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## PROGRESS OF HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM IN INDIA: ITS CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

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### ABSTRACT

*The Indian education system has to pass many ups and downs since the early ages. The vast changes and development have mainly occurred during the pre – independence era or British era. Some of which contribution are till now continuing in the present education system. After the downfall of Muslim rule, Britisher came to India, and established the east India Company but soon the region of the government reached the hands of the British parliament. Britisher ruled India for about 150 years. The need to enhance the employability of graduates is presenting entry points for collaboration in enterprise education and entrepreneurship, links with industry, research skills and the wide range of transferable skills, including English. The emerging interest in Indian higher education institutions in the vocational skills market provides areas for potential engagement with international partners. Higher educational institutes need to improve quality and reputation. There should be a good infrastructure of colleges and universities which may attract the students. Government must promote collaboration between Indian higher education institutes and top International institutes and also generates linkage between national research laboratories and research centers of top institutions for better quality and collaborative research.*

**KEY WORDS:** *Education, Enrolment and Institutions, social change, higher education*

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### 1. INTRODUCTION

India has a very rich history dating back several millenniums. The system of education in ancient India served as an effective instrument for the transfer of oral and written tradition from one generation to another. The socio-historical journey of higher education in India has evolved through different periods, ancient, medieval, colonial, post-independence and contemporary. In this journey, a system of English education takes a position in higher institutions of learning. The institutions of higher learning are considered the most important agency of social change, social transformation, and entire development of the country. (Moonis Raza 1991)

The Indian education system has to pass many ups and downs since the early ages. The vast changes and development have mainly occurred during the pre – independence era or British era. Some of which contribution are till now continuing in the present education system. After the downfall of Muslim rule, Britisher came to India, and established the east India Company but soon the region of the government reached the hands of the British parliament. Britisher ruled India for about 150 years. During this period western science and literature

made good progress through English medium. By this time traders of east India Company spread their religion through Christian missionaries. Modern system of education was also developed with effort of Britisher.

The present system of education was introduced and founded by the British in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, by the recommendations of Macaulay. It has western style and content. The British government did not recognize the traditional structures and so they have declined. It is said that even Gandhi described the traditional educational system as a beautiful tree which was destroyed during the British rule. From at least the 5<sup>th</sup> century CE, India has been home to institutions of higher education. In 1857 three universities were established in three metropolitan cities, Bombay (now Mumbai), Calcutta (now Kolkata) and Madras (now Chennai) following Oxford or Cambridge as models. Another university was established in 1887 in Allahabad. These universities imparted education in the liberal arts and sciences. The main objective was to prepare people for careers in the civil service, legal profession and in medicine. The need for technical education was also felt by the British, who established the first industrial school attached to the Gun Carriage Factory in

Guindy, Chennai, in 1842. The first medical college of Kerala was started at Calicut, in 1942-43, during World War II. As there was a shortage of doctors to serve the military, the British Government opened a branch of Madras Medical College in Malabar, which was under Madras Presidency then.

## 2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Ahmad Sheikh (2017) the world has realized that the economic success of the states is directly determined by their education systems. Education is a Nation's Strength. A developed nation is inevitably an educated nation. Indian higher education system is the third largest in the world, next to the United States and China. Since independence, India as a developing nation is contentiously progressing in the education field. Although there have been lot of challenges to higher education system of India but equally have lot of opportunities to overcome these challenges and to make higher education system much better. India need well skilled and highly educated people who can drive our economy forward. India provides highly skilled people to other countries therefore; it is very easy for India to transfer our country from a developing nation to a developed nation. The current study aims to highlight the challenges and to point out the opportunities in higher education system in India. Sharma (2015) Higher education system plays an important role for the country's overall development which includes industrial, social, economic etc. Indian higher education system is third largest in the world. The role of Indian higher educational institutes such as colleges and universities in the present time is to provide quality based education in the field of education, research etc to empower youth for self sustainability. This

paper includes the key challenges that India is currently facing in higher education and also includes some initiatives taken by the government to meet those challenges.

## 3. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To analyse the higher educational institutes in India during Pre and Post- independence.
2. To analyse the Enrolment across Higher education in India.
3. To offer policy suggestions to improving the Higher education system in India.

## 4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study is based on secondary data collected from various sources like report and Compiled from "Selected Education Statistics" and "Statistics on Higher and Technical Education" of various years 2000-01 to 2015-16. The statistical tools used like Percentage, Average, CV and CAGR.

## 5. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### 5.1 The Higher educational institutions and Enrolment in India.

In pre-independence era, access to higher education was very limited. From the year 1883 till the independence the number of colleges and number of universities in India were not only inadequate but in few hundreds and subsequently the enrolment of the students were also found to be low. (Table 3.1) After independence, the education became the responsibility of the states and the Central Government coordinated the technical and higher education by specifying the standards.

**Table 1: State of Higher Education during pre-independence era**

Year	1883	1947
No of Universities	3	20
No of colleges	139	591
Student Enrolment	16088	228881

Source: <http://www.education.nic.in/cd50years/n/2j/3j/2j3j0201.htm#1of4Dated31/8/2011xiii>

When India achieved independence in 1947, it had 500 colleges affiliated to 20 universities and later in 1950, it had 578 colleges affiliated to 27 universities. Since then, the number of colleges and its affiliated universities has increased rapidly to meet the rising demand for higher education. It now boasts as one of the largest higher education systems. Table 3.2 provides the growth of higher education institutions in India since 2000. The total higher educational institutions in India during the year 2000 stood at 10152. Out of these, the general degree colleges were 7929 and the remaining colleges were imparting professional education. Over the years, the

degree colleges have gradually increased with CAGR of 10.48 per cent, whereas the professional colleges in India have increased with CAGR of 11.07 per cent. The number of universities regulating these colleges has also seen tremendous growth. During the year 2015-16, the total universities in India stood at 799 as against 254 in 2000-01 with a CAGR of 7.46 per cent. The total general degree colleges during 2015-16 stood at 39071 and number of professional colleges were 11923. Co-efficient of Variation reveals that there is consistent growth in India in terms of number of universities, general degree and professional colleges.

**Table 2: Higher educational institutes in India during post-independence**

Years	Universities	Degree Colleges	Professional Colleges	Total higher educational Institutes
2000-01	254	7929	2223	10152
2001-02	272	8737	2409	11146
2002-03	304	9166	2610	11776
2003-04	304	9427	2751	12178
2004-05	343	10377	3201	13578
2005-06	350	11698	5284	16982
2006-07	371	11458	8357	19815
2007-08	406	13381	9718	23099
2008-09	440	15852	12030	27882
2009-10	436	20970	10239	31209
2010-11	621	32974	11139	44113
2011-12	642	34908	11356	46264
2012-13	667	35525	11565	47090
2013-14	723	36634	11664	48298
2014-15	760	38498	12276	50774
2015-16	799	39071	11923	50994
<b>CAGR*</b>	<b>7.43</b>	<b>10.48</b>	<b>11.07</b>	<b>10.61</b>
<b>CV**</b>	<b>39.22</b>	<b>60.06</b>	<b>51.43</b>	<b>55.76</b>

Note: \*refers to Compound Annual Growth Rate; \*\* refers to Co-efficient of Variation

Source: Compiled from "Selected Education Statistics" and "Statistics on Higher and Technical Education" of various years

During the year 1950-51, the total enrolment across higher education in India stood at 396138, of which only 11.3 per cent were females. The enrolment increased gradually over the years and stood at 8626332 in 2000-01. The share of female enrolment in India also increased and stood at 36.89 per cent during this year. During the period 2000-01 to 2015-16, the enrolment in India grew at CAGR of 9.07 per cent. Across gender, it is revealed that the rate of growth in female enrolment (10.62 per cent) is marginally high when compared to the rate of growth in male enrolment (7.98 per cent). There is consistent growth in the enrolment across higher education in India during this period as witnessed by the values of Co-efficient of Variation. It is relatively higher across female

enrolment as compared to male enrolment. Further during this period, there is gradual decline in share of male enrolment from 63.11 per cent in 2000-01 to that of 53.77 per cent in 2015-16. On the other hand, the share of female enrolment has seen considerable increase from 36.89 percent to that of 46.23 per cent during the same period. With this improvement, the Gender Parity Index with regard to enrolment of higher education has shown noteworthy improvement. It has risen from 0.58 to 0.86 during the same respective period. The share of male enrolment to the total enrolment is higher when compared to share of female enrolment to the total. On an average, the share of male and female enrolment to the total stood in the ratio of 59:41 during this respective period.

**Table 3: Enrolment across Higher education in India**

Years	Total Enrolment	Male Enrolment		Female Enrolment		GPI*
		Number	% to total	Number	% to total	
2000-01	8626332	5443829	63.11	3182503	36.89	0.58
2001-02	9541826	5795417	60.74	3746409	39.26	0.65
2002-03	10716558	6681558	62.35	4035000	37.65	0.60
2003-04	11200584	7044205	62.89	4156379	37.11	0.59
2004-05	13032186	8191957	62.86	4840229	37.14	0.59
2005-06	14323566	8831748	61.66	5491818	38.34	0.62
2006-07	15552519	9593315	61.68	5959204	38.32	0.62
2007-08	17211516	10573890	61.43	6637626	38.57	0.63
2008-09	18500325	11227810	60.69	7272515	39.31	0.65
2009-10	20740740	12444600	60.00	8296140	40.00	0.67
2010-11	27499749	15466559	56.24	12033190	43.76	0.78
2011-12	28562693	15874800	55.58	12687893	44.42	0.80
2012-13	30152417	16617294	55.11	13535123	44.89	0.81
2013-14	32336234	17495394	54.10	14840840	45.90	0.85
2014-15	34211637	18488619	54.04	15723018	45.96	0.85
2015-16	34584781	18594723	53.77	15990058	46.23	0.86
CAGR	9.07	7.98		10.62		
CV	45.76	39.89		53.97		

Note: \* refers to Gender Parity Index which is calculated by dividing female with male.

Source: Compiled from "Selected Education Statistics" and "Statistics on Higher and Technical Education" of various years

Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) shows the extent of participation of respective age-group of population at a given level of education. It is a very important indicator for measuring the rates to Access to Education. GER is the ratio of the number of persons in the respective age group enrolled to that of the total number of persons in that respective age group. Table 3.4 provides the trend of gender-wise GER across higher education in India. It reveals that during the year 2001-02, there was very low rate of participation across higher education in India. The overall GER, irrespective of gender

stood at 8.1 per cent in India. Across gender, the GER of females was just 6.7 per cent as against 9.3 per cent GER across males. Over the years, there was gradual improvement in the rate of participation across higher education. The overall GER improved to 24.5 per cent in the year 2015-16. The rate of GER across females increased to 23.5 per cent as against 25.4 percent GER across males. Along with this improvement, the Gender Parity Index with regard to GER across higher education also registered increase from 0.72 in 2001-02 to that of 0.93 in 2015-16.

**Table 4: Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) across Higher education in India**

Year	Male	Female	Total	GPI
2001-02	9.3	6.7	8.1	0.72
2002-03	10.3	7.5	9.0	0.73
2003-04	10.6	7.7	9.2	0.73
2004-05	11.6	8.2	10.0	0.71
2005-06	13.5	9.4	11.6	0.70
2006-07	14.5	10.0	12.4	0.69
2007-08	15.2	10.7	13.1	0.70
2008-09	15.8	11.4	13.7	0.72
2009-10	17.1	12.7	15.0	0.74
2010-11	20.8	17.9	19.4	0.86
2011-12	21.6	18.9	20.4	0.88
2012-13	22.7	20.1	21.5	0.89
2013-14	23.9	22.0	23.0	0.92
2014-15	25.3	23.2	24.3	0.92
2015-16	25.4	23.5	24.5	0.93

Source: Compiled from "Selected Education Statistics" and "Statistics on Higher and Technical Education" of various years

## 5.2 Challenges and Opportunities in Higher Education

It is our 69th year of independence still our education system has not been developed fully. We are not able to list a single university in top 100 universities of the world. Various governments changed during these six decades. They tried to boost the education system and implemented various education policies but they were not sufficient to put an example for the universe. UGC is continuously working and focusing on quality education in higher education sector. Still we are facing lot of problems and challenges in our education system. Some of the basic challenges in higher education system in India are discussed below: **Enrolment** The gross enrolment ratio of Indian in higher education is low as compared to the developed country. **Equity** There is no equity in gender enrolment ratio among different sectors of the society. **Infrastructure** Poor infrastructure is another challenge to the higher education system of India. Particularly the institutes run by the public sector suffer from poor physical facilities and infrastructure. **Faculty** the faculty shortage and the inability of the state educational system to attract and retain well qualified teachers have been posing challenges to quality education in India.

Indian higher education system is growing very fast irrespective of various challenges but there is no reason that these Challenges cannot be overcome. With the help of new-age learning tools, it is easy for country like India to overcome these problems and bring a paradigm shift in the country's higher education sector. With such a vibrant country with huge population properly educated, the possibilities are endless. If knowledge is imparted using advanced digital teaching and learning tools, and society is made aware of where we are currently lagging behind, our country can easily emerge as one of the most developed nations in the world.

The need to enhance the employability of graduates is presenting entry points for collaboration in enterprise education and entrepreneurship, links with industry, research skills and the wide range of transferable skills, including English. The emerging interest in Indian higher education institutions in the vocational skills market provides areas for potential engagement with international partners. There is a need to build stronger relationships and increase mutual understanding in higher education by increasing support and participation in platforms (conferences, workshops, seminars) which enable debate and dialogue with other countries of the world (British Council, 2014).

## 6. SUGGESTIONS AND CONCLUSION

There is a need to implement innovative and transformational approach from primary to higher education level to make Indian educational system globally more relevant and competitive. Higher educational institutes need to improve quality and reputation. There should be a good infrastructure of colleges and universities which may attract the students. Government must promote collaboration between Indian higher education institutes and top International institutes and also generates linkage between national research laboratories and research centers of top institutions for better quality and collaborative research.

Education is a process by which a person's body, mind and character are formed and strengthened. It is bringing of head, heart and mind together and thus enabling a person to develop an all round personality identifying the best in him or her. Higher education in India has expanded very rapidly in the last six decades after independence yet it is not equally accessible to all. India is today one of the fastest developing countries of the world with the annual growth rate going above 9%. India is a country of huge human resource potential, to utilize this potential properly is the issue which needed to discuss. Opportunities are available but how to get benefits from these opportunities and how to make them accessible to others is the matter of concern. In order to sustain that rate of growth, there is need to increase the number of institutes and also the quality of higher education in India. To reach and achieve the future requirements there is an urgent need to relook at the Financial Resources, Access and Equity, Quality Standards, Relevance, infrastructure and at the end the Responsiveness.

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