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# Higher Education and Women Participation in India

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**ABSTRACT**

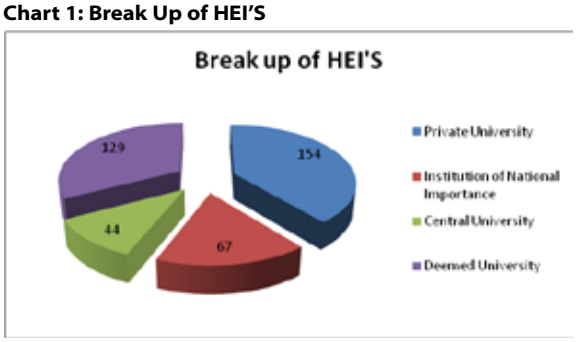
*In the words of Mahatma Gandhi, " If you educate the man, you educate the person but if you educate the woman, you educate the nation". Women are part of our socio-economic system. They up hold our rich cultural and traditional values as they have a strong bond with the society. Their progress is often equated with the nation's progress and therefore, their participation in development activities of the societies is always a concern. The educational background of a woman has a direct bearing on her development. One can see that there is a great disparity in the distribution of women's employment between urban and rural areas.Formulating laws and policies are not enough as it is seen that most of the times these laws and policies just remain for the inaugural of the event. The ground situation on the other hand just remains the same and in many instances worsens further. Addressing the malice of gender discrimination of Higher Education in India, it becomes a long drawn battle for empowerment against powerful structural forces in the society. Education is the nourishment of the mind with knowledge and as such it helps in the formation of an integrated personality of an individual. Higher education in India has witnessed an impressive growth over the years. Clearly, for the government, it necessarily has to pool the energies and resources needed to promote female education at all educational levels. Most Indian women do accept their traditional role of dependency on male relatives. But with the possibility of economic independence, through respectable employment, it becomes a reality for women. In this paper I shall delineate the extracts of Indian women participation in higher education. The implications of gender inequality gap under this purview shall also be discussed. Suggestions shall be cited eventually to accelerate the participation of women in higher education in India*

**KEYWORDS : Gross Enrolment Ratio(GER),Higher Education Institutions(HEI'S),Gross Domestic Product(GDP),Gross Attendance Ratio(GAR), Gender Parity Index (GPI), Labour Force Participation Rate**

The higher education system in India is complex. The regulators associated with governance are overlapping and entangled across various ministries and regulatory bodies. The increase in the enrolment figures is consistent with the expansion of Higher Education Institutions (HEI's) over the years. The number of higher educational institutions (HEIs) has increased from about 30 universities and 695 colleges in 1950-51 to about 700 universities (as of 2012-13) and 35,000 colleges (as of 2011-12) as per a recent UGC report1. With an annual enrolment of above 25 million (including enrolment under Open and Distance Learning system), India is today ranked as the third largest higher education system in the world after US and China(Source: ASHE 2013 Annual Status of Higher Education of States and UTs in India-Part 1).

The break-up of number of HEIs in the country shows that the share of state universities is the highest (44%) followed by private universities (22%), deemed universities (18%), institutes of national importance (10%) and central universities(6%)( Source:UGC Higher Education at a Glance - June, 2013)

**Chart 1: Break Up of HEI'S**




**Source: UGC Higher Education at a Glance - June, 2013**

The public expenditure in higher education remained close to 1% of the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) over the years. This has led to an exponential growth of private sector institutions. The number of private HEIs has increased by more than 60% during the five year period between 2007 and 2012, As a result, the share of private sector in terms of total HEIs has increased to about 64% in 2012. (Source: Twelfth Five Year Plan (2012-2017) - Social Sectors)

**STUDENT ENROLMENT**

The total enrolment in higher education has increased from 0.21 million in 1950-51 to about 22 million in 2011-12, while the GER has increased from 0.40% in 1950-51 to 19.4% in 2012-13. in 2010, with a Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) of 19.4 per cent, India is still below the world average of 27%, especially with that of other emerging countries such as China (26%) and Brazil (36%) etc..(Source: UGC Higher Education at a Glance - June, 2013 and RUSA, 2013)

Moreover, the Government intends to achieve enrolment of 35.9 million students in higher education institutions, with a GER of 25.2%, by the end of the Twelfth Five Year Plan period through the co-existence of multiple types of institutions including research-centric, teaching and vocation-focused ones. (Source: Higher Education in India Twelfth Five Year Plan ,2012–2017)

There are 83 Technical, 33 Agriculture, 24 Medical, 17 law and 10 Veterinary Universities. The top 6 States in terms of highest number of colleges in India are Uttar Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Rajasthan and Tamil Nadu. Bangalore district tops in terms of number of colleges with 924 colleges followed by Jaipur with 544 colleges. 73% Colleges are privately managed; 58% Private unaided and 15% Private aided. Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu, both have more than 85% Private unaided colleges, whereas, Bihar has only 6% and Assam 10% Private unaided colleges.(Source: All India survey on Higher Education,2013)

**Table1:Number of Colleges District wise**

| District | Number of Colleges |
|---|---|
| Bangalore | 924 |
| Jaipur | 544 |
| Hyderabad | 533 |
| Pune | 470 |

| District | Number of Colleges |
|---|---|
| Rangareddy | 448 |
| Nagpur | 433 |
| Mumbai | 358 |
| Bhopal | 323 |
| Chittoor | 290 |
| Indore | 290 |

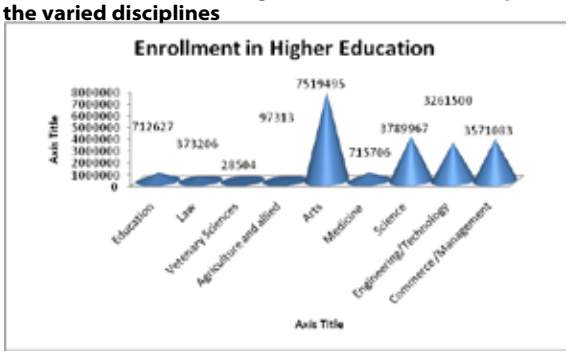
**Source: All India survey on Higher Education,2013**

Total enrolment of students in regular mode in Higher Education Institutes in India is around 241.8 lakhs, with 15.87 million boys(55.7%) and 12.69 million girls(44.2%) of total enrolment. Maximum numbers of Students are enrolled in B.A. programme followed by B.Com and B.Sc. programmes. At the Undergraduate level, (34%) of students is enrolled in Arts followed by Engineering & Technology (19%), Commerce (14.5%) and Science (12%). At Ph.D. level, maximum number of students is enrolled in Science stream followed by Engineering & Technology. On the other hand at Post Graduate level maximum students are enrolled in Management stream and Social Science ranks at number two The distance enrolment constitutes 12.5% of the total enrolment in higher education, of which 39.9% are female students. About 79% students are enrolled in Undergraduate level programme. 84505 students are enrolled in Ph.D. that is less than 0.5% of the total student enrolment. (Source: All India survey on Higher Education,2013)

Uttar Pradesh is ranked first in terms of enrolment (37.7 lakhs, 15.6%); followed by Maharashtra (32.2 lakhs, 13.4%), Andhra Pradesh (23.7 lakhs, 9.8%), Tamil Nadu (18 lakhs, 7.4%) and Karnataka (16.1 lakhs, 6.6%). The three southern states of Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka accounted for approximately one-third (33.8%) of the total enrolments across India. (Source: 3 UGC Higher Education at a Glance - June, 2013 and RUSA, 2013)

Scheduled Caste students constitute 12.5% and Scheduled Tribes students constitutes to 4.2% of the total enrolment. 31.6% students belong to Other Backward Classes. 4.5% students belong to Muslim Minority and 2.1% from other Minority Community.

**Chart 2: Enrolment in Higher Education with respect to the varied disciplines**




**Source: Twelfth Five Year Plan (2012-2017) - Social Sectors**

The Enrolment through Regular Mode at various levels is 2.4 crores in India. As can be inferred, the highest share of enrolment (82.9%) is at under-graduate level, followed by post-graduate (8.7%) and Diploma (7.0%), with all other levels forming only 1.4%. The maximum enrolment share (39.2%) is in government colleges in the country.( Source: Annual Status of Higher Education in States and UTs 2013)

**STATUS OF WOMEN IN HIGHER EDUCATION**

There is a wide disparity in the GER of higher education across states and the Gross Attendance Ratio (GAR) in urban and rural areas. Total enrolment of students in regular mode in Higher Education Institutes in India is around 241.8 lakhs, with 15.87 million boys(55.7%) and 12.69 million girls(44.2%) of total enrolment (Source: All India survey on Higher Education,2013)

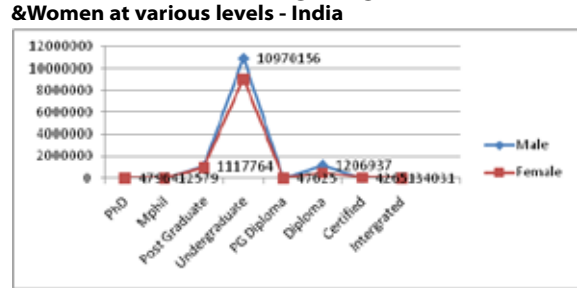
**Table 2: Men & Women student growth in higher education from 1950-51 to 2012-2013**

| YEAR | MEN ('000) | WOMEN ('000) | TOTAL ENROLMENT ('000) | WOMEN AS PERCENT OF ALL STUDENTS |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1950-51 | 157 | 17 | 174 | 10.00 |
| 1955-56 | 252 | 43 | 295 | 14.60 |
| 1960-61 | 468 | 89 | 557 | 16.00 |
| 1965-66 | 849 | 218 | 1067 | 20.40 |
| 1970-71 | 1563 | 391 | 1954 | 20.00 |
| 1975-76 | 2131 | 595 | 2426 | 24.50 |
| 1980-81 | 2003 | 749 | 2752 | 27.20 |
| 1985-86 | 2512 | 1059 | 3571 | 29.60 |
| 1990-91 | 2986 | 1439 | 4425 | 32.50 |
| 1995-96 | 4235 | 2191 | 6426 | 34.10 |
| 2000-01 | 4988 | 3012 | 8001 | 37.60 |
| 2005-06 | 6562 | 4466 | 11028 | 40.50 |
| 2012-2013* | 13468 | 10687 | 24180 | 44.20 |

**Source: Enrolment of women in higher education (Selected Educational Statistics 2005–06; University Grants Commission, Annual Report, various years)**
***Statistical Report- registrar.uoregon.edu/statistics/reports**

In terms of gender, enrolment is skewed as 55.7% comprises males, while only 44.3% of the enrolment is females, indicating significant gender disparity. The GER for males (20.8) is higher than GER for females (17.9). Gender Parity Index (GPI) in enrolment is the ratio of the number of female students enrolled to the number of male students. A GPI that varies between 0 and 1 typically means a disparity in favour of males whereas a GPI greater than 1 indicates a disparity in favour of females. In general, at the national level, the number of girls enrolled is less than their counterparts(0.86). However, the female-male ratio in education has been steadily improving over the years.

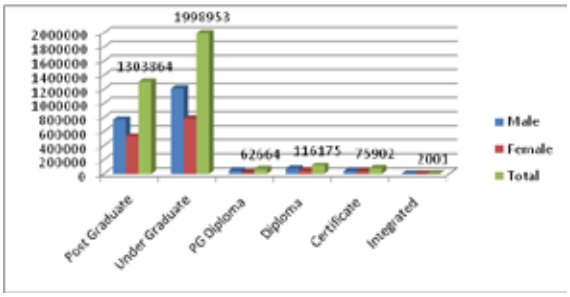
**Chart 3: Enrolment through Regular Mode of Men &Women at various levels - India**




**Source: Twelfth Five Year Plan (2012-2017) - Social Sectors**

On analysis it is quite clear that the women participation in the regular mode is far lesser than male in all disciplines. However the growth pattern of women has increased over the years and there is a significant elevation in their enrolment pattern. In 2012-2013 women as percent of all students has increased to 44.2%.The growth of Under Graduates are likely more than other persistent sections. This shows that women are mostly concerned with under graduation which is a serious element of discussion because it will adversely affect the economy by and large. Hence remedies in relation to generation of practical awareness programmes should be exercised. So also in relation to distance education shown below there lies a substantial gap between the enrolment of women and men.

**Chart 4: Level wise Distribution of Distance Enrolment**




**(Source: All India survey on Higher Education,2013)**

According to CIA World Fact book demographic statistics-2011, it is stated that the gender disparity accounts to 15.2% for females and 19% for males. At birth the sex ratio is 1.12 male(s)/female( under 10years:1.14male(s)/female;15–24 years: 1.09 male(s)/female 24–64 years: 1.06 male(s)/female;65 years and over: 0.908 male(s)/female). The total population accounts to 1.08 male(s)/female

In the rural sector, females have a workforce participation rate of 30.02% compared with 53.03% for males. In the urban sector, it is 15.44% for females and 53.76% for males. As per Census 2011, 41.1% of female main and marginal workers are agricultural labourers, 24.0% are cultivators, 5.7% are household industry workers and 29.2% are engaged in other works. From this it is quite clear that women are confined to their household habitat than generating employment from education. This by and large is responsible for the reduction of female enrolment in higher education which has to be curtailed constructively.

As per National Sample Survey (68th Round), the worker population ratio for females in rural sector was 24.8 in 2011-12 while that for males was 54.3. In Urban sector, it was 14.7 for females and 54.6 for males in 2011-12. Labour force participation rate in women, reflects the persons who express their willingness to work .The labour force participation rate for women across all age-groups was 25.3 in rural sector and 15.5 in urban sector compared with 55.3 and 56.3 for men in the rural and urban sectors respectively in 2011-12 (NSS 68th Round).

## IMPLICATIONS OF INEQUALITY IN GENDER UNDER HIGHER EDUCATION

In the nineteenth century, the central moral challenge was slavery. In the twentieth century, it was the battle against totalitarianism. We believe that in this century the paramount moral challenge will be the struggle for gender equality around the world. Millions are condemned to a stiller doom than mine, and millions are in silent revolt against their lot. Today Society tells the woman: You are a Peacemaker yet rejects her when she claims that education to women is the progress to every society...to every family.

There has been a number of theoretical and empirical studies which finds that gender inequality in education and employment reduces economic growth. The theoretical literature suggests that such gender inequality reduces the average amount of human capital in a society and thus harms the economic performance.

A positive link between education and labour appears as women with a greater taste for work are more likely to attain higher education. If education of women co-incides with the restrictions on women's mobility in work, one would observe a negative correlation between education and labour force participation. This will adversely affect the economic growth of the country. It is important to stress that the persistence of the gender pay gap cannot be only explained away by differences in skills, experience, education or location in the labour market. "There is an unexplained residual which reflects gender discrimination." Gender discrimination at work constrains economic growth, increases poverty and has a negative effect on the wealth and well-being of families and communities.

Gender-based violence both reflects and reinforces inequities between men and women and compromises on the health, dignity, security and autonomy of its victims. It encompasses a wide range of human rights violations, including sexual abuse of children, rape, domestic violence, sexual assault and harassment, trafficking of women and girls and several harmful traditional practices. Any one of these abuses can leave deep psychological scars, damage the health of women and girls in general. Through Education awareness can be generated in this regard which uplifts the simple women found today.

Women generally feel that the intrinsic benefits of college are high, and they are more likely than men to report that college had improved the quality of their lives.

According to World Bank 2001, it states that Corruption and Nepotism will be reduced as women are less prone to them compared to that of men. This will promote the smooth functioning of the economy.

India's economy has grown fast over the past two decades with the services sector accounting for a large share of growth (Bosworth and Collins, 2008; Shastry, 2012). India has also experienced a sizable fertility decline, a rapid education expansion and a decline in the education gender gap, while the labour market returns to education increased (Kijima, 2006; Pieters, 2010). Against this background, it is puzzling to see that the reported female labour force participation rate in urban India has stagnated in its growth.

Obviously, the reasons for the development and perpetuation of these negative attitudes about and by women are complex. But this does not alter the imperative need to change them. Therefore the structures of today's technological society must be changed to allow every individual equal right to develop and use his or her capabilities and to be treated and compensated accordingly.

## SUGGESTIONS

Education policy has to be taken in the right form and kind to facilitate women participation in higher education in order to reduce the inequality in the gender gap prevalent in our country. It is found that there exists varying quality standards of education provided in institutes with low level of accreditation. This may be a hindrance to tapping the quality of the skill portrayed by the potential in our economy. On analysis the following are some of the measures that can be viewed in order to reduce the gender inequality gap and promote economic growth.

- Each individual is born unique in all his/her human characteristics. Therefore, equality and inequality, only when properly comprehended, are both engines of liberty. One should analyse and respond with the right action to the present situation of gender differences in all areas of the higher education institution. Academic women are most commonly found on the faculties of junior colleges, liberal arts colleges and the like rather than at high prestige universities( Bernard, op. cit., p. 85 ). Women faculty members tend to cluster in a few fields of study - education, home economics, the health professions library science etc. Predictably, women professors are extremely rare in those fields which our society has sex-typed as male, such as law and engineering.
- Through increase in women representations in decision making bodies of higher educational institutions we can promote them to that level to an extent. One development of interest is the share of women parliamentarians to 10.96% in 2011. The share of women in the person days employed through MGNREGA stood at 51.0% in 2012-13 (all districts with rural areas).
- A total of 20.5% women were employed in the organized sector in 2011 with 18.1% working in the public sector and 24.3% in the private. ( Women and Men in India 2013-15th Issue- Central Statistics Office ,National Statistical Organisation, Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation ,Government of India ).Statistics show that women are getting empowered today and the belief of dependency has reduced over the years. This will have a positive effect in the economic development of the country
- Make skill-oriented higher education. Institutions of higher education must help all students develop a new image of women as human beings, capable of substantial contributions to the academic, scientific, and political world around them. They must also begin to make the changes necessary to facilitate the full pursuit of education and professional training by women. There are three

areas in which specific steps can be taken immediately by individual in situations:

1. Policy and structural changes to promote increased involvement of women in academic life at all levels and in all fields.
2. Program and service changes to facilitate life on campus for women, including provision of child-care facilities on campus and campus health services for women.
3. Academic changes, including the institution of courses or major programs in female studies.

- A series of courses should be open to all students which would be one of the most effective ways in which an educational institution could combat myths and stereotypes about women and help change women's own image of themselves and their capabilities.

Share of females getting free education/ exemption from tuition fee and receiving different types of incentives is higher than that for males in all the three levels of education. However, the average annual expenditure for females is lower than that of males. The government should take strict measures that allocation of funds towards upliftment of women should be exercised constructively. Measures that can be viewed in order to reduce the gender inequality gap should also be adhered to.

**CONCLUSION**

Education is widely recognized as the gateway to economic security and opportunity particularly for girls and women. There is little deny in the fact that investing in human capital is one of the most effective means of reducing poverty and encouraging sustainable development. The foremost factor limits female education due to the existence of poverty at large. An educated woman has the skills, the self-confidence and the information she needs to become a better parent, worker and citizen.

One of the most significant worldwide transformations in education over the past several decades has been the drastic increase in women's access to colleges and universities. It must be admitted that women are in no way inferior to men. They have all the power and capacity as that of men but they fail to manifest themselves amongst different opportunities.

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