



Status of Women in Higher Education in India

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Abstract:

Education is the empowerment and the freedom for excellence, None can deny that in the life of an individual as well as society education has a vital role. India has witnessed a very remarkable development in education system in the last six decades. The very first commission for education, University Education Commission Set up by the Government of free India in 1948 placed immense importance on the education of women. Higher education was recognized as a powerful instrument of socioeconomic advancement of the society in general and a vehicle for upward social mobility for deprived sections in particular. Now, India has third largest higher education system of the World. The present scenario witnesses that the number of women in India in higher education is increasing slowly. The necessity, the factors responsible for women participation in higher education and the suggestions for promoting women participation in Higher education are discussed in this paper.

Key words : Higher education, Women, Education Commission, Women Education.

Introduction:

“To educate your women first and leave them to themselves, they will tell you what reforms are necessary” Swami Vivekananda. In any society the indicators of development largely rest on women education. When it comes to holistic and enduring development, it is only women’s education that counts. If includes equitable and increased access to technical and vocational and training, higher education and research with due attention to quality assurance. In India Women participation in higher education is now increasing but the rate increase is slow.

Higher Education:

Higher education means the education beyond the level of secondary education. It is often assumed that education imparted by the colleges or universities are higher education. But in fact higher educational institutions include Professional Schools in the field of Law, Theology, Medicine, Business, Music and Art. It also includes other institutions like Teachers’ Training School and Technological Institutions. Thus in general the term ‘Higher Education’ refers the education at the degree level and above.

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Objective:

The objective of the current study –

- Place of women in higher education.
- Necessity of higher Education for women
- Main factors influencing women in completing higher education.
- Suggestions for promoting women participation in higher education.

National Commission for women:

The national commission for women (NCW), a statutory body set up in 1992, safeguards the rights and interests of women.

Background of Higher Education in India:

In India Higher Education had its roots in early time as well. In the 5th century BC Taxila was the earliest recorded centre of higher education in India although there is a debate with its status – whether it was university or not. In the modern sense of the term ‘University’ the Nalanda University was the oldest University system of education in the World. With the establishment of the British Raj in India, the western education became in-grained into Indian society. But in the pre-independence era there was very limited access to Higher Education. The stretch from 1883 to the independence showcased a sorry picture of higher education. The enrolment of students as well as the number of colleges were found to be very low. The following table will show the

Picture of Higher Education in India from pre-independence to post independence.

Year	1883	1928	1947	1961-62
No. of Colleges	139	307	591	2,282
No. of Enrolment	16,088	90,677	2,28,881	11,77,245

Source : <http://www.education.nic.in/cd50years/n/2j/2J3J0201.htm>; 1 of 4 Dated 31/8/2011

Analysis :

Figure 1 Number of College in India

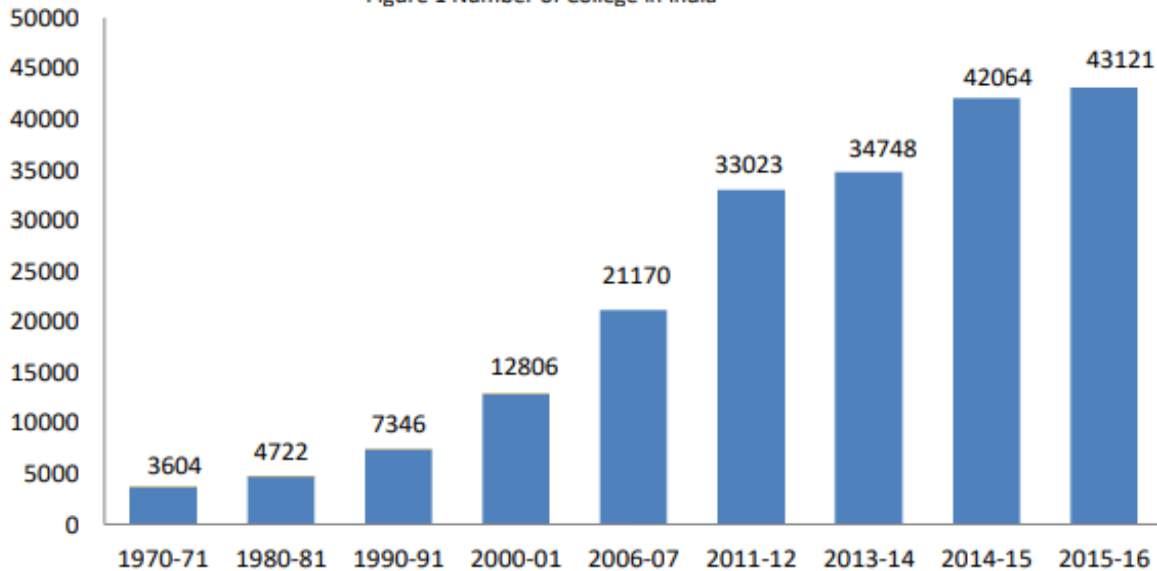
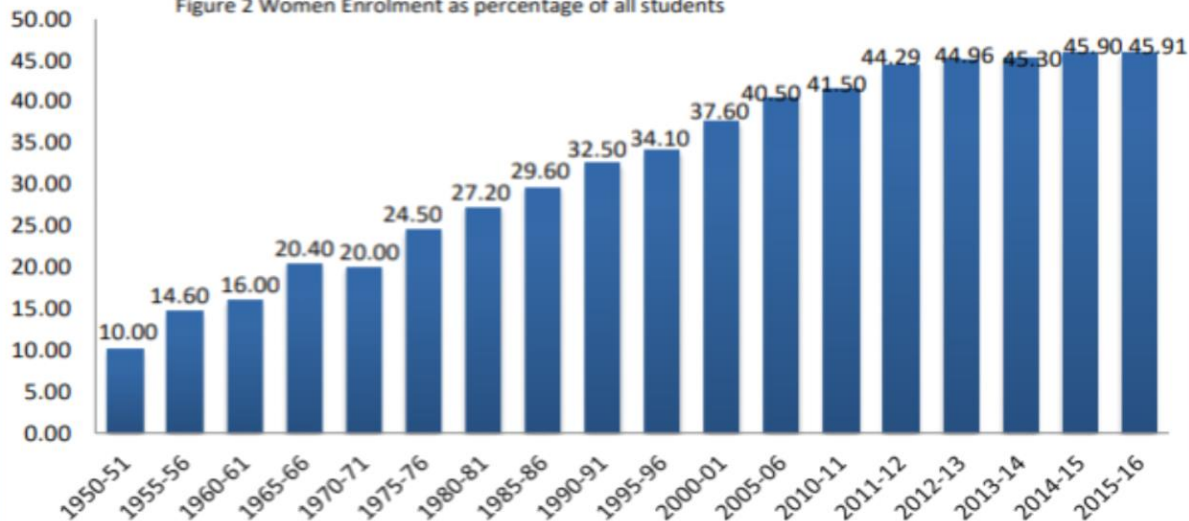


Figure 2 Women Enrolment as percentage of all students



Percentage of women population susceptible (18-23 years of age) for higher education in 2011-12 was 47.74 which increases to 48.21 in 2015-16, the states having percentage of women enrolment less than national value are Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Delhi, Gujarat, Haryana, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, Rajasthan, Tripura and West Bengal. It is also to be mentioned that out of women HEIs about 5% are professional (medical, agriculture, law, technical and veterinary) and about 67% are general education in India for the year 2015-16.

Table:1 showing the ranks of the percentage of women enrolment for the years 2011 to 2016.

STATE	REW ₁₁	REW ₁₂	REW ₁₃	REW ₁₄	REW ₁₅
Andhra Pradesh	17	22	24	21	21
Assam	5	4	5	6	6
Bihar	24	24	23	25	24
Chandigarh	2	14	4	3	3
Chhattisgarh	8	11	13	8	8
Delhi	15	12	12	19	19
Goa	3	2	2	4	4
Gujarat	23	23	22	24	25
Haryana	16	19	21	16	16
Himachal Pradesh	6	5	7	2	2
Jammu and Kashmir	4	3	3	5	5
Jharkhand	13	6	15	14	14
Karnataka	11	10	8	7	7
Kerala	1	1	1	1	1
Madhya Pradesh	25	26	25	23	23
Maharastra	22	21	19	22	22
Odisha	19	16	16	18	18
Puducherry	9	9	10	9	9
Punjab	20	17	9	12	11
Rajasthan	26	25	26	20	20
Tamil Nadu	12	13	11	11	12
Telangana	14	15	17	15	15
Tripura	21	20	20	26	26
Uttar Pradesh	10	7	6	10	10
Uttaranchal	7	8	14	13	13
West Bengal	18	18	18	17	17

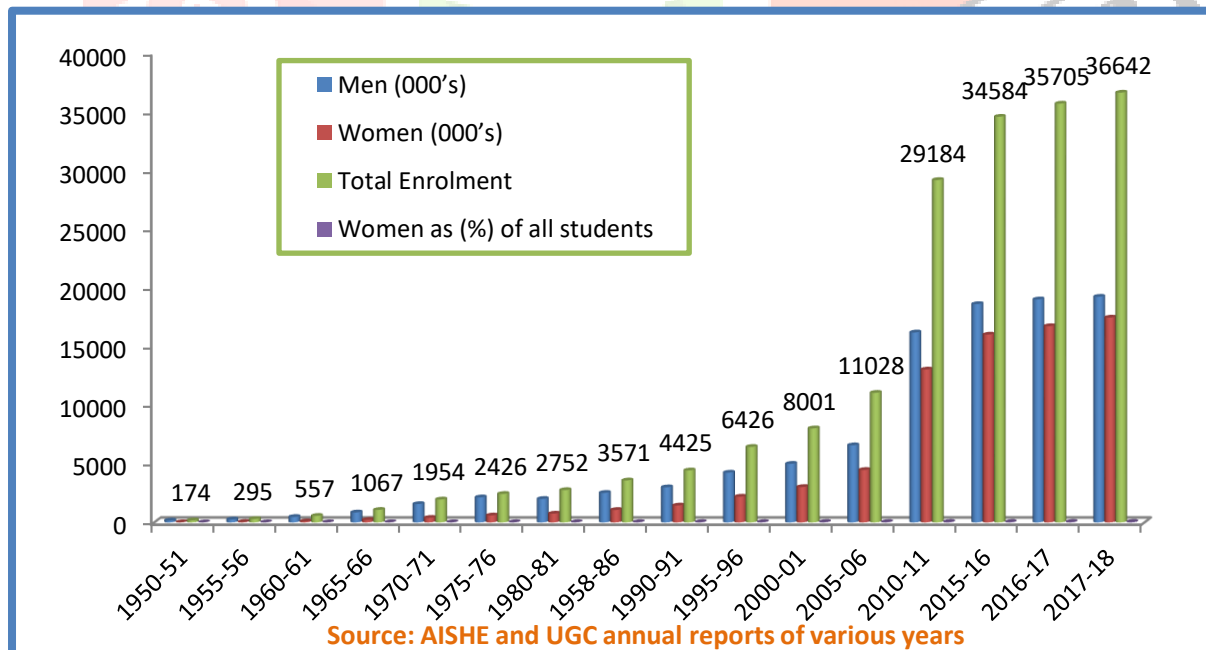
REW11 means rank corresponding to women enrolment in HEIs for the year 2011-12 etc.

Women's Enrolment in Higher Education in India

The past 70 years have witnessed significant – but not sufficient – enrolment of the female population in higher education. A closer analysis of higher education statistics reveals the different nature of the problem in different socio-cultural and economic contexts. In general, women's enrolments have improved and may even very close those of men. The following table 2 will show the picture of female students in higher education from 1950-51 to 2017-18.

Table 2 : Women Education in last 7 decades in India

Year	Men (000's)	Women (000's)	Total Enrolment	Women as (%) of all students
1950-51	157	17	174	10
1955-56	252	43	295	14.6
1960-61	468	89	557	16
1965-66	849	218	1067	20.4
1970-71	1563	391	1954	20
1975-76	2131	595	2426	24.5
1980-81	2003	749	2752	27.2
1958-86	2512	1059	3571	29.6
1990-91	2986	1439	4425	32.5
1995-96	4235	2191	6426	34.10
2000-01	4988	3012	8001	37.6
2005-06	6562	4466	11028	40.5
2010-11	16173	13010	29184	45
2015-16	18594	15990	34584	46
2016-17	18995	16710	35705	46.8
2017-18	19220	17442	36642	47.6

Women Education in last 7 decades in India

Place of women in Higher Education in India :

Women education was rooted in the times of the british supremacy in India. In 1854 the East India Company acknowledged women's education and employment. Initially this education was limited only to primary school level education and only the richer section of the society enjoyed this facility. Thus as it

was confined only for a small section of people in society so the literacy rate for women increased from 0.2% in 1882 to 6% only in 1947. It is very unfortunate to say that for centuries higher education for women has been neglected.

But in spite of this, it is fact that in post independence period the female literacy rate was 8.9%. Thus in 1958, the government of India appointed a national committee for the education of women. The committee submitted report in favor of women education. The recommendation of the committee on women education were gladly accepted by the Government of India.

There is a possibility of revolutionary change in India's higher education system and this is women participation. In some elite institutions we find that number of female students is more than male students and there is a possibility to increase this trend. It is strikingly clear that the number of males has far outnumbered that of females in education. One of the reasons for this is rampant sex selection and cultural factors. It is common feature that from the time of birth girls are discriminated in subtle and crude ways. Despite all these obstacles the number of women in colleges and universities is on the rise. Not only this, it is also found that in some most competitive higher educational institutions women are gaining entry without availing gender quota. This is undoubtedly credit for them.

Necessity Of Higher Education For Women:

Women consist of almost half of the population in India. They are the half of the human resources. But there is no denying the fact that women in our country have long been strongly prejudiced and as a result they have been determined equal socio-economic rights. This neglecting attitude towards women is prominent in many respects particularly in the field of education. Education plays a pivotal role in ushering socio-economic development in a country. In this journey women education plays the same role as that of men. But unfortunately women education has not been given its due credit.

There are two different views on the question of women participation in higher education – traditional and modern. The traditional view supports women's education to equip them to become better wives and mother. This view believes that women's present education is entirely irrelevant in their lives. The education that they are armed with is of little importance to them as it does not help them master their daily crisis. This view believes that modern educated women are neither happy nor contented nor socially useful. But modern attitude visualizes education as an instrument for women's equality and development.

Theoretically the need of higher education for both males and females is the same. Though male and female are equally important in strengthening the social fabric, it is women education in particular which is of more importance than that of the male. In this connection I may refer a statement of philosopher-president and noted educationist Dr. S. Radhakrishnan (1948). He says "there cannot be educated people without educated women. If general education has to be limited to men or women, the opportunity should be given to women. From them it would most surely be passed on to the next generation."

The University Grants Commission (UGC) report reveals that out of 169.75 lakh students enrolled in higher education in 2010-11, almost 70.49 lakh were women as compared to just about 47.08 lakh women enrolled in 2006-07.

Main Factors Influencing Women In Completing Higher Education:

There are different factors which are responsible for influencing women in completing higher education. Some of these are mentioned below.

- a) Above all, it is fact that outlook of modern society has been changed in many respects which helps women to complete their higher studies.
- b) As they are firm in their mission, so their performance is also remarkable.
- c) Educational institutions meant for girls attracted many conservative families to get admitted their wards in higher educational institutions.
- d) Expectation for education-based employment is very high amongst women.
- e) In some cases women students get inspiration from the teachers working in higher educational institutions.
- f) Increased number of higher educational institutions helped women to complete their higher studies.
- g) Most of the women are firm in their mission of success. So in education stream also they are strongly motivated to succeed.
- h) Now a day the tendency of prejudice against women has been reduced.
- i) There are many institutions which have the provision of hostel facilities for girls' students.
- j) There are some courses which provide scholarship facilities for women.

Suggestions for Promoting Women Participation in Higher Education:

- a) Above all, attitudes of the male oriented society must be changed. This will undoubtedly help in increasing women participation in higher education.
- b) Check sexual harassment within and outside institutions.
- c) Education policy has to be taken to facilitate women participation in higher education.
- d) Establish equal opportunity commissions for higher educational institutions.
- e) Establish higher educational institutions in rural and tribal areas.
- f) Establish more female educational institutions.
- g) Establish non-traditional curricular for women and extend state support for this.
- h) Establish post-secondary vocational training institutions for promoting the entry of women in higher education.
- i) Government should formulate and implement policies for stopping drop out of girl students in secondary and lower classes.
- j) Improve transport facilities for women students.

- k) In many cases early marriage leads to withdrawal of women from higher studies. This must be stopped.
- l) Increase hostel facilities for women students.
- m) Increase women representations in decision making bodies of higher educational institutions.
- n) Increase women teachers in co-educational institutions of higher education.
- o) Introduce attractive scholarships for both financially poor students and meritorious students to encourage women students in higher education.
- p) Introduce stipends, scholarships and fellowships for women studying in higher educational institutions.
- q) Make skill-oriented higher education.
- r) Provide Bank loan facilities for women students.
- s) Provide counseling for both family and person concerned at the secondary stage of education.

Conclusion:

Women have all the power and capacity as that of men. But they fail to manifest themselves for different reasons. In men dominated society the women get rare chance to express their voice and are not be allowed to leave the home for higher studies or work. We should have to change our thinking, our attitude towards women. We should have to think that women are not just reproduction. They have feeling, thinking and all these as the men have. They have all the capacities as that of men and thereby they can do all these as men, if not more. So their power and capacities must be recognized. It is only then women participation in higher education will be enhanced

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