
Access to Higher Education: Indian Scenario

Dr. Monika Sharma

Independent Researcher, Shimla, Himachal Pradesh

Abstract

Indian Higher Education system is one of the largest in the world. It has made a significant contribution not only to the economic development of the country but also to social progress and polity in this democratic state. In spite of considerable expansion even today the total number of students enrolled in higher education is much below the average of developed countries. In the present scenario the globalized era has necessitated the inculcation of competitiveness in the education system. In order to meet the everyday challenges of changing world with demands for advanced knowledge and technologies both quantity and quality should be the focus of higher education. Access, equity, accountability and quality still remain guiding principles, while planning for higher education development in India. This paper tries to find the current status of Higher Education in India. It further tries to analyze the access & growth of Higher Education in terms of Gross Enrolment Ratio & Gender Parity Index. The study revealed that India is having a very low GER (24.3%) as compared to other developed countries. Further it is found that SC (19.1%) & ST (13.7%) have considerably low gross enrolment ratio as compared to all categories (24.3%) taken together. Moreover female were found to have lesser GER in higher education as compared to males in all the three categories taken viz. SC ST & all categories. Moreover the Gender Parity Index scenario in India reveals a GPI of 0.92 in India. Therefore India is still far from achieving Gender Parity as GPI (0.92) in India is quite lower than the UNESCO index (0.97- 1.03) given for achievement of Gender Parity.

Access to Higher Education: Indian Scenario

Indian Higher Education system is one of the largest in the world. It has made a significant contribution not only to the economic development of the country but also to social progress and polity in this democratic state. No doubt Indian Higher Education has gone through a tremendous increase in the number of Universities/University level Institutions & Colleges since Independence. The number of Universities has increased 38 times from 20 in 1950 to 760 in 2014. There were only 20 universities and 500 colleges enrolling 1 million students at the time India got independence. Today it has increased to 760 universities, 38,498 colleges and 12276 other stand alone institutions with an enrolment of 34.21 million as per All India Survey of Higher Education (2014-15). In spite of considerable expansion even today the total number of students enrolled in higher education is much below the average enrolment of developed countries. In the present scenario the globalized era has necessitated the inculcation of competitiveness in the education system. According to Aneja, N. (2015), the key challenges the higher education system in India facing today include quality assurance, credit transfer systems, movement between higher education and vocational skills streams and teacher training. In order to meet the everyday challenges of changing world with demands for advanced knowledge and technologies both quantity and quality should be the focus of higher education. Access, equity, accountability and quality still remain guiding principles, while planning for higher education development in India.

Government of India aimed at creating knowledgeable society, expansion of intensifying excellence and achieving equal access to quality higher education in the latest 12th five year plan (2012-17). But there are still millions of youngsters who are far off to get an access to the higher education in India. This paper deals with access to higher education in India, the very first step to meet higher education challenges today.

Objective of the Study

1. To study the current status & growth of Higher education in India.
2. To analyze the access to higher education in India in terms of Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) and Gender Parity Index (GPI).

Research Methodology

The present study attempts to find the present status of Higher Education in India. It further tries to analyze the access & growth of Higher Education in terms of Gross Enrolment Ratio & Gender Parity Index.

The researcher used descriptive research method for the study. Secondary sources were explored for collecting relevant data of the study. The information has been collected with the help of Research Articles, Research Journals, E-Journals, Reports of All India Surveys of Higher Education & online education world data banks etc.

Status and Growth of Higher Education

In India Higher Education is a shared responsibility of the Centre and the States. The coordination and determination of standards in various Universities & Colleges is maintained &

ensured by the University Grants Commission (UGC) the apex regulatory body for higher education and other statutory regulatory bodies.

Higher education in India is mainly provided through various institutions, viz. central, state, private, deemed universities & Institutions of National Importance. Institutions of National Importance predominantly consist of the National Institutes of Technology, Indian Institutes of Technology and eminent medical colleges as well as the All India Institute of Medical Sciences. AISHE (2014-15) has classified the higher education institutions in India in three broad categories. Firstly, Universities are institutions that under the Act of Parliament or State legislature are empowered to award degrees. Secondly, colleges that are affiliated/recognized with universities and are not empowered to award degrees in their own names. Thirdly, stand alone institutions that run diploma level programmes and are not empowered to provide degrees. These includes Polytechnics, PG Diploma in management institutes recognized by AICTE, DIETS recognized by NCTE, Nursing institutes recognized by Nursing Council and that institutes which are directly under the control of different central Ministries.

As per AISHE (2014-15) there are 760 universities including 43 central, 316 state public, 181 state private, 32 deemed government, 11 deemed government aided, 79 private deemed universities & 75 Institutes of National Importance. These also includes 1 central, 13 state public and 1 state private open universities. Along with universities there are 38498 colleges & 12276 stand alone institutions providing higher education to 34.2 million students in the country. The enrolment of 34.2 million in higher constitutes 18.5 million boys and 15.7 million girls. Further the girls constitute 45.5% of the total enrolment. Table-1 shows the no. of higher education institutions and enrolment in higher education as per various All India Surveys of Higher education. Table-1 shows the number of Higher Education Institutions & Enrolment as per various All India Surveys of Higher Education.

Table-1
Number of Higher Education Institution & Enrolment

No. of Institutions/ Enrolment	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
Universities	621	642	667	723	760
Colleges	32974	34852	35525	36634	38498
Stand Alone Institutions	11095	11126	11565	11664	12276
Enrolment in Millions	27.5	29.184	30.152	32.336	34.212

Source: All India Survey on Higher Education (2010-11), (2011-12), (2012-13), (2013-14) & (2014-15)

As it is clear from the Table-1, that in AISHE (2010-11) the no. of universities were 621. In AISHE (2011-12) the number raised to 642. It further raised to 667 and 723 in AISHE

(2012-13 & 2013-14) respectively. In the latest survey number of universities raised to 760. There is an annual increase in number of universities is 3.38%, 3.89%, 8.4%, 5.12% respectively.

According to National Knowledge Commission (NKC) report 2009 the higher education system needs a massive expansion of opportunities. It has recommended to raise the number of universities to 1500 nationwide, so as to attain a gross enrolment ratio of at least 15 per cent by 2015. An perusal of data in Table-2 reveals that the higher education system is far off to achieve the target set by NKC.

Gross enrolment ratio (GER) in Higher Education

In India Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in Higher education is calculated for 18-23 years age group. As per latest AISHE Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in Higher education in India is 24.3%. GER for male population is 25.3% while it is 23.2% for females. Table-2 presents the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) found in various AISHE.

Table-2

Gross enrolment Ratio (GER) in Higher Education (18-23 years)

Source: All India Survey on Higher Education (2010-11), (2011-12), (2012-13), (2013-14) &

		2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
All Categories	Male	20.8	22.1	22.7	23.9	25.3
	Female	17.9	19.4	20.1	22.0	23.2
	Total	19.4	20.8	21.5	23.0	24.3
SC	Male	14.6	15.8	16.0	17.7	20.0
	Female	12.3	13.9	14.2	16.4	18.2
	Total	13.5	14.9	15.1	17.1	19.1
ST	Male	12.9	12.4	12.4	12.5	15.2
	Female	9.5	9.7	9.7	10.2	12.3
	Total	11.2	11.0	11.0	11.3	13.7

(2014-15)

Figure-1 shows clearly the disparity in enrolment of SC, ST & All categories. It is evident from the figure-1 that SC (19.1%) & ST (13.7%) have considerably low gross enrolment ratio as compared to all categories (24.3%). Moreover female were found to have lesser GER in higher education as compared to males in all the three categories taken viz. SC ST & all categories.

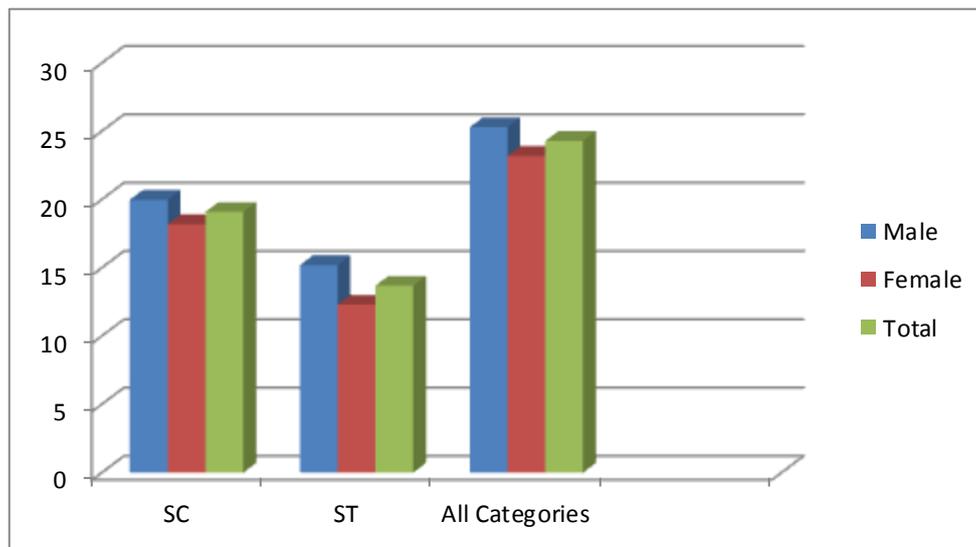


Figure:1 Gross Enrolment Ratio as per AISHE 2014-15

As per World Bank Data GER of India is far less than the world GER of 32.88% (2013). Further according to UIS (2013) data Republic of Korea has a GER of 95.35%. While the GER of India, China, Japan, USA and Australia is 23.89, 30.16, 62.41, 88.81 & 86.55% respectively. A comparison of GER of India with other countries as per UIS (2013) data is given in Figure-2.

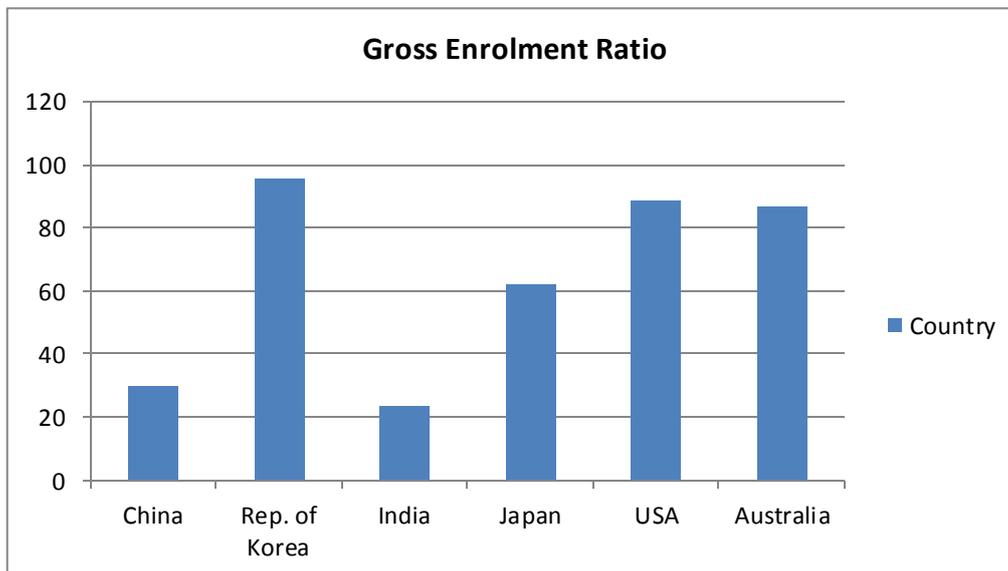


Figure-2: Gross Enrolment Ratio Data as per UIS (2013)

Gender Parity Index

The Gender Parity Index (GPI) is a socioeconomic index which measures the relative access to education of males and females. GPI for higher education is calculated as the quotient of the number of females by the number of males enrolled in tertiary education. It aims at

achieving equal participation for boys & girls in education. Gender equality is understood not only as the right to gain access and participate in education but also as to benefit from gender-sensitive and gender-responsive educational environments. Therefore achieving gender parity is understood as the first step towards gender equality. A GPI of 1 shows that there is no difference in the indicators for girls and boys. UNESCO has defined a Gender Parity Index (GPI) between 0.97 and 1.03 as the achievement of Gender Parity. Table-3 shows the Gender Parity Index found in various All India Surveys of Higher Education.

Table-3
Gender Parity Index in Higher Education (18-23 years)

	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
All Categories	0.86	0.88	0.89	0.92	0.92
SC	0.84	0.88	0.89	0.92	0.91
ST	0.74	0.78	0.79	0.81	0.81

Table-3 indicates an increase in Gender Parity Index from 2010-11 to 2014-15 for SC, ST as well as all categories. But GPI (0.92) for India is still less than the UNESCO index (0.97- 1.03) given for achievement of Gender Parity. Moreover a global trend of higher GPI toward girls is found today as the rate of increase of girls enrolment is higher than the boys. According to Millennium Development Goal Indicators (MDG) data for the year 2013 India has a lower value of GPI (0.92) as compared to United States (1.37), United Kingdom (1.35), China (1.15), Australia (1.37), Pakistan (0.98), Sri Lanka (1.60) & many others. A comparison of GPI of various countries as per UIS (2011) data is given in figure-3.

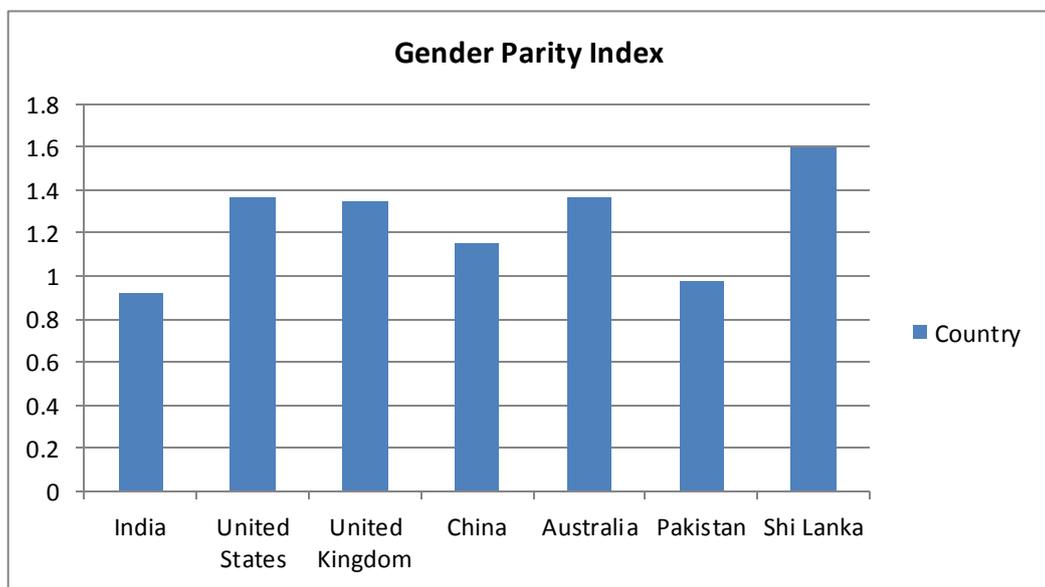


Figure-3: Gender Parity Index Data as per MDG Indicators (2013)

It is evident that from the figure-3 that India has yet to achieve Gender Parity. Moreover global trend of higher GPI toward women is not an Indian phenomenon.

Discussion & Interpretations

National Knowledge Commission (NKC) recognized meaningful reform in the higher education sector, with a long-term perspective. According to NKC (2009) the objectives of reforms in our higher education system must be expansion, excellence and inclusion. Higher education system needs a massive expansion of opportunities, to around 1500 universities nationwide till 2015. Further it would enable India to attain a Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) of at least 15 per cent by the year 2015. The realization of these objectives, combined with access, would not only develop the skills and competence we need for the nation but would also transform India into a knowledgeable economy and society. It is evident that in spite of the efforts done to expand the higher education, India is far off to achieve the target of 1500 universities by 2015. As it is clear the maximum annually increase in number of universities has been found to be 8.4%. Achieving the target by 2015 requires 97% increase in number of universities in the year 2015-16.

The other important parameter of access to higher education is Gross Enrolment Ratio. It is clearly evident that India is having a very low GER (24.3%) as compared to other developed countries. Further it is observed that SC (19.1%) & ST (13.7%) have considerably low gross enrolment ratio as compared to all categories (24.3%) taken together. Moreover female were found to have lesser GER in higher education as compared to males in all the three categories taken viz. SC ST & all categories.

Lastly the Gender Parity Index scenario in India reveals a GPI of 0.92 in India. Therefore India is still far from achieving Gender Parity as GPI (0.92) in India is quite lower than the UNESCO index (0.97- 1.03) given for achievement of Gender Parity.

Conclusions & Recommendations

The key challenge is to find a path to achieve the divergent goals for the growth of higher education in India. In spite of considerable progress made till 2014, GER of 24.3% (2014) has been attained in India which is much below the world average of 32.88 % (2013). Moreover due to the government's consistent efforts there is considerable growth in the number of higher education institutions and enrolment, yet several challenges viz. low and inequitable access, inadequate infrastructure, lack of quality faculty and little quality research, need to be dealt with. There are certain constraints and opportunities which need to be identified so that strategies could be evolved not only for addressing them but also to influence the opportunities. It is to be kept in mind that the three challenges of expansion, equity and excellence cannot be addressed in isolation from each another. Future expansion should be carefully planned so as to correct regional and social imbalances. We need to strengthen institutions to improve standards and reach international level of excellence. *The private sector can play a significant role in the achieving these goals via creation of knowledge associations, research and innovation hubs and corporate-backed institutions. The government must encourage Public Private Partnerships in higher education and also involve the industry actively through comprehensive Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) activities.*

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