



## Extent of Accessibility to Higher Education in India

### KEYWORDS

**Dr.Satvinderpal Kaur**

Senior Assistant Professor, SDS College of Education Lopon, DisttMoga (Punjab)

### ABSTRACT

*Higher education in India is passing through a phase of unprecedented expansion, marked by an explosion in the volume of students. The challenge of providing equal opportunities for quality higher education to ever-growing number of students is also a historic opportunity for correcting sectorial and social imbalances. The 12th Five Year Plan shall focus on utilizing this historic opportunity of expansion for deepening excellence and achieving equal access to quality higher education. During eleventh Plan, provision was made for setting up of 16 new Central Universities and 374 Model Colleges in low Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) districts. But considerable challenges remain, access to higher education is still less than the minimum international threshold levels. Much greater challenges continue to exist with respect to quality and the provision of relevant education. To achieving the objectives of access, inclusion and expansion, "Rashtriya Uchch Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA)" aimed to achieve 25 percent national level GER. In this context this paper has been written. Our data source is NSSO 61ST, 64th and 66th rounds. This paper has been divided into three sections. In the first section GER among different categories was discussed. In the second section GER in rural and urban area is compared. Third section includes conclusions and policy implications.*

### Introduction

Higher Education is a very important sector for the growth and development of human resource which can take responsibility for social, economic and scientific development of the country. The University Education Commission (1948-49), under the Chairmanship of Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, gave the foundations of the future of Indian higher education. The report of the Education Commission (1964-66) under the Chairmanship of Dr. D.S.Kothari symbolized the symbiotic relationship between education and national development. A lot of thought has since been generated towards the emerging concerns of higher education. The vision of higher education in India is to realize the country's human resource potential to its fullest with equity and inclusion. This essentially means the need to provide greater opportunities of access to higher education with equity to all eligible, and in particular, to the vulnerable sections of the society. Higher education in India is passing through a phase of unprecedented expansion, marked by an explosion in the volume of students. The challenge of providing equal opportunities for quality higher education to ever-growing number of students is also a historic opportunity for correcting sectorial and social imbalances. The 12<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan shall focus on utilizing this historic opportunity of expansion for deepening excellence and achieving equal access to quality higher education. During eleventh Plan, provision was made for setting up of 16 new Central Universities and 374 Model Colleges in low Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) districts. But considerable challenges remain, access to higher education is still less than the minimum international threshold levels. Much greater challenges continue to exist with respect to quality and the provision of relevant education. To achieving the objectives of access, inclusion and expansion, "Rashtriya Uchch Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA)" aimed to achieve 25 percent national level GER. In recent years, the nation has embarked upon initiating a number of development linked strategies for promotion of higher education. The latest of these include the Report of the 'National Knowledge Commission' (NKC). The 11<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan evolved as a move towards a quantum leap in expanding and strengthening the higher education system. The 12<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan is projected to maximize the access, equity and quality, meeting the international benchmarks. But the current scenario in terms of access and equity shows some what different situation which mends immediate concerns.

### SECTION - I

#### GER among different categories

Even though there is a significant growth in student enrolment in higher education system, especially in the last two decades, the GER in higher education in India is still about half the world's average GER (24%) and about two thirds that of the developing countries (18%) and much lower than that of developed nations (58%) (Source: Mid-term Appraisal of the 11<sup>th</sup> FYP). There is a considerable debate in the country about the precise level of GER and the actual position may become clear after the findings of the All India Higher Education Survey being conducted by the National University of Educational Planning and Administration (NUEPA) become available. In the mean time, the 12<sup>th</sup> FYP may consider the level of incremental expansion in GER by 10%. The targeted GER in higher education was fixed at 15% by the end of the 11<sup>th</sup> FYP and was accordingly required to grow by 8.9% annually. In technical education, the enrolment growth was targeted at 15% per annum. The expansion objectives were to be achieved through a multipronged strategy, namely (a) targeted increase in their take capacity of the existing universities and colleges, strengthening of 200 state engineering institutions, upgrading 7 technical institutions, and (b) establishment of new universities and colleges, including setting up of 16 new Central Universities, 14 Innovation Universities, 374 Model Colleges, 8 Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs), 7 Indian Institutes of Management (IIMs), 10 National Institutes of Technology (NITs), 3 Indian Institutes of Science Education and Research (IISERs), 20 Indian Institutes of Information Technology (IIITs), 2 Schools of Planning and Architecture (SPAs) and 50 Centres for Training and Research in frontier areas. These new institutions were planned to be established through government funding and also under the PPP mode. The sample household survey conducted by the National Sample Survey Organisation (NSSO) during 2007-08 does point to the achievement; it indicated exceeding the target GER of 15% during the 11<sup>th</sup> FYP as is evident from the data presented in Table 1.

**Table 1 Enrolment and GER (18-22 Years)**

	NSS 61st round (2004-05)		NSS 64th round (2007-08)	
	Enrolment (000)	GER %	Enrolment (000)	GER %
(a) General and Reserved Categories				
SC	1,898.5	8.72	2485.5	11.54
ST	767	8.44	652	7.67
OBC	5027.4	11.48	6599.6	14.72
OTHERS	7787.2	22.82	8886.6	26.64
TOTOL	15480.1	14.19	18623.7	17.21
(b) General and Minorities				
Muslims	1308.8	8.5	1521.4	9.51
Non-Muslims	14170.9	15.1	17102.4	18.54
Total	15,479.7	14.19	18,623.8	17.21

**Source: NSS 61<sup>st</sup> and 64<sup>th</sup> Rounds**

When GER is discussed among General and Reserved Categories very alarming figures appear in the scene. GER for the nation as a whole is 14 percent in NSSO 61<sup>st</sup> round and 17.2 percent in 64<sup>th</sup> round. No doubt this is an achievement but it is far from satisfactory level. During both the rounds, GER for other categories (except, SCs, STs and OBC) is 22.8 and 26.6 respectively which is almost two and half times more than the SCs and STs. Scheduled caste is exploited in all spheres of life by so called upper castes since time immemorial. This is also noticed for higher education. It is clear from the table 1 that GER in SCs is 8.72 for 61<sup>st</sup> round and 11.54 for 64<sup>th</sup> round. GER in SCs and other category has improved almost at a same pace i.e. three percent. But a disturbing situation is that the percentage of GER for STs has declined from 8.44 to 7.67. It is a serious cause of concern and demands immediate attention of policy makers. There are huge differences in GER in General and Minorities during both the rounds. Muslims and Scheduled tribe population are worst suffered as for as GER in higher education is concerned. GER for Muslims is 8.5 in 61<sup>st</sup> round and 9.51 in 64<sup>th</sup> round. Very little improvement is noted during 64<sup>th</sup> round as compared to 61<sup>st</sup> round in Muslims.

## SECTION- II

### Rural -Urban dichotomy in GER

The inequalities between the rural and urban population in terms of access to higher education is reflection of desperate level of socio economic development in the rural and urban sector. Although the government has started various programs to develop education in rural India yet the gap between rural and urban India continuous due to urban bias of education. Almost one third of the population in India live below the poverty line and a large proportion of poor people live in the rural areas. Education is directly linked with the production processes. The denial of the access to educational opportunities by rural people constrained their job opportunities and productivity levels.

**Table 2 GER (18-22 Years) in Rural and Urban Areas**

NSS round	Rural	Urban
NSS 61st round (2004-05)	8.42	16.18
NSS 64th round (2007-08)	11.6	19.03
NSS 66th round (2009-10)	13.9	34.5

**Source: NSS 61<sup>st</sup>, 64<sup>th</sup> and 66<sup>th</sup> Rounds**

Table 2 shows rural urban disparities in GER for higher education. At overall level GER is 18.8 percent in 2009-10, in rural areas is 13.9 and in urban areas GER was 34.5. GER amongst rural areas (13.9%) is much below the national average, while in urban areas is more than twice that of rural area Hence GER in rural areas is two and half times less than the urban areas. 70 percent of the households in India belong to rural areas and accounts for 73 percent. Further, improvement in GER in rural areas has not become doubled where as GER has become more than doubled during 61<sup>st</sup> round and 66<sup>th</sup> round for other groups. To live in rural areas means to be lagging not only in education but also in other fields.

It may be noted that the GER in Tables 1 and 2 has been estimated on a five-year higher education cycle (18-22 years). The NSS data refer to only attendance and not enrolment data and there is always a small difference between attendance and enrolment, with the former being on the lower side. It may also be pertinent to mention that attendance in higher education here includes both degree and diploma programmes equivalent to graduation and above as well as attendance of students who have completed higher secondary education and are enrolled in Diploma and Certificate programmes below the graduation level. This corresponds to UNESCO's broadest measure of enrolment in tertiary education as per International Standards for Educational Classification (ISEC 5 & 6).

## SECTION-III

### Inter- state inequities

Access to higher education differs widely across states (Table 3). The picture of higher education varies from state to state, with economically poorer states having a lower percentage of students enrolled in higher education. Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh have not done as well in the area of higher education as some other smaller states, or the Union Territories such as Goa and Chandigarh. (GOI 2008). The more progressive southern states have better GERs as well as higher availability of educational institutions. This trend is also seen from the NSSO estimates these are also states with higher per capita spending on higher education. While most hilly region states have low institutional density, their GERs vary from high to low. This may be due to the fact that higher education does not completely depend on the physical availability of institutions but also on other socio-economic factors such as income of the parents, willingness to migrate etc. High-population density states present a different picture. Here on an average, institutional availability per 1000 sqkms in unable to ensure good access due to the large population and possible lack of institutional capacity. In Bihar, Jharkhand, Odisha and Rajasthan, both the institutional density and GER are very low. In the age group 18-23years, females are way behind males. While GER for women and girls is estimated to be 15.8 percent, it is 22.8 for men. This calls for a more sustained effort in addressing gender disparity

Table 3 GER in Higher education by States in India

State/UT	GER		GER	State	GER	State	GER
A&N	14.40	Delhi	41.20	Lakshdeep	4.80	Punjab	20.00
Andhra Pradesh	21.60	Goa	50.30	Madhya Pradesh.	15.30	Rajasthan	18.70
Arunachl Pradesh	15.70	Gujrat	14.70	Maharashtra	23.60	Sikkim	14.00
Assam	12.80	Haryana	41.20	Manipur	26.60	Tamil nadu	31.80
Bihar	9.00	H.P.	24.50	Meghalya	10.20	TripurA	9.10
Chandigarh	46.60	J&K	23.90	Mizorum	11.40	U.P.	18.10
Chattisgarh	20.50	Jharkhand	13.70	Nagaland	19.80	Uttranchal	39.90
Dadra&Nagar Haveli	5.90	Karnataka	21.10	Orissa	14.00	West Bengal	12.30
Daman & Dau	21.80	Kerala	34.40	Pondicherry	46.70	Total	18.8

Source: NSS 66th Round on Education 2009-10

#### SECTION IV

##### Conclusion and Policy Implications

India has a very low GER of 18.8%, indicating that only about a fifth of the population in the age group of 18-23 years has access to higher education in India. India's GER is far below those of developed countries and even below those of the other BRIC nations (Brazil, Russia and China). Even though there is a significant growth in student enrolment in higher education system, especially in the last two decades, the GER in higher education in India is ((18%) still about half the worlds average GER (24%) and about two thirds that of the developing countries and much lower than that of developed nations (58%). Despite various programs initiated by the government to develop rural sector in terms of education. The gap between rural and urban population continuous due to urban bias of education. GER in SCs and other categories has improved almost at a same pace i.e. three percent. But, percentage of GER for STs has declined from 8.44 to 7.67. It is a serious cause of concern and demands immediate attention of policy makers. There are huge differences in GER in General and Minorities during both the rounds. Muslims are worst suffered as for as GER in higher education is concerned. GER for Muslims is 8.5 in 61<sup>st</sup> round and 9.51 in 64<sup>th</sup> round. Very little improvement is noted during 64<sup>th</sup> round as compared to 61<sup>st</sup> round. The picture of higher education varies from state to state, with economically poorer states having a lower percentage of students enrolled in higher education. Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh have not done as well in the area of higher education. The more progressive southern states have better GERs as well as higher availability of educational institutions. New institutions must be established through government funding and not under the PPP mode. GER in higher education must be at par with international standard and must be funded by government.

#### REFERENCE

Annual Status of Higher Education Report 2013. | All India Survey on Higher Education (2010-11), Ministry of Human Resource Development (Provisional). | (Census 2011), Registrar General and Census Commission India. | Deshpande, S. (2006) Exclusive Inequalities: Merit, caste and Discrimination in Indian Higher Education Today. | Ganesh N. Devy (2010), Inclusive Education, a view of Higher Education in India, Public Lecture Series National Institute of Advanced Studies. | Inclusive and Qualitative Expansion of Higher Education, Twelfth Five year plan 2012-17, Government of India. | Mid-Term Appraisal of the 11th FYP | NSSO 61ST, 64th round, and 66th round |