



INCLUSIVE GROWTH AND HIGHER EDUCATION IN INDIA

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Introduction

The role of education in facilitating social and economic progress is well recognized. It opens up opportunities leading to both individual and group entitlements. Education is the most crucial input for empowering people with skills and knowledge and in giving them access to productive employment in future. Improvements in education are not only expected to enhance efficiency but also augment the overall quality of life. It is a crucial instrument to make humans conscious of their rights and duties and enable them to claim a part of the fruits of development in an economy. Thus education plays a vital role in the process of development of human resource¹.

Even after six decades of planned economic development, a large part of population particularly women, scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and other backward castes suffers from social and financial exclusion. Inclusive development is possible through the progress in both social inclusion and financial inclusion. In view of this, the government of India adopted inclusive growth approach during the Eleventh five year plan. Accordingly the government policies are directed towards economic and social upliftment of the hitherto neglected sections of the society so as to enable everyone to reap the benefits of growth. Education is considered as the potential tool in the empowerment of the exclusive sections of our society. It is argued that a strong equity enhancing and inequality reducing thrust to the education plan is an imperative, particularly in view of the emphasis on "Inclusive Growth". Provision of access to education at all levels i.e. from elementary education to higher education is essential to achieve the goals of inclusive growth.

Objectives of the Study

The Specific objectives of the study are

1. To present the historical profile of Higher Education in India;
2. To examine the growth of Higher Education during the post independence period; and
3. To examine Inclusive Growth in Higher Education in India.

Historical Profile of Higher Education in India

India's higher education system is the third largest in the world, after China and the United States. Higher education has occupied a dominant position in independent



India since it was perceived as a promoter of economic growth, technological development and also as an instrument of equal opportunity and upward social mobility. Higher Education in India evolved over centuries and India was considered as the seat of learning for the whole world since times immemorial. However, for the purpose of our study Historical Profile of Higher Education in India is presented in Four Phases viz., Ancient Period, Medieval Period, Colonial Period and Modern Period.

Ancient Period

The basic aim of Higher Education in ancient India was to impart spiritual and mental skills to the student unlike the economy based education popular now-a-days. The Rigvedic Education was mainly oral transmission of knowledge from guru to sishya. Besides Vedas, they also emphasized on six Vedangas i.e. kalp, siksha, Chand, Nirukta, Vyakarana and Jyotish. Kautilya's Arthshastra (400-300 B.C) emphasized on acquiring knowledge of religion, philosophy, agriculture, trade and statecraft, especially for a prince. During the ancient period there were three most important places of higher learning in India viz, Taxila, Nalanda and Kanchipuram.

Taxila was the most famous Buddhist seat of higher learning. It was famous for the school of medicine, law and military sciences. Students from far-off areas used to come here for higher education. Out of eighteen crafts, student should opt one among mantra-tantra, medicine, study of omens, art of war etc. Vocational and Technical education were also imparted to them.

Nalanda was another famous seat of higher education. Here, Ashoka founded a chaitya which became educationally important due to the advent of Mahayana Sect. Nagarjuna and Aryadeva were the famous teachers. According to Itching, students from China, Nepal, Tibet, South-East Asia came here to study. At the time of Hiuen-Tsang, Shibhadra was the administrator of the university. The university curriculum included a wide range of subjects-Buddhist and Brahmanical, sacred and secular, philosophical and practical.

Kanchipuram was the most important center of higher learning in South India. The Gghatikas of Kunchipuram attracted students from all over the country. They devoted themselves to the study of sacred lore called pravachanam. Veda and Vedanga were the main curriculum. Temples like Kailashnath, Maths like Kamkoti, Vidyasthanas like Belur etc. were also centers for higher studies. These centers were devoted for the flowering of the Vaishnava, Shaiva and other sects. These centers which spread from Vikarmshila in East to Taxila in West and Shaiva maths in Kashmir to Kanchipuram in South, covering a vast geographical area and numerous thinking processes, which sometimes contradicted each other, and at some points supplemented each other, had created a treasure of knowledge for the generations to come.

Medieval Period

The ancient education system continued in the middle ages. Important centers in South India continued along with Banaras, Prayag, Haridwar, Nadia, Ujjain, Mithila



etc. located in North, with their pathshalas and tools devoted to the study of Vedas, Puranas and other Shashtras. The new settlers came with their Madarasas devoted to the study of Greco-Arab philosophy, numerology, logic etc. Thus higher education progressed though both systems that co-existed with a little influence on each other. In middle ages, Banaras emerged as a prominent center of Sanskrit learning. Many great scholars like Dharmadhikari, Sesa, Bhatta, Moulin etc, settled there. Banaras was known for the study of Ved, Vedanta, Sanskrit literature and grammar along with philosophy, medicine, astronomy, geography etc. Nadia in Bengal was famous for its School of Logic and Navya Nyaya along with Smiriti and Vyakaranam. In these institutions of higher learning at Nadia students studied different subjects such as poetry, law, grammar, astronomy, astrology, rhetoric, lexicon and philosophy. Besides, languages like Sanskrit, Pali, Prakrit, Bengali etc were also taught here. Mithila was also famous for specialized study of logic during the Mughal period. Famous scholars like Raghunandan Das Rai and Mahamahopadhyya Gokulnath were its products².

Colonial Period

During the colonial Period many drastic changes occurred in higher education in India. The medieval and ancient types of studies were transformed to modern, scientific, secular and logic based studies. However, after the decline of Mughal Empire, many educational institutions were closed. In a letter to the Court of Directors dated 21 February 1784, Warren Hastings referred to the decayed remains of educational institutions in every capital town and city of Northern India and the Deccan. At the behest of Muslim bodies Warren Hastings, set up the Calcutta Madrasa in 1781 for the study and learning of Persian and Arabic. Traditional Islamic studies were the main contents of the curriculum at Madrasa. In 1791, a British resident, Jonathan Duncan had established a Sanskrit College at Benaras. Its main aim was to cultivate the studies of law, literature and religion of the Hindus. These early attempts for the education of the people in Oriental languages met with little success. Christian missionaries opposed this initiative and called it an out-of-date education system. They were in favour of western literature and Christian religion through the medium of English. The Serampore missionaries, in particular were very enthusiastic for the spread of modern education in India. As a result Lord Wellesely established the Fort William College in 1800 for the training of the civil servants of the company, in vernacular languages and customs of India. The college published an English-Hindustani Dictionary, a book on Hindustani grammar and some other books. In 1813, for the first time the Charter Act (1813) provided an annual expenditure of one lakh rupees for the revival and improvement of literature and the encouragement of the learned natives of India, and for the introduction and promotion of a knowledge of the sciences among the inhabitants of the British territories in India.

However, it was Sir Charles Wood who revolutionized Higher Education in India. In 1854, Sir Charles Wood came with his famous Dispatch on Education. This dispatch came to be considered as the Magna Carta of English education in India.



On its recommendations, universities on the model of the London University were set up at Calcutta, Bombay and Madras, in 1857. The dispatch emphasized on the importance of vocational or technical studies and the education to women. The ideas and methods advocated in Wood's Dispatch dominated the field for about five decades, which witnessed a rapid westernization of the educational system in India. In 1882, the Government appointed the Hunter Education Commission to review the progress of education in the country since the Despatch of 1854. Its remarks were mostly confined to secondary and primary education. The Hunter commission identified the inadequate facilities for female education in India.

Modern Period

Modern Period refers to the Post-Independence Period education system. To inculcate the ideas, thoughts etc that were evolved during freedom struggle in the minds of the youth and to make them good citizens of India, it was felt necessary to overhaul the entire education system according to the needs of an independent nation. A commission was appointed in 1948 under the chairmanship of Dr. S.Radhakrishnan to reconstruct university education for the scientific, technical, social and economic development of the country. The commission gave its recommendations in 1949 covering all aspects of university education. According to it, pre-university education should be of twelve years. Higher Education had three main objectives-General Education, Liberal Education and Occupational Education. More attention was drawn towards subjects, such as agriculture, commerce, law, medicine, education, engineering and technology etc. The Commission observed that the examination standards should be raised and made uniform in all the universities and university education should be placed in 'concurrent list'. In pursuance of the recommendation of the Radhakrishna Commission University Grants Commission was set up, under executive orders, in 1953, and on the passing of the University Grant Commission Act, a statutory Body was set up in 1956 with Dr.C.D.Deshmukh as its first Chairman. Most of the matters connected with the university education including the determination and co-ordination of standards and facilities for study and research have been given to this body.

In 1964 another commission on education was appointed under the chairmanship of Dr. D.S.Kothari to advise the government on the national pattern of education and on the general principles and policies for the development of education at all stages and in all aspects. The commission recognized that education and research are crucial to the overall development and progress of a country. It recommended for moral education and vocationalisation of secondary education. It laid emphasis on strengthening the centers of advanced study and for setting up some universities which would aim to achieve highest international standards.

New Education Policy (NEP) was launched by the government of India in 1986. The main aim of the NEP is to transform a static society into a vibrant one with a commitment to development and change. The long-term programme and strategy consisted of increasing the literacy rate; universalization of elementary education;



vocationalisation of higher secondary education; improvement of Higher Education and to train and motivate manpower to new challenges inherent in modernization and globalization of economy.

As a result of the above, the system of higher education in India has witnessed an impressive growth since independence. As on August 2011, India has 43 Central Universities, 130 Institutions of Deemed to be Universities, 289 State Universities, 94 Private Universities established and functioning under the State Act, and 50 Institutions which are of National Importance plus other Institutions, 31,324 colleges including 2565 exclusive women's colleges, functioning under the universities and Institutions. Further, emphasis was laid on science and technology as well as distance learning in Indian higher education system. As a result of the several initiatives, the Gross Enrollment ratio (GER) in Higher Education increased from 0.7 percent in 1950-51 to 1.4 percent in 1960-61, to about 11 percent in 2006-07 and further increased to 17.21 percent in 2007-08. Thus the access to higher education in India has been increasing over years.

Growth of Higher Education in India

Since Independence Higher Education has grown steadily over the years. The growth is evident in the form of institutional growth as well as enrolment growth. The data relating to the growth of institutions and their intake capacity are presented in table 1.

Table -1 Institutions of Higher Education and their Intake Capacity(1950/51 to 2010/11)

| Capacity Indicators | 1950-51 | 1960-61 | 1970-71 | 1980-81 | 1990-91 | 2000-01 | 2010-11 |
|---|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| No. of University level Institutions | 28 | 45 | 93 | 123 | 177 | 266 | 611 |
| No. of Colleges | 578 | 1819 | 3227 | 4738 | 7,346 | 11,146 | 31,324 |
| No. of Teachers (in thousands) | 24 | 62 | 190 | 244 | 272 | 395 | 588 |
| No. of Students Enrolment (in millions) | 0.1 | 1.7 | 2.5 | 2.7 | 4.9 | 8.3 | 13.6 |

Source: UGC report 2010

From the data it may be observed that the number of universities level Institutions in India increased from a mere 28 in 1950-51 to 45 in 1960-61 to 93 in 1970-71 and rapidly increased to 123 in 1980-81. The growth of these institutions is found to be very rapid during the post liberalization period and the number of university level institutions are estimated at 611 in 2010-11.

With regard to the number of colleges also the growth is found to be steady during the first three decades and is found to explosive during the liberalization period. The total number of colleges increased from 578 in 1950-51 to 1,819 in 1960-61 and further to 3,227 in 1970-71. However, the growth of colleges is found to be explosive



during the liberalization period and the total number of colleges are estimated as 31,324 in 2010-11.

With regard to number of teachers also the same trend continued. The total number of teachers working in higher education institutional increased from 24,000 in 1950-51 to 244,000 in 1980-81 and further increased to 588,000 by 2010-11. The growth in terms number of students enrolled in higher education institutions is also found to be very rapid during the liberalization period. The total number of students enrolled in higher education institutions is found to be 0.1 million 1950-51 to 2.7 million in 1980-81 and further increased to 13.6 millions by 2010-11. Thus, it is clear that higher education witnessed a rapid growth in terms of number of institutions, teachers and students enrolled during the liberalization period compared to the pre-liberalization period.

Student Enrolment in Higher education in India

Data relating to the student enrolment in higher education in India are presented in table.2

Table-2 Student Enrolment in Higher Education in India

| Year | Total Enrolment | Increase over the preceding year | Percentage |
|---------|-----------------|----------------------------------|------------|
| 1970-71 | 19,53,700 | 1,60,920 | 9.0 |
| 1975-76 | 24,26,109 | 59,568 | 2.5 |
| 1980-81 | 27,52,437 | 1,03,858 | 3.9 |
| 1985-86 | 36,05,029 | 2,00,933 | 5.9 |
| 1990-91 | 49,24,868 | 3,22,188 | 7.0 |
| 1995-96 | 65,74,005 | 4,60,076 | 7.5 |
| 2000-01 | 83,99,443 | 3,48,836 | 4.3 |
| 2005-06 | 1,13,38,253 | 6,75,509 | 6.3 |
| 2009-10 | 1,46,24,990 | 8,42,153 | 6.1 |

Sources: UGC Annual Reports (Various Years)

From the data it may be observed that the total enrolment of students in higher education increased from 19.5 lakh in 1970-71 to 27.5 lakh in 1980-81, to 49.2 lakh in 1990-91, to about 84 lakh in 2000-01 and further to 146.4 lakh by 2009-10. The decadal growth of student enrolment in higher education was found to be fluctuating during the pre-reform period and achieved steady improvement during the post reform period except during the year 2000-01. The decadal growth of student enrolment was estimated as 9 percent in 1970-71, 3.7 percent in 1980-81, 7 percent in 1990-91, 4.3 percent 2000-01 and 6.1 percent by 2009-10. From this it may be concluded that the student enrolment in higher education through declined during the pre-liberalization period, increased continuously since 2000-01.

Status of Women in Higher Education

Due to the efforts made by the government and the University Grants Commission over the years, women education in India has grown both in terms of



number of women's colleges and proportion of women enrolment in higher education. The data relating to a number of women colleges and women enrolment are presented in table.3.

Table- 3 Women Colleges and Women Enrolment in India

| Year | Total Enrolment | Women Enrolment | Percentage of Women | No. Of Women's Colleges |
|---------|-----------------|-----------------|---------------------|-------------------------|
| 1950-51 | 395745 | 43126 | 10.9 | - |
| 1960-61 | 1040864 | 170455 | 16.2 | - |
| 1970-71 | 1792700 | 394894 | 22 | 430 |
| 1975-76 | 2426109 | 595162 | 24.5 | 528 |
| 1980-81 | 2752437 | 748525 | 27.2 | 609 |
| 1985-86 | 3570897 | 1058612 | 29.6 | 741 |
| 1990-91 | 4425247 | 1436887 | 32.5 | 874 |
| 1995-96 | 6574005 | 2363607 | 36 | 1146 |
| 2000-01 | 8399443 | 3306410 | 39.4 | 1578 |
| 2005-06 | 11028020 | 4466348 | 40.5 | 2071 |
| 2009-10 | 13641808 | 5649102 | 41.4 | 2565 |

Source: UGC Annual Reports, (Various Years)

From the above data it is observed that the total number of women's colleges in India increased from 430 in 1970-71, to 609 in 1980-81, to 874 in 1990-91, to 1578 in 2000-01 and further increased to 2565 by 2009-10. Women enrolment as a proportion of total enrolment has witnessed a steady growth during the last four decades. The proportion of women enrolment in the total enrolment increased from 10.9 percent in 1950-51, 16.2 percent in 1960-61, to 22.01 percent in 1970-71, 27.01 percent in 1980-81, to 32.4 percent in 1990-91 to 39.36 percent in 2000-01 and further increased to 41.41 percent in 2009-10. From this it may be concluded that there has been a phenomenal growth in women enrolment in higher education particularly during the liberalization period in India.

Gross Enrolment in Higher Education and Inclusive Growth

hough Gross Enrolment in Higher Education has improved significantly during the post-reform period compared to the experiences of the developed as well as developing countries, India is far behind the other countries. According to Mid-Term appraisal of 11th Five Year Plan the Gross Enrolment Ratio in Higher Education in India was still about half the world's average Gross Enrolment Ratio (24 percent) and about two thirds that of the developing countries (18 percent) and much lower than that of developed nations (58 percent). Further, access to Higher Education was not uniform and equitable in spite of the consistent efforts of the Government of India. The Gross Enrolment Ratio among different social groups and between different regions were not found to be uniform. It is evident from the data of NSS 61st and 64th rounds with



regards to Higher Education. The data relating to Enrolment and Enrolment Ratios are presented in table 4 and 5.

Table- 4 Enrolment and Gross Enrolment Ratio (18-23 Years)

Table- 4 Enrolment and Gross Enrolment Ratio (18-23 Years)

| | NSS 61st round (2004-05) | | NSS 64th round(2007-08) | |
|---|--------------------------|-------|-------------------------|-------|
| | Enrolment | GER % | Enrolment | GER % |
| a) General and Reserved Categories | | | | |
| SC | 1898.5 | 8.72 | 2485.5 | 11.54 |
| ST | 767 | 8.44 | 652 | 7.67 |
| OBC | 5027.4 | 11.48 | 6999.6 | 14.72 |
| Others | 7787.2 | 22.52 | 8886.6 | 26.64 |
| Total | 15480.1 | 14.19 | 18623.7 | 17.21 |
| b) General and Minorities | | | | |
| Muslims | 1308.8 | 8.5 | 1531.4 | 9.51 |
| Non-Muslims | 14170.9 | 15.1 | 17112.4 | 18.54 |
| Total | 15479.7 | 14.19 | 18623.8 | 17.21 |

Sources: UGC Report 2011, Government of India

Table-5 Gross Enrolment Ratio in Rural and Urban Areas

| | Rural | Urban |
|--------------------------|-------|-------|
| NSS 61th round (2004-05) | 8.42 | 16.18 |
| NSS 64th round(2007-08) | 11.06 | 19.03 |

Sources: UGC Report 2011, Government of India

From the data it may be observed that the total enrolment in higher education has increased from 15.48 million in 2004-05 to 18.62 million in 2007-08. Similarly the Gross Enrolment Ratio also increased from 14.19 percent to 17.21 percent during the same period. However, the data reveals that there are significant variations in Gross Enrolment Ratio in Higher Education in terms of different social groups. While the Gross Enrolment Ratio among Scheduled Tribes decreased from 8.44 percent in 2004-05 to 7.67 percent in 2007-08, Gross Enrolment Ratio with respect to others category increased from 22.52 percent to 26.64 percent, that of OBC's increased from 11.48 percent to 14.72 percent and that of Scheduled Caste increased from 8.72 percent to 11.54 percent during the corresponding periods. It is also observed that there are significant differences in the Gross Enrolment Ratio in Higher Education with respect to Muslims and Non-Muslims. The Gross Enrolment Ratio among Muslims increased from a mere 8.5 percent in 2004-05 to 9.51 percent in 2007-08, the Gross Enrolment Ratio among non-Muslims increased from 15.1 percent to 18.54 percent during the same period. Further, significant Rural-Urban divide is also found in terms Gross Enrolment Ratio in Higher Education in India. While the Gross Enrolment Ratio among rural students increased from 8.42 percent in 2004-05 to 11.06 percent in 2007-08, the Gross Enrolment Ratio among Urban students increased from 16.18 percent to 19.03 percent during the same period. From the above analysis, it may be concluded that there are significant differences in Gross Enrolment Ratio among different social groups as well as between the rural and urban areas. This calls for more vigorous measures



to achieve more equitable and more inclusive growth in higher education in India.

Conclusions and Suggestions

- The expansion in the number of institutions of higher education and their intake capacity has not been able to ensure simultaneous sustenance of quality. There is a severe shortage of well qualified faculty, teaching facilities and proper infrastructure. As such, the quality parameters associated with teaching and research needs sustained attention and policy focus by the government.
- The access to higher education is not only limited but also varies across different socio-economic groups. In order to increase the access to higher education there is need for sustained efforts both by the government and private agencies.
- In order to achieve the objectives of inclusive growth in higher education, efforts should be made to increase Gross Enrolment Ratio among the disadvantaged groups, notably the Muslims and Scheduled Tribes. As such, the government should provide additional facilities to the marginalized sections of the society.
- Efforts are also needed to bridge the gap between the rural and urban areas in terms of growth in higher education.
- Issues relating to quality and excellence in higher education should be addressed with adequate regulatory mechanisms. There is need for special initiatives towards strengthening quality institutions in higher education.
- Finally, the major goals of National Policy on Education such as greater access, equal access, quality and excellence etc. in education are to be achieved to transform India into a developed country with quality human resources.

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