchability is still prevalent just as gender discrimination and violence are. .... Education can be an instrument of change. But nation-building would require reform in education; unlearning of undemocratic values is as important as the learning of democratic ones. Unfortunately, our education system,

with its present curricula and pedagogy, has less to offer by way of civic learning and democratic engagement that shapes good citizens out of men and women.”

Regarding Development towards Education of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Article 46 of the Constitution states that “The State shall promote, with special care, the education and economic interests of the weaker sections people, and in particular of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and shall protect them from social injustice and all forms of social exploitation”. The National Policy on Education 1986, updated in 1992 envisages paying greater attention to the education of the educationally backward minorities in the interest of equity and social justice. After independence, the Government of India has taken number of steps to strengthen the educational base of the persons belonging to the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and Minorities (cited in Kumar, *et al.*). But yet the representation of them in higher education is comparatively very poor than others. Despite huge strides in primary enrolment rates, India still has the largest number of out-of-school children in the world, more than the whole of sub-Saharan Africa and 69 per cent of India’s population still lives on less than \$2 a day (World Bank, 2010). The World Bank categorises India as “an extreme dual economy” (cited in British Council, 2014).

### ***Policy***

In order to improve quality of state universities and affiliated colleges, Human Resource Ministry recently started the National Higher Education Mission. Under this scheme, in 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> five year plan a total of Rs. 98,138 crores would be spent, of which 69 per cent would be borne by the central government and rest by the state governments (<http://slugpost.com/2013/11/15/problems-solution-indias-higher-education-system/>, retrieved 4.12.14 at 5.33pm). The Annual Report of UGC for 2012-2013 provides not only the major initiatives taken by UGC as the apex body for coordinating and maintaining standards of higher education in the country but also highlights the initiatives undertaken by the UGC to promote the general development of universities and colleges culminating to enhancing access, equity, relevance, and excellence. During the first year of the XII Plan (2012-2017), the UGC has undertaken a number of new initiatives with a view to ensuring inclusive and qualitative expansion of higher education (UGC Annual Report, 2012-2013). Therefore, the 12<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan (2013-17) for higher education addresses three overarching challenges: excellence<sup>3</sup>, equity<sup>4</sup> and expansion<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup>Excellence: Priority issues include improvements in teaching and learning, and a focus on learning outcomes; faculty development to improve teaching; increased integration between research and teaching; more international partnerships in teaching as well as research; better links between industry and research to stimulate innovation; and connecting institutions through networks, alliances and consortia.

<sup>4</sup>Equity: Further initiatives targeted at underprivileged and underserved populations in society and geography, addressing urban/rural, gender, people with disabilities and community divisions and inequities.

<sup>5</sup>Expansion: Scaling up capacity in existing institutions, rather than creating many new government-funded institutions; enabling discipline diversity, counteracting the skewed growth towards engineering and other technical subjects; enabling flexible and skills-based learning; ensuring a more even spread across the country; alignment to the needs of the economy; and encouraging private investment



- (i) To enhance access to degree courses so as to achieve expansion in higher education, the UGC has implemented the scheme 'Establishment of New Model Degree Colleges in EBD with low GER' during 2010-11. The scheme is essentially a motivational mechanism for State Governments to uplift the underserved districts educationally by providing appropriate financial assistance. It is applicable to those districts (374 districts) which are identified as EBD by the Planning Commission.
- (ii) To achieve excellence mainly in teaching and to initiate a research culture in colleges, the UGC has initiated a scheme "College with Potential for Excellence". During the reporting the year 2012-13, as many as a total grant of `46.73 crores were released to 284 colleges with potential for excellence.
- (iii) To minimize the social disparities in Higher Education, the UGC provides 2667 Rajiv Gandhi National Fellowships to SC/ST candidates every year (2000 for SC and 667 for ST) to undertake advanced studies and Research leading to M.Phil./Ph.D. degrees. Yearly PDF for 100 SC/ST scholars; and Post-graduate Scholarships for 1000 SC/ST Students in Professional Courses have been implemented. The UGC has been providing PG Scholarships for all GATE qualified students (M.E./M.Tech./M.Pharm.).

Apart from the above, the UGC has undertaken a number of initiatives at different times. These are: (i) The "Research Fellowships in Sciences for Meritorious Students" scheme has been implemented with an aim to provide opportunities to meritorious candidates to undertake advanced studies and research leading to Ph.D. degrees in Sciences. (ii) To achieve the goal of enhancing the status of women, the Commission has been providing financial assistance for construction of hostels and other infrastructural facilities under the Special Scheme for Construction of Women Hostels. (iii) To support research on the issue of Social Exclusion and inclusion which has theoretical as well as policy importance, the UGC had established teaching-cum-research centres in Universities called as 'Centres for Study of Social Exclusion and Inclusion Policy'. As of 31.03.2012, as many as 35 centres are functioning in 35 universities. In this regard, Thorat (2013) says, "this requires reform in our educational system to develop a generation that will be more sensitive and engaged in the promotion of gender and caste equity, freedom, and fraternity, and reduce dependence on legal safeguards".

### ***General Observation***

Education is the cradle of society and by this ladder, a person can move and reach from one roof to another quickly or slowly or as desired. It breaks the social cleavages as well as barriers to society rapidly and brings mobility. Thus, for all-round development apart from the economy, educational progress is very much essential as education and economy are two sides of the same coin. It is needed for the development of human resources as it plays a vital role in balancing the socio-economic fabric of the country. It is the mirror of the society and the people of India are its most important resource. Moreover, for the overall development of the people as well as society and nation, education is needed. The people of India have to face various problems in their daily life due to the diversities of this country as it is vast in various respects such as geography, climate, language, culture, religion, politics, economy, caste, community/groups, and so on. For

maintaining the basic livelihood many of the people face various difficulties. The inequality is well prevalent in all respects such as gender, age, caste, community, etc. A greater section is the downtrodden people and most of them do not get the adequate working scope and as a result, they face severe problems for survival. Many of the people are debarred from safe drinking water, nutritious food, shelter, education, etc. The life expectancy at birth is not satisfactory also. The reflection of the above is also not satisfied that can be observed in the Human Development Index too. In this regard, education is essential as it enables the man to make their life better both in a familial and societal context. Education is the total development that includes social, cultural, moral, intellectual, and physical development. Therefore, for the all-round development of human beings and in particular economic growth, a high rate of education is urgently required, and in this regard, along with the basic level of education, higher education is essential. After independence Government of India and various agencies have taken different policies and also tried to implement those as it is the prime instrument for ensuring the upward mobility of the people and the progress of the country. But the fact is that a large section of people has not higher education. However, several factors and reasons are responsible for that.

The Indian education and in particular the higher education system is framed to serve the elite and incidentally, most of the institutes are highly politicised. To break this system various initiatives have been taken and accordingly processes are going on but the result is not pleasing. Many colleges and universities etc. have been established but with respect to the necessity and demand of the society, these are not sufficient. The disparities between the central and state institutes have increased a lot as in respect of central institutes the state institutes get a very poor share (5:1). The representatives of girl students and scholars are very poor than the boys; and further, very few percentages of both the students can complete the master degree; and the enrolment for research is very poor. Many scholarships are given for pursuing higher education but these are not allotted properly and that's why the purposes of the students are mostly not fulfilled. Though there are many colleges and universities but most of them are facing serious economic crises. Primarily the required infrastructure is lacking, most of the teaching posts are vacant. In this regard, the situations of higher education in the case of downtrodden people and in particular SCs/STs and Muslims are very poor and unsatisfactory. However, wide gender disparities in terms of access to higher education are present in all respects. The disparities are also prevalent in rural and urban areas. It is a fact that very poor percentages of people in rural areas can achieve higher education.

Language is the vehicle of culture and it is an important medium of communication and education and in particular higher education. But unfortunately, due to multi-complex culture, society, and linguistic groups, a major section of the people face serious difficulties as all the mother tongues are not considered for pursuing higher education. In this regard, primarily the downtrodden people including tribal face lots of problems as apart from their mother tongue they have to learn several other languages for education. For pursuing higher education in India, Hindi and very particularly the 'English' language is essential. But unfortunately except very few most of the people are not in a position to learn the same or they have to face a lot of difficulties in this regard. To provide equal opportunity to all the sections of people, the Government has taken various initiatives and formulated various cells, coaching centres, etc. But unfortunately,

most of them are not functioning properly due to a lack of infrastructure and the interest of certain sections of the people. Further, due to the implementation of certain policies, rules etc., many of the student's higher education including Ph.D., research work, etc. are affected seriously; and even the future of the students/ scholars become hell.

Gender, caste, race, and religion-based discrimination and deprivation are continuously being happened. Even sometimes it turns into physical violence and psychological pressure. In many cases, the practice of caste based division is well prevalent and the environment of many of the institutes enforces to maintain the division between the Dalits and non-Dalits. Like gender disparity, untouchability is still observed in many cases. Various rules and regulations are in the Constitution and accordingly many policies etc. have been made for bringing the SCs/STs etc. in the domain of higher education. But yet the representatives of them are very poor. Moreover, the people belonging to these categories including poor people also need attention and support to bring in higher education and upliftment in the mainstream.

### ***Suggestions and Remarks***

After 67 years of independence of India yet a greater section is devoid of education and in very particular higher education which is affecting the allover progress of society and nation. The importance has not been given to the civic learning and the democratic engagement of the people rather the educational system including basic and higher educational institutes primarily prepares students only for economic gains as well as the market-oriented economy. However, there are so many problems both in society and in the system of higher education as well as in education too. Therefore, considering the above issues following suggestions and remarks are being mentioned which may be helpful for the development of higher education as well as the progress of the nation.

- Along with the filling up of all the vacant teaching posts, equal and required infrastructural development both in the Central and State higher educational institutes is urgently needed. Further, the required infrastructural facilities should be provided to all the students equally. Therefore, the Government should take care of and necessary steps for the improvement of state universities and colleges in all respects.
- The higher education institutes should be freed from any political interference.
- Along with anyone language (mother tongue or regional or state or national language), only 'English' language should be introduced in higher education in all areas of India that the students of any area or caste or community or group etc. can easily access and understand the world view.
- Transport and communication system should be developed that the students of isolated or distant places do not face very difficult problems.
- Apart from the SC/ST and Muslim students, more importance and facilities should be given to all the girl students for pursuing their higher education smoothly.
- Job assurance should be needed after completing the master's degree and Ph.D. degree otherwise they will become frustrated. In this regard, students of poor families face a lot

of difficulties for completing these degrees, thus, if they do not get the job, along with those persons their family members also face problems as their minimum savings or property have already been spent for the same.

- Further, apart from job-oriented education value-based education should be introduced and provided to all the students.
- Economic development is very much essential for enhancing the rate of higher education as the economy and education is inter-related. Along with economic development, policies may be formulated and implemented for reducing the disparities both in income and working scopes for the people.
- The gender, caste, creed, race, culture, language, religion-based discrimination, and disparities including untouchability should be reduced and stopped immediately and in this regard, the required policies and their implementations should be followed strictly that the equal opportunity may be provided in all respects for pursuing higher education.

It may be concluded that various social groups, religious and linguistic minorities, the landless and poor wage earners are far away from higher education and still multi-dimensional inequalities in enrolment rates are present. The people of those sections should be provided the education and higher education, in particular, thus they may come into the mainstream of society and may create strong and sound bases for socio-economic change and upward mobility. The country needs basic and qualitative education to gain a good quality of life. Thus, lastly, it may be said that educational opportunities should be provided to all the citizens of India, in spite of geography, social, cultural, political, religious position, economic ability, etc.

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