

INDIAN HIGHER EDUCATION - ISSUES AND INITIATIVES

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ABSTRACT

The Indian Higher Education system, which includes Technical Education, is one of the largest of the world, just after the United States and China. Higher Education is the most powerful tool to build a knowledge-based society for the future. Higher Education provides people with an opportunity to reflect on the critical social, economic, cultural, moral and spiritual issues facing humanity. It contributes to national development through dissemination of specialized knowledge and skills.

The National Policy on Education-1986, revised in 1992 (NPE) states that in Higher education in general and Technical Education in particular, steps will be taken to facilitate inter-regional mobility by providing equal access to every Indian of requisite merit regardless of his origins. The universal character of Universities and other Institutions of Higher Education is to be underscored.

This paper developed on descriptive research and focused on stock of the situation in terms enrolment trends, present position of equity and equality in receiving higher education by all genders and all communities. For enhancing quality education, the paper suggests the needed steps to overcome gaps and in upgrading the skill sets in the areas of research and development, and science and technology and for attaining employment and personal empowerment.

Key Terms: Higher Education, GER, China GER, State Policies, MHRD Initiatives.

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1.0 Introduction

There are 760 universities and 38,498 colleges offering higher education in the year 2014-15. The number of institutions offering higher education has increased significantly and more than doubled in last 10 years (Refer Table 1.1). Apart these institutions, they are 11922 stand alone institutions.

Table 1.1 Number of Recognised Educational Institutions

Level/ Year	(in hundreds)				(In absolute numbers)	
	Primary	Upper Primary	Secondary	Senior Secondary	College	University
1950-51	2097	136	NA	74	578	27
1960-61	3304	497	NA	173	1819	45
1970-71	4084	906	NA	371	3277	82
1980-81	4945	1186	NA	516	6963	110
1990-91	5609	1515	NA	798	5748	184
2000-01	6387	2063	877	384	10152	254
2005-06	7726	2885	1060	536	16982	350
2006-07	7849	3056	1122	574	19812	371
2007-08	7878	3252	1138	592	23099	406
2008-09	7788	3656	1221	642.29	27882	440
2009-10	8199	3941	1222	717	25938	436
2010-11	7485	4476	1312	720.46	32974	621
2011-12	7143	4788	1283	841	34852	642
2012-13*	8539	5778	2189	1224	35525	667
2013-14*	8589	4215	1335	1036	36634	723
2014-15*	8471	4251	1353	1093	38498	760

NA: Not Available

Note: from 1950-51 to 1990-91, figures for Class XI-XII include Class IX-X

Data Source:

For School Education:-

(i) figures for 1950-51 to 2011-12: Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India (website: <http://mhrd.gov.in/statist>)

(ii) figure for 2012-13 & 2014-15: National University of Educational Planning & Administration, New Delhi (website: <http://dise.in/>)

* Figures related to School Education are provisional.

For Higher Education : MHRD, Government of India (website: <http://mhrd.gov.in/statist>)

The HRD ministry suggested state universities in conjunction with regulatory bodies strive to update curriculum, which might include industry participation, use technology-enabled education, collaboration with international organisations to make education more dynamic.

Overall, the enrolment in higher education was 33.3 million in 2014-15 compared to 30.1 million in 2012-13, according to a survey on higher education released by the Ministry of Human Resource Development (Refer Table 1.2).

Table 1.2 Enrolments in Higher Education (Total in Millions)

Year	2014-15	2013-14	2012-13
Men	17.9	17.5	16.7
Women	15.4	14.8	13.5
Total	33.3	32.3	30.1

Source: Ministry of Human Resource Development

Out of the total enrolled students in higher education, 11% of the students registered themselves in distance education. Among them, the Male and Female ratio is 7:8.

While India's GER increased significantly from 10% at the beginning of the millennium to 17.9% in 2011-12, it is still significantly lower than the world average of 27% and as well as the averages of other emerging countries such as China (26%) and Brazil (36%). The gross enrolment ratio (GER) in higher education in India has improved to 23.6 per cent in 2014-15 from 21.5 per cent in 2012-13 (Refer Table 1.3).

GER is calculated for the 18-23 years age group. It is total enrolment as a percentage of the eligible population.

Table 1.3 Gross Enrolment Ratio in Higher Education

Year	2014-15	2013-14	2012-13
Men	24.5	23.0	22.7
Women	22.7	22.0	20.1
Total	23.6	23.0	21.5

Source: Ministry of Human Resource Development

While launching the sixth All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) in New Delhi, The then HRD minister Smriti Irani expressed confidence that the target of 30 per cent GER by 2020 - as envisaged in the 12th Plan - would be achieved.

Table 1.4 : Percentage Enrolment in various Disciplines at Under Graduate level in Higher Education 2014-15

Discipline	Under Graduate
Arts/ Humanities/ Social Sciences	40.24
Engineering & Technology	15.89
Science	15.38
Commerce	13.98
Education	3.25
Medical Science	3.05
IT & Computer	2.57
Management	1.93
Law	1.13
Agriculture	0.61
Oriental Learning	0.39
Others	1.58

Data Source: Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India (website: <http://mhrd.gov.in/statist>)

From the Table 1.4 we can understand that 40% of the students are enrolled in Arts/ Humanities/Social Sciences. These are not professional courses. Sometimes the graduates and under graduates does not know the use of certificates that they poses after spending 3/5 years in campus. Education system should stop enrolling the students into courses which are not offering any skill set. The system should offer only professional courses whether it is B.A., B.Com., or B.Sc.

1.2 Key Reasons for Poor Quality

Indian higher education institutions still face system related challenges despite significant progress made in the past decade. **The following are some of the reasons for poor quality**

- **Outdated curricula** not reflecting the requirements of the dynamic market environment
- **Shortage of faculty:** Shortage of faculty in state and central universities is 40% and 35% respectively resulting
- **Press articles in high pupil-teacher ratios.** As of 2013, an estimated 40% of college teachers are non-regular faculty members — temporary, contractual, ad hoc, guests or self-financing
- **Variation in Aided college system in states:** The aided college system varies from state to state. In Andhra Pradesh, there is no replacement to retired aided lecturer while other states like Kerala and Tamilnadu are getting new lecturers from under aided system replacing the retired employees. It creates imbalances in teacher quality, aided and unaided teacher ratio etc.
- **Low focus on research:** Indian government spends only 0.9% of GDP on R&D compared to 2.7% by the US
- **Equity:** There is a wide disparity in GER across genders, social groups and regions, with rural areas and minority social groups having a GER that is significantly lower than the national average.
- **Inter-state disparity:** GER in higher education is 38.5% in Delhi vs 11.2% in Bihar; southern states with a higher GER than northern and eastern states (2012–13)
- **Differences across communities:** 15.1% for SCs, 11.0% for STs (2012–13)
- **Gender disparity:** 19.8% for women vs 22.3% for men (2012–13)

Table 1.5 GER as Per 2010-11 statistics

	ALL CATEGORIES			SC			ST		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
All India	20.8	17.9	19.4	14.6	12.3	13.5	12.9	9.5	11.2

Employability: According to the National Employability Report 2013, 47% of graduates are not employable in any sector in India’s knowledge economy.

1.2 Chinese and Indian Higher Education Enrolment Statistics

China and India are the two largest higher education systems in the world with total enrolment of 29.1 million and 26.7 million students as compared to 21 million in the U.S in 2010(Refer Fig 1.1).

India has the largest system in the world in terms of undergraduate enrolment of 19.8 m. students as compared to 12.7 m. in China and 10.4 million in the U.S. In contrast, India has much smaller proportion of students enrolled in the vocational education. This highlights the *skilled manpower shortage in India* which is simply ballooning with time.

Indian socio-cultural environment creates aspirations for bachelor's degree even if they do not offer employment opportunities. After earning bachelor's degree many continue for master's education in hope for subsequently getting jobs.

This situation of *postgraduate unemployment* is also emerging in China. Indian students (2.7mns.) at master's level are also more than double as compared to China (1.2mns.).

This fascination for getting advanced degrees suddenly stops as the doctoral level where India has one-third of students in China. In India, there is a need to encourage and motivate students to pursue continuous education up to doctoral level.

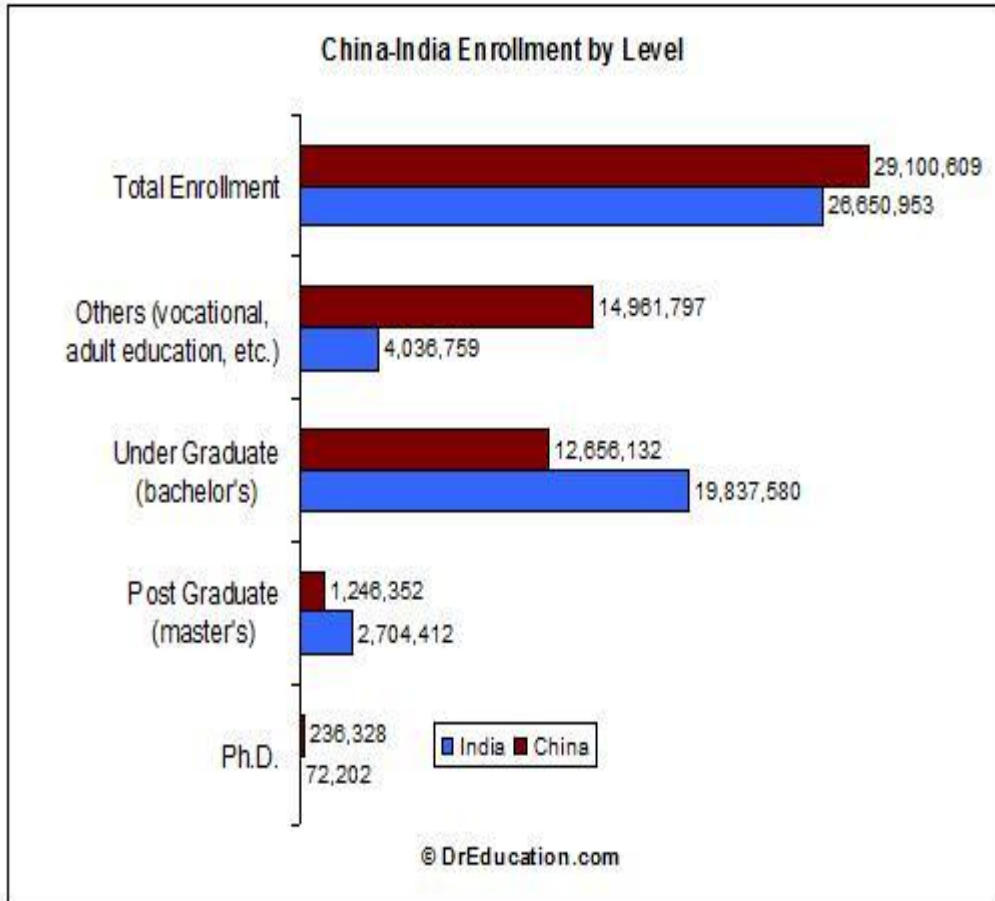


Fig.1.1 India and China Enrollment of students in different courses

2.1 India: Need for Change

By 2030, India is estimated to be the third largest economy and will be home to the largest and one of the youngest populations in the world

- India is expected to become the most populous nation by 2030 reaching 1.46bn, up from 1.25 bn in 2013 and its urban population is expected to reach 600 m by 2031 (41% of total), up from 377 m (32% of total) in 2011
- It will also have one of the youngest populations in the world by 2030, with a median age of 32 years, as compared with 35 in Brazil, 39 in the US, 42 in the UK, 43 in China and 52 in Japan
- The Indian economy is expected to grow at a Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) of 6.7%, the fastest in the world, to become the third largest economy by 2030, at GBP 8.6 trillion after China and the US
- Industry and services sectors are expected to contribute 92% of India's GDP by 2030 and require a net / gross incremental workforce of 145 m / 250 m respectively

The new Education policy should focus on meeting the future requirements of Industry. The centre and state governments should focus on effective implementation of liberalisation policies so that the universities, colleges and other organisations should offer creative courses and skill oriented courses time to time. The outcome of the institutions should match industry needs.

3.0 Investment in education

Indian government and state governments are spending nearly 4% of the GDP on education. However the focus is missing on higher education due to focus on primary education. Later the education is offered through private educational institutions both in professional and general courses. Due to massification of education, the quality of output is far below normal. However, the higher education reaches to all classes of people. University and Higher education receives less than 1/6th of total investment put in education. There is a need to increase in expenditure to higher education so that universities and colleges will get good faculty and good research environment so that it can move the society into knowledge society. (Refer Table 3.1)

3.1 Expenditure on Education by Education and Other Departments by Sector - 2011-12

Sector	Expenditure on Education (Rs. Crore)			Expenditure as % of GDP		
	States/ UTs	Centre	Total	State/ UTs	Centre	Total
Elementary Education	113171	35994	149165	1.3	0.41	1.71
Secondary Education	75510	10063	85573	0.86	0.12	0.98
University & Higher Education	34845	19056	53901	0.4	0.22	0.62
Adult Education	354	577	930	0	0.01	0.01
Technical Education	23975	20385	44361	0.27	0.23	0.51
Total (Education)	247855	86075	333930	2.84	0.99	3.82

3.1 The growing middle classes are spending more on education

Increasing income levels have translated into increased consumption by households. Indians

Want to spend their entire capital/ assets they possess on children’s Education. It becomes an opportunity to private institutions to capture the weakness. Some institutions felt that the education system creates cash cows. But in the long run, Institutions that doesn’t focus on quality faculty, quality infrastructure lost their identity in the long run. Now it’s the right time to improve the deficiencies and offering the quality education by encouraging staff and students for better achievements. Indian middle class will benefit from it.

Table No 4.1 Percentage Out-turn/Pass Out in various Disciplines at Ph.D & Post Graduate Level in Higher Education 2014-15

Discipline	Ph.D.	Post Graduate
Agriculture	7.08	0.63
Commerce	6.11	8.45
Engineering & Technology Total	11.9	7.18
Foreign Language	2.73	4.17
Home Science	0.52	0.29
Indian Language	6.34	9.56
IT & Computer	1.47	7.87
Law Total	0.77	0.5
Management	4.91	16.65
Medical Science	4.51	2.96
Science	25.76	12.44
Social Science	13.56	16.89
Others	14.34	12.41

Data Source: Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India

4.0 Research in Higher Education.

World rankings: Only six Indian higher education institutions featured among the top 500 global universities and none feature in top 200 in the QS World University Rankings 2014-15. A high-powered advisory body - National Knowledge Commission (NKC) set up. NKC recommendations tremendously successful in increasing Government's focus and plan outlay on education.

- **Research publications:** The number of research papers published by academics in India is one-fifth of that published in China in 2013
- **Low citation impact:** India's citation impact of 1.3 is half that of the world average
- **Patents:** India's patents filed are just 3% of patents filed by China

Table 4.1 provides information about no. of Ph.D.s produced in various disciplines.

5.0 Academic Reforms at Institutional Level

The Following are some proposed reforms to be implemented at institution level.

- Introduction of credit system in all programmes
- Giving weightages to online courses and project works
- Continuous and comprehensive evaluation
- Updating of curricula to retain its relevance
- Inter-disciplinarity in developing curricula
- Competitive admissions
- Innovations in Teaching-Learning Methods
- Rewards to meritorious teachers and researchers
- Teachers to continuously upgrade qualifications and knowledge

6.0 Central and State Government role

- **Accredited institutions (2012-13):** Only 27% of universities and 15% of colleges in India have been accredited by the NAAC. Of the ones that are accredited, 44% of the universities and 17% of the colleges have been rated in the "A" category. National Accreditation process should continue and increase the support to national accredited institutions.

- **Policy Regime :** 100% FDI in education allowed through automatic route. NKC has recommended that the number of universities increase 1500 by 2015, considered a highly ambitious target, but inadequate to meet demand for quality education. So far 670 universities were established and need to be expanded with full faculty.

- For higher education, an expenditure of USD 37.13 billion has been projected to achieve the proposed objectives during the 12th Five Year Plan (2012-17). But Duo governments should spend at least 6% of GDP to create Quality institutions with full fledged facilities and staff.

The following schemes initiated by government should be continued and strengthened.

National Academic Depository (NAD) scheme: The scheme aims to create an online national database of certificates awarded by boards and universities. It is currently being piloted by the Central Board of Secondary Education.

SWAYAM: Study Webs of Active-learning for Young Aspiring Minds (SWAYAM) is a MOOC platform launched by the Indian government to provide free online education. In its first phase, IIT Bombay, IIT- Chennai, IIT-Kanpur, IITGuwahati, the University of Delhi, the International institutions are being invited to develop and offer MOOCs on SWAYAM.

Digitised library hubs: The Government plans to set up a national digitised library for users and institutions which is globally accessible.

6.1 Employability / Entrepreneurship Initiatives

CIHEC: The MHRD is in the process of establishing the Council of Industry-Higher Education Collaboration (CIHEC), which will collaborate with the placement cells of Central government universities to identify emerging fields, based on the requirement of industries, to make students employment-ready. The CIHEC will also help to train placement cell counsellors to enhance their competencies in guiding students towards appropriate careers and to liaise effectively with industry for job placements.

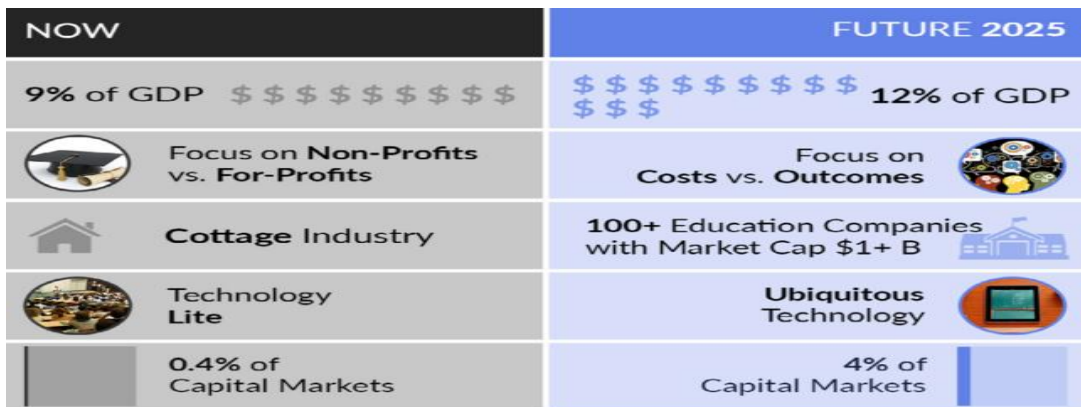
KUSHAL: One hundred Knowledge Upgradation Centres for Skilled Human Action and Learning (KUSHAL) are to be established within a year. These centres will coordinate the skill development initiatives of higher educational institutions in India.

NSQF: The Government has developed a National Skills Qualification Framework (NSQF), which seeks to promote vocational education and training among students by facilitating seamless mobility between general and vocational streams.

Entrepreneurship: The Government proposes to establish an INR 100 m (GBP 1.3 m) fund to attract private capital by providing equity, quasi-equity, soft loans and other risk capital to start-up companies.

Bachelor of Vocation: In 2014, the University grants commission (UGC) launched B. Voc courses under the National Skills Qualifications Framework (NSQF) and National Vocational Education Qualification Framework (NVEQF) schemes).

Fig 1.2 Present and Future of Educational System



Capital IQ, GSV Asset Management

The future expenditure on education will expand to 12% of GDP and service firms will in education system will be 4% of market capitalisation by 2025 (Refer Fig 1.2).

7.0 Conclusion

The Indian education system is changing from unproductive, unresponsive, vacation orientation to modern, tactical, efficient and competitive orientation. Advanced institutions like IIMs, IITs are the flag bearers of our education. They will continue their legacy but private institutions like BITS and Private universities like VITs etc are improving their positions in their space. Education system organised through newly adopting policies generally focusing on key gaps/ deficiencies and needs identified through surveys and feedback. Each rupee spent by the government and private institutions should create professional that are being used to build our country as manufacturing and technology hub of the world.

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