Research Paper Economics

# An Analysis of Enrollments in Education at All Levels in India

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**ABSTRACT**

Enrolments in education and Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) are the established criteria to measure the enrolments in education. The current research is a study of enrolments and GER across various levels of educations from 2005-06 to 2012-13. Enrolments in education at all levels showed an upward trend for the research period. Particularly the enrolments in higher education showed a noticeable rise and surpassed the enrolments at senior secondary level. GER for all levels of education showed an upward trend except at primary level. One of the reasons suggested was regarding the entry level age group for standard 1 that was fixed at 6 years with the Right to Education Act being enforced since 2009-10. Across the research period the GER descended with the ascent of education levels from primary to higher education level at each year. Only 21.1% i.e about one person in every five belonging to the eligible age cohort enrolled in higher education.

**KEYWORDS** GER, India, enrollments at all levels.

## INTRODUCTION

India is the second most populated country in the world after China and has about 46% of India's population belonging to the age group of 0-24 (CIA, 2015). While most of the countries are ageing India is thus termed as a young nation. It is a great challenge for the nation to convert the population into an asset, else it would be a golden opportunity foregone.

Education is vital to the growth of a nation in today's race of knowledge economies. It contributes to the economic development by providing skilled and knowledgeable manpower for the various sectors of the economy. The returns that the human resources earn and then spend on various expenditures complete the circular flow of activities in an economy. The Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) is the apex regulatory body responsible for education and the associated policies in India. The MHRD iterates the sentiments of the importance of education for the society by quoting "The essence of Human Resource Development is education, which plays a significant and remedial role in balancing the socio-economic fabric of the Country…." Understanding the decisive role played by the education in the development of the economy, the Parliament of India passed the bill of Right to Education in July 2009 and the Act came in to force from 1st April, 2010 (http://mhrd.gov.in/about-mhrd).

Indian policy makers have consistently attempted to provide an access to its population to all levels of education since independence. The objective of the current research is to analyze the enrolments in education at all levels in India for a period of 2005-06 to 2012-13.

## METHODOLOGY

The current study is an analysis of enrolments at various levels of education based on the secondary data from a report released by the MHRD (2014). The study is undertaken for the period of 2005-06 to 2012-13 since a comparable data across all levels of education is available for this periodover the last decade 2004-15. The data for 2012-13 were provisional. The analysis is undertaken for five stages of education, namely primary education (standard 1 to 5, age group 6-10 years), upper primary education (standard 6 to 8, age group 11-13 years), secondary education (standard 9 to 10, age group 14-15 years), senior secondary education (standard 11 to 12, age group 16-17 years) and higher education (all education after senior secondary education, age group 18-23 years) (MHRD, 2014). The two tools used to analyze enrolment are (i) absolute enrolments measured in lakhs at various levels (ii) Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) at various levels. Gross Enrolment Ratio is defined as the total student enrolment in a given level of education, regardless of age expressed as a percentage of the corresponding eligible official age group population in a given school year.

## FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

By absolute numbers the enrolments largely followed a descending trend as the level of education increased for each year, except for higher education as can be observed for figure 1.

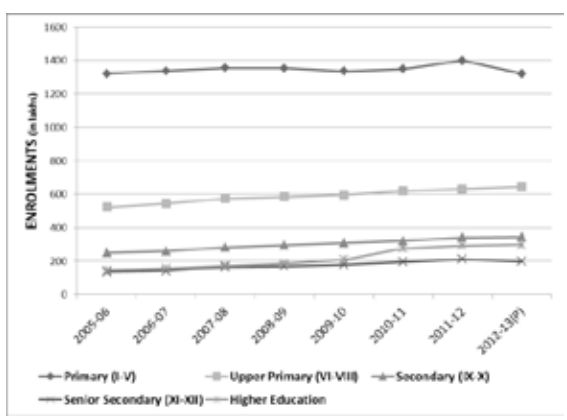


**Figure 1: Enrolments in various levels of education from 2005-06 to 2012-13 (provisional) (in lakhs)**
Source: MHRD (2014)

Thus for the research period maximum enrolments were in primary education followed by upper primary, secondary, higher education and then senior secondary education. The trend for all education levels prior to the level of higher education had almost parallel curves for most of the period of 2005-06 to 2012-13 (P). A downfall in primary education for the year 2012-13 could be observed. This might have resulted since the data for 2012-13 were provisional and the final data should be awaited. Higher education enrolments for a period after2009-10 exhibited a noticeable upward trend that was exceptional as compared to any other levels of education.Thus the enrolments in 2012-13 (P) in primary education was 1321 lakhs, for upper primary 643 lakhs, for secondary 343 lakhs, for senior secondary 198 lakhs and for higher education 296

lakhs (MHRD, 2014).

GER is a globally accepted tool to measure the enrolments in education since enrolments are expressed as a percentage of the eligible age cohort for the respective levels of education. Hence GER is a more refined tool than enrolments to analyze the trends in enrolments.

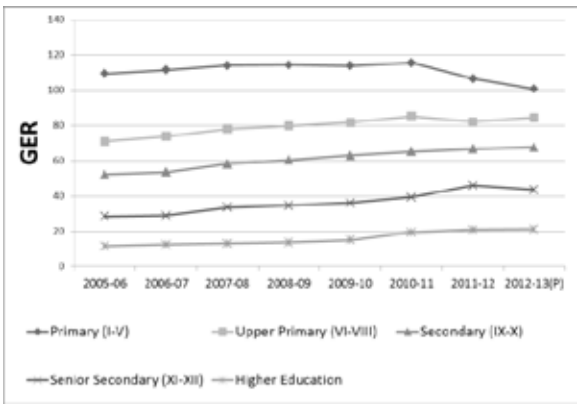


**Figure 2: GER at various levels of education from 2005-06 to 2012-13 (provisional)**
Source: MHRD (2014)

Figure 2 shows the trends in GER for various levels of education from 2005-06 to 2012-13 (P). A GER for primary education above 100 indicates that more people were enrolled in primary education than the population in the eligible age group of 6-10 years. Lower entry age and resulting entry to underage children could be the reason for the GER above 100 besides other factors. As observed in her paper Sood (2008) provides comprehensive evidence that in200512 states had 6 as the age of entry in class 1, while 23 had 5 years. In 2005-06 35.2 lakh children enrolled in school before they were eligible by chronological age (Sood, 2008). According to MHRD "The Constitution (Eighty-sixth Amendment) Act, 2002 inserted Article 21-A in the Constitution of India to provide free and compulsory education of all children in the age group of six to fourteen years as a Fundamental Right in such a manner as the State may, by law, determine." (http://mhrd.gov.in/rte). Since the Right to Education came into force from 1st April, 2010, this might be an important reason for the fall in the GER at primary level. It might simply imply that since 2009-10 the age for entry in standard one was 6 years, and so students under the age of six were not to be permitted an entry in standard 1. Prior to the enforcement of the Act more students (underage by the definition of 6 years) were enrolled as a proportion of the eligible age cohort of 6-10 years, whereas this proportion might have reduced after the enforcement of the act. For the provisional data for 2012-13 the GER for primary education was thus 101, low from 116 in 2010-11.

For various other levels of education an upward trend was noticed. A noticeable difference between enrolments and GER (depicted in figure 1 and 2) was observed for the association between senior secondary and higher education. By enrolments higher education exceeded senior secondary education enrolments. But the GER curve for higher education was below the GER curve for senior secondary education. GER curves sequence clearly one below the other as per the levels of education with highest levels of GER for primary education and the lowest for higher education. It signaled the drop-outs at every level of education. Hence, very few of the eligible age cohorts had enrolled in the higher education in India. As noted by Joshi and Ahir (2014), while the higher education system in India is the second largest in the world by enrolments, about 80% of the eligible age cohorts still lie out of the ambit of access to higher education. For 2012-13, the GER for primary education was 101, and it decreased to 85 for upper primary, 68 for secondary level of education, 44 for senior secondary level and finally 21 for higher education level. Certain successful government policies like the SarvaShikshaAbhiyan(-to assure an opportunity of access to primary levels of education), RashtriyaMadhyamikShikshaAbhiyan(to assure an opportunity of access to secondary levels of education), and the RashtriyaUchhaShikshaAbhiyan(to assure an opportunity of access to higher education) contributed to the rise in enrolments and higher transitions from previous levels of education to the higher ones.

## CONCLUSION

Enrolment in education is one of the basic indicators of education level of a country. For a highly populated country like India, attainment of education by its population can be the deciding factor for the success in today's knowledge economy. While India has consistently performed well in the attainment of education, particularly at primary level of education,a lot more needs to be done to keep pace with the demand for access to education.

It should also be noted that providing access to the discerning population is the first step towards a successful education system. Equity, efficiency and quality are ultimately the deciding factors to truly term an education system successful. These virtues cannot follow the attempts to increase access; instead they have to be an integral part of the growth of education system. Alternately the opportunity cost of pursuing education at any age group would exceed and demotivate the enrolments.

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