



# STATUS OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN RURAL AREAS OF INDIA

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## ***Abstract***

Higher education is the backbone of the modern society. It has the power to transform human beings into human resociety it Along with primary and secondary education higher education is also an instrument to build future generation. In India majority of Ble higher educational institutions are urban centric. Even most of the higher educational institutions in rural India lack quality. As a result of that rural population are deprived. Under certain circumstances it is seen that gross enrolment ratio is very poor in these rural areas. The situation is even worse for female population in regard to gross enrolment ratio. The paper highlights all these key issues and tries to find out the problems that the rural population is suffering in regard to education. Along with that the paper tries to find out possible remedies to overcome those barriers.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Education is one of the most powerful instruments for reducing poverty and inequality of society. Education is the key to enhance India's competitiveness in the global economy. Therefore ensuring access to quality education for all, in particular for the poor and rural population, is central to the economic and social development. The rapid expansion of higher education system has brought several pertinent issues related to the standards of its quality and equal availability of higher education facilities to all the categories of people of the society. India is a country with severe economic and social inequalities. There are some families with children rolling in wealth on one hand, while on the other, people strive of hunger. In India a large number of populations fall under middle class family and lower middle class families. At the same time lower economy class families also exist in large numbers. Now, when a large number of families and their youth are struggling hard to fulfill

their basic needs, they naturally have to compromise with the higher education specially the youth of rural and remote areas. Normally it is observed in India, higher education institutions are mostly located in cities, main towns etc.; where it is not possible for all the youth to stay away from their families as they may be the only bread earner of their families Apart from this poor communication & transportation system of the rural areas also hinders equal access of higher education. The most important problem in the higher education system in India is the lack of quality of the institutions in rural areas. The quantitative expansion is not adequate. The inequalities among the institution located in rural area and urban area are quite remarkable. The institutions of higher education located in rural and socio-economic backward areas are lacking in the implementation of best practices in higher education and quality. There are number of colleges located in remote, rural, backward and hilly areas, striving to achieve excellence. In these colleges the student's enrolment is from the socio-economic backward families. Most of the students are the first generation learners of higher education. More than 70% of the students are scholarship holders as they are belonging to socio- economic backward families. There are no criteria for admission in the college, any students seeking higher education; who has passed the last qualifying examination, can enroll his name. The colleges are bound to enroll them, because they were established for these students. They were established with the objectives to provide education to these economically, socially and educationally weaker section of the society. In the assessment and accreditation by NAAC, such colleges get poor grades only because of the high dropout rates. The high dropout rate of the students in such colleges is a most important problem, which is to be solved.

## **STATEMENT OF PROBLEM**

Equity is at the heart of a good educational system. We don't have equity. "Kapil Sibal. The Indian Higher Education system is characterized by a large rural-urban and gender divide. Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) in rural India is estimated to be about 7% while urban areas have a GER of about 23%. India's GER shows significant variability across regions. Though the current rural-urban disparity in access to higher education opportunities is trending towards continuous shrinking; however this disparity is still very clear. Through this study an attempt is made to highlight the status of higher education in rural areas as well as what challenges has been faced by the higher educational institution in rural areas.

## **OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY**

The study is conducted to the following objectives;

1. To determine the status of higher education in rural areas in india
2. II. To know the problems of higher education in rural areas.
3. To find out best possible remedies to cope out those problems.

## METHODOLOGY

In this paper the research is based on secondary data. The data is taken from different research reports, journals, websites and research papers. The research is based on the study of Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) of higher education in Urban and Rural areas of India.

## DISCUSSION AND RESULTS

The National Knowledge Commission chaired by Sam Pitroda has recommended setting up of 1500 universities in the country. This was done with the objective of extending the benefits of education to all the people of our country eligible for the same. The UGC in a report released in early part of 2010 has identified 374 districts of the country as educationally backward districts. This number as compared to the total nos. of 650 district of the country amounts to approximately 60% of the districts.

### EDUCATIONALLY BACKWARD DISTRICTS IN INDIA

Category	Nos
EBD with no Colleges	14
EBD with only one College	32
EBD with less than 10 Colleges	81
EBD with more than 100 Colleges	02

*Source: UGC Website, Early 2010.*

### RURAL - URBAN PATTERN OF GER & NER IN RESPECT OF MALE AND FEMALE IN INDIA

		GER	NER
		<b>Total</b>	12.59
<b>Total</b>	<b>Male</b>	14.42	11.75
	<b>Female</b>	10.57	8.45
	<b>Total</b>	7.51	6.24
<b>Rural</b>	<b>Male</b>	9.26	7.91
	<b>Female</b>	5.67	4.50
	<b>Total</b>	23.79	18.86
<b>Urban</b>	<b>Male</b>	24.77	19.49
	<b>Female</b>	22.56	18.08

*Source: UGC Website*

The rural urban divide continues as urban GER is about three times higher (23.79) than the rural (7.51). For women it is four times higher (22.56 for urban as compared to 5.67 for rural) whereas for urban men it is about twice and half higher than the rural men, the corresponding figures being 24.77 for urban and 9.28 for rural. Analysis of about 111 Universities and 3,492 colleges assessed by the NAAC indicates that the deficiencies in availability of human resources in terms of quantity and quality teachers and physical and other infrastructural facilities caused qualitative gaps between 'A' and 'C' grade Universities and colleges. The higher educational institute of rural areas are lacking behind in different aspects as compared to the institutes of urban areas which leads to lower grading by NAAC.

The percentage of colleges with libraries, computer centers, health centers, sport facilities, hostels, guest houses, teacher's housing, canteens, common rooms, welfare schemes, gymnasiums, auditoriums, and seminar rooms are much higher in case of high quality colleges as compared with the low quality ones. Similarly, high quality colleges are better placed with regard to academic indicators, which include higher student-teacher ratios, number of permanent teachers or teachers with PhD degrees, books per student, books and journals per college, and students per computers etc. Thus, if low quality colleges are to be brought at parity with high quality ones; a substantial improvement in the physical and academic infrastructure is necessary in the higher educational institutions located in remote areas. The colleges located in rural areas have their own specific patterns of student's attendance in the classroom. Especially in rural areas more than 50% of the students use to remain absent in the classroom during the sowing season in the fields as they are from the farmers families and the land-less labors families; and again in the season of harvesting the classrooms use to be vacant. The annual teaching plans prepared by the teachers are not much helpful to carry out the process of teaching and evaluation in practice.

## PROBLEMS

- 1. Lesser Number of Institutes:** In comparison to the number of higher education institution present in urban areas i.e., cities or towns, there are very few institutions in rural areas of India. Technical higher educational institutions are very rarely established in the rural areas.
- 2. Access:** The Gross Enrolment Rate (GER), measures, the access level by taking the ratio of persons in all age groups enrolled in various programs to total population in age group of 18 to 23. The access to higher education for all eligible in the country is a major issue before the policy makers.
- 3. Equity:** On one hand GER stands low for the overall population, while on the other there are large variations among the various categories of population based on urban or rural habitation and rich and poor. Due to regional disparity in economic development and uneven distribution of institutions of higher education, the higher education is not equally available to the different sections of the society.

**4. Limitation of Quality:** The higher educational institutions suffer from large quality variation in so much so that a NASSCOM-Report-2005 has said that not more than 15per cent of graduates of general education and 25-30per cent of Technical Education are fit for employment. First, the quality

Technical Education are fit for employment. First, the quality norms of which are not comparable with international standards can't be maintained by the higher educational institute of rural areas. Secondly, the enforcement process is not stringent. Further political interference and corruption dilute the role and impact of these intuitions in ensuring the desired quality standards.

**1. Cost of Education:** One of the main factors of lower enrolment in rural area is the cost of education. Technical education sometimes only a dream for most of the students of rural areas where the people are mostly dependent on agriculture. Even sometimes it is seen that normal higher education expenses cannot be afforded by some of the families coming under lower middle class tag.

**2. Higher Teacher-student Ratio:** Student teacher ratio is one of the indicators used to describe the quality of education received in any education unit, be it in a city or in any rural areas of the country. UGC has recommended an ideal ratio of 1:30 for the general undergraduate courses. Unfortunately, because of lesser no of educational institutes in rural areas, more and more students are bound to enroll and the teacher-students ratio does vary to the standard so far as quality education is concerned.

**3. Privatization:** In India both public and private institutions operate simultaneously. In the year 2000-01, out of 13,072 higher education institutions, 42 per cent were privately owned and run catering to 37 per cent of students enrolled into higher education. Since providing grant-in-aid to private colleges is becoming difficult, they sometimes not able to maintain the minimum standard of quality education. The quality of education in these private colleges is very uneven. Many of the colleges because of shortage of funds are not able to hire well deserving and quality teachers which at times create a problem for the students to face. Apart from it some institutions do not have proper infrastructure like quality laboratory. But on the other side of the coin we actually could see there are some private colleges which have strived to enhance their standards and some of them rank better than many Government run colleges today which are not accessible for all.

**4. Misuse of Grants:** UGC provides financial assistance to the universities and colleges for various developmental activities. But the same fund is hardly seen to be properly utilized. Specially, in rural areas where the local bodies are not so strong, the guardian of the students are not so conscious about the proper use of financial assistance, administrative bodies takes the advantage of it.

**Lesser Research Activities:** It has been seen that not more than 20% of all students enrolled in a doctoral research Programme complete their work and almost 80% drop out. A lack of motivation amongst university

1. Faculty to conduct and supervise research also stems from unavailability of good research students and a lack of professional incentive for research. However, to increase research output, the UGC began giving scholarships to students enrolled for a PhD in central universities, but ignores State universities.

2. Poor input: One of the major challenges facing by the higher educational institutes in rural areas is the standard of input, i.e. students, especially in general education. So far as higher education is concerned with quality education with quality output, the biggest challenge for these institutes where minimum cut off mark is not applicable at the time of admission.

3. High dropout rate: In rural areas of India the school dropout rate is more than normal. As a result of this very few students taste the sweetness of higher education. Even during college life also because of family burden, poor infrastructural facilities, lack of monetary support, apathy towards education etc. we can see high percentage of drop out among rural students.

4. Lesser use of ICT: ICT can affect the delivery of education and enable wider access to the same. In addition, it increases flexibility so that learners can access the education regardless of time and geographical barriers. It can influence the way students are taught and how they learn. But in most of the rural colleges and universities, use of ICT is hardly seen while teaching. There are lots of colleges in India where electricity problem is a common phenomenon. In those institutions we can expect only the traditional method of teaching.

5. Inadequate physical Infrastructure: Quality education is possible when facilities, resources and technologies are upgraded. For this funding is needed which has been made on the basis of grades given by NAAC on the basis of various parameters. The higher educational institution of rural areas are bound to grade in the lower side since quality of input is also very low, higher ratio of teacher-students poor communication etc. and due to this grants are also given on the lower side which hinders improvement in physical infrastructure.

**Faculty problem:** Quality of teaching depends upon quality of teachers. Availability of adequate and qualified faculty is a prerequisite of quality education. Quality teachers always prefer better colleges in

1. the sense better input, standard teacher-student ratio, better communication, better physical facilities, better research facilities etc. and due to which the rural institutes has to suffer.

**REMEDIES**

**a. Equal Importance in Rural Areas:** To assess the availability of various policies programs and facilities in higher education, there is an urgent need to access and find out from the students their awareness and utilization of facilities, as also to cross check the availability of the facilities in institutions where they are enrolled.

**b. Enhance Quality of Education:** All plans for expansion must have a major thrust on enhancing quality of education. Hence due care must be taken for developing skills of teachers for enhancing teaching-learning transaction, creating conducive academic environment, improving the learning infrastructure, putting technology enabled learning into practice wherever possible.

**C. Establishment of research centers:** Establishment of research centers of excellence in various areas of local relevance must be pursued and these should be affiliated with the existing universities and institutions of national importance. UGC should focus more on research-based support to the universities and colleges. It should help in developing bench-marking in teaching and research, support curricula updating, develop norms for efficient governance, establish and support large number of interuniversity centre like institutions that will facilitate institutions of higher education towards quality and excellence in teaching and research. UGC should furthermore help in developing networking and electronic connectivity, besides helping institutions in optimally utilizing them.

**d. Checking drop-out ratio:** Higher education system should take interest in their feeder area or supply chain to improve quality and drop out as a priority need of the community and duty of higher education system and for their own growth i.e., higher education system.

**e. Establishing Career Counseling Cells:** Special career counseling cells must be set by the government so that students can also enroll themselves in other technical and professional courses apart from other general courses. Besides, the students can select subject according to their needs and capacity.

- **Adequate fund:** To build a high quality education system, adequate funding must be made available by the Central and State governments to improve quality, at the same time, making higher education affordable to all specially for the families of rural areas where income level of the people is low and thus increasing access.
- **Checking proper utilization of grants:** The grant provided by Central, State govt. as well as other bodies to the educational institutes is how effectively utilized is a matter of doubt. Administrative bodies of the uses the funds as per their own profitability rather than priority of the institute for greater social interests of the stakeholders. The regulatory bodies should ensure proper use of funds on the basis of priority.



## CONCLUSION

Despite of growth in terms of number of colleges and enrolment the numbers are not sufficient enough to cater to the education needs of increasing young population of this country. The current status of higher education in rural areas of India is characterized by low enrolment, poor completion rates and high drop out. As per UNESCO estimates, at least 20% GER is necessary for rapid socio- economic development of a country. Thus, the Indian education system needs to expand fast to cater to the increasing student population.

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