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## Scenario of Higher Education in India

*A Comprehensive Overview from AISHE*

By

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### Abstract:

Higher education plays a key role in nation's growth and prosperity by transforming individuals into valuable human resources. The Indian higher education system has evolved significantly since independence, witnessing substantial growth in both quantity and quality. This study explores the dynamics of higher education in India, focusing on aspects such as growth in educational institutions, gender parity, pupil-teacher ratio, and gross enrolment ratio (GER). Using secondary data from All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE), the study reveals that the number of universities and colleges has substantially increased over the years. However, challenges persist, including disparities in access, quality, and gender equality. The Gender Parity Index (GPI) has shown improvements, although gender disparities remain in certain categories. Pupil-teacher ratio (PTR) trends demonstrate variations, with a noticeable increase in recent years, potentially impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. The Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) has risen, showcasing positive strides in higher education access, although with continued disparities among different categories. Bridging these gaps remains a priority, requiring focused efforts to ensure equal access and quality education for all segments of society.

**Keywords:** *Higher Education, AISHE, Economy, Growth, Development, Enrolment*

### Introduction:

Education is often referred to as a form of human capital, which contributes to the productivity and overall capabilities of a workforce. (Schultz, 1961) introduced the concept of human capital, emphasizing that education and training enhance individuals' skills, making them more productive contributors to the economy. Education has the potential to reduce poverty and inequality. Investing in education, especially for marginalized and disadvantaged populations, can lead to improved access to job opportunities and higher

income levels. The World Bank's World Development Report (2006) highlights education's role in breaking the cycle of poverty.

Higher education is an important form of investment in human capital. In fact, it can be regarded as a high level or a specialised form of human capital, contribution of which to economic growth is very significant. It is rightly regarded as the “engine of development in the new world economy (Tilak 2003). Education is the right of every Individual and the most vital input for the growth and prosperity of a nation. It provides strength and flexibility to enable people to respond to the changing needs of the hour. Education is the backbone of all national activities. It has the power to transform human being into human resource. We cannot build a sustainable and prosperous nation without human resource development which mainly depends on the health and vitality of Education. Apart from the primary and secondary education, higher education is the main instrument for the development and transformation. Higher education has the all-powerful role of preparing leaders for different walks of life: social, political, economic, cultural and scientific and technological. The Indian Higher Education system has expanded significantly since the post-independence era, and it is now one of the biggest organizations in the world. Both quantitatively and qualitatively, the situation of "Higher Education" in India has significantly improved. In India, "Higher Education" is regarded as one of the paths to increased socio economic mobility.

### **Growth and Development of Higher Education in India**

The Indian higher education system is one of the largest such systems in the World. It is estimated that during the X Five Year Plan period (2002-07), there will be a tremendous pressure of numbers on this system and a large number of additional students will be knocking at the doors of higher education institutions in the country (UGC, 2003). Higher education has experienced significant growth and development over the past century, with enrolment numbers increasing dramatically in many countries around the world (Marginson, 2016). India has witnessed significant growth and development in its higher education system over the past few decades, with the number of colleges and universities increasing rapidly (AISHE, 2021). According to the Ministry of Education, there were over 40,000 colleges and more than 1,000 universities in the country as of 2021.

This expansion has been driven by a range of factors, including increased government investment in education, rising demand for higher education among the growing Indian middle class, and the adoption of new technologies and pedagogical approaches. Furthermore, the Indian government has implemented policies aimed at expanding access to higher education for marginalized and disadvantaged groups, including the establishment of reservations for underrepresented communities.

### **Growth in Different Types of Higher educational Institutions:**

The growth of higher educational institutions has been a significant trend over the past century. Universities are the highest educational institution in the system of higher education. There are different types of higher educational institutions in India based on the sources of finances. Among the universities there are public universities which are supported by the government, which include public universities, state

universities and central universities. While state universities receive major part of their finances from the respective state governments, central universities receive funding from the central government.

**Table.1 Growth of Number of Educational Institutions in India**

Year	Universities	Colleges
2010-11	621	32974
2011-12	642	34852
2012-13	667	35525
2013-14	723	36634
2014-15	760	38498
2015-16	799	39071
2016-17	864	40026
2017-18	903	39050
2018-19	993	39931
2019-20	1043	42343
2020-21	1113	43796
<b>CAGR %</b>	<b>7.19</b>	<b>2.99</b>

Source: AISHE various reports, Ministry of Education, GoI.

There is a considerable increase in the number of higher educational institutions in India since the Planning era. We find there is great change in growth of universities and colleges in India which is shown in the below table. The number of universities has increased from 621 in 2010-11 to 1113 in 2020-21 by almost 7.19 percent, while the number of colleges has increased from 39,071 in 2010-11 to 42,343 in 2020-21 with a CAGR 2.99 percent.

The growth of educational institutions can be attributed to various government initiatives aimed at expanding access to higher education. These initiatives could include the establishment of new universities and colleges to accommodate the increasing demand for education. The increasing number of universities and colleges reflects a growing demand for higher education in India. This could be due to factors such as population growth, urbanization, and the recognition of education as a pathway to better opportunities.

**Table.2 Student Enrolment in Higher Education in India**

Enrolment in Higher Education					
Year	Total	Male	Female	Male %	Female%
2011-12	2.85	1.58	1.26	55.43	44.21
2012-13	3.02	1.66	1.36	54.96	45.03
2013-14	3.23	1.75	1.48	54.18	45.82
2014-15	3.42	1.85	1.57	54.09	45.9
2015-16	3.46	1.86	1.6	53.75	46.24
2016-17	3.57	1.9	1.67	53.22	46.77
2017-18	3.66	1.92	1.74	52.45	47.54
2018-19	3.74	1.92	1.82	51.33	48.66
2019-20	3.85	1.96	1.89	50.9	49.09
2020-21	4.13	2.12	2.01	51.33	48.67

Source: AISHE various reports, Ministry of Education, GoI.

The total enrolment in higher education has shown steady growth over the years, increasing from 2.85 crores in 2011-12 to 4.13 crores in 2020-21. Both male and female enrolment have increased over time, with males consistently having a higher enrolment number than females. The percentage change in total enrolment

has fluctuated from year to year but generally shows an upward trend. In the initial years (2011-12 to 2014-15), male enrolment was slightly higher than female enrolment, but the difference was relatively small. From 2015-16 onwards, female enrolment started to catch up and even surpassed male enrolment in 2020-21. Generally, the data suggests that there has been a steady growth in enrolment in higher education over the years, with both male and female enrolment increasing. The increase in female enrolment is notable, as it shows a positive trend and has been closing the gender gap over time.

**Table.3 GER in Higher Education for different categories**

Year	All Categories			SC			ST		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
2010-11	20.8	17.9	19.4	14.6	12.3	13.5	12.9	9.5	11.2
2011-12	22.1	19.4	20.8	15.8	13.9	14.9	12.4	9.7	11.0
2012-13	22.7	20.1	21.5	16.9	15	16	12.4	9.8	11.1
2013-14	23.9	22.0	23.0	17.7	16.4	17.1	12.5	10.2	11.3
2014-15	25.3	23.2	24.3	20.0	18.2	19.1	15.2	12.3	13.7
2015-16	25.4	23.5	24.5	20.8	19.0	19.9	15.6	12.9	14.2
2016-17	26.0	24.5	25.2	21.8	20.2	21.1	16.7	14.2	15.4
2017-18	26.3	25.4	25.8	22.2	21.4	21.8	17.0	14.9	15.9
2018-19	26.3	26.4	26.3	22.7	23.3	23.0	17.9	16.5	17.2
2019-20	26.9	27.3	27.1	21.9	24.7	23.4	14.4	17.5	18.0
2020-21	28.5	25.8	27.3	23.2	25.9	24.3	14.8	18.0	18.9

Source: AISHE various reports, Ministry of Education, GoI.

The Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) measures the number of students enrolled in higher education as a percentage of the eligible population aged 18 to 23 years. The data presented in the table shows the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in higher education in India from 2010-11 to 2020-21 for all categories, Scheduled Castes (SC), and Scheduled Tribes (ST). The GER is a measure of the percentage of eligible students who are enrolled in higher education. Overall, the GER has been increasing over the years. It has gone up from 19.4 percent in 2010-11 to 27.3% in 2019-20, and further to 27.3 percent in 2020-21.

The GER for SC and ST categories have also been increasing over the years. However, it is lower than the overall GER and there is a significant gap between the GER for general category and the GER for SC and ST categories. The GER for SC and ST categories has increased from 11.2 percent and 13.5 percent respectively in 2010-11 to 18.0 percent and 18.9 percent respectively in 2020-21. However, the gap between the GER for SC and ST categories and the overall GER has not reduced much. The GER for females in all categories, SC and ST is lower than the GER for males. However, the gap between male and female GER has been reducing over the years. The GER for females in the SC and ST categories is significantly lower than the GER for males in the same categories. This indicates that there is a need to focus on improving female enrolment in higher education, especially for SC and ST communities.

In general, the data suggests that while there has been an improvement in GER in higher education, there is still a significant gap between different categories and genders. The government and other stakeholders need to take measures to improve access and quality of higher education for all sections of society, particularly for disadvantaged groups such as SC and ST communities.

## Trend in Gender Parity Index in Higher Education in India

The Gender parity Index (GPI) in higher education is an important indicator of progress towards gender equality in education sector. It highlights disparities, informs policy decisions, and contributes to the broader goal of empowering women and promoting social and economic development. There is an increase in Gender Parity Index (GPI) for all the categories in India in last 10m years which is shown in the below table.

**Table.4 Gender Parity in index in India**

Year	Gender Parity Index(GPI)		
	ALL	SC	ST
2011-12	0.88	0.88	0.74
2012-13	0.89	0.89	0.79
2013-14	0.92	0.92	0.81
2014-15	0.92	0.91	0.81
2015-16	0.92	0.91	0.83
2016-17	0.98	0.96	0.88
2017-18	1.01	1.00	0.91
2018-19	1.05	1.06	0.96
2019-20	1.06	1.08	1.00
2020-21	1.05	1.07	1.02

Source: AISHE various reports, Ministry of Education, GoI.

The Gender Parity Index is the ratio of the number of females by the number of males enrolled in a given stage of education. A GPI of greater than one signifies education access in favor of female students. The Gender Parity Index (GPI) is a statistical tool used to measure gender equity in education. It is calculated by dividing the number of female students enrolled in a particular level of education by the number of male students enrolled in the same level of education. The GPI ranges from 0 to 1, where a GPI value of 1 indicates complete parity between male and female students.

Looking at the above data, we can see that the GPI in India has increased steadily over the years, indicating an improvement in gender equality in education. In 2011-12, the GPI was 0.88 which increased to 1.05 in 2020-21, showing a significant improvement of 19 percent over the ten-year period. However, we see that there are still significant disparities in gender equality among different castes. In 2015-16, the GPI for ST students in India was only 0.83, while it was 0.91 for SC students, and 0.92 for all students. Although there has been an improvement in GPI for ST students over the years, it still lags behind the other categories. While there has been an overall improvement in gender equality in education in India. The Government of India has implemented several measures to improve the Gender Parity Index (GPI) in higher education like, *Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao*, *RUSSA*, *UGC guidelines for women's studies centres*.



## Pupil Teacher Ratio (PTR) in Higher Education in India

Pupil teacher ratio shows the number of students per students. Reduction in PTR shows increase in the number of available teachers and lesser number of studentsto each teacher facilitates greater attention.

**Table.5 Pupil Teacher Ratio (PTR)in Higher Eduaction**

Pupil Teacher Ratio (PTR)	
Year	India
2010-11	23
2011-12	23
2012-13	23
2013-14	24
2014-15	23
2015-16	23
2016-17	26
2017-18	29
2018-19	26
2019-20	26
2020-21	27

Source: AISHE various reports, Ministry of Education, GoI.

The Pupil Teacher Ratio (PTR) is a measure of the average number of pupils or students per teacher in an educational institution. A lower PTR is generally considered better, as it indicates that each student can receive more individual attention from their teacher. We can see that the PTR in India has remained relatively stable over the years, with a slight increase from 23 in 2010-11 to 27 in 2020-21.

### Conclusion:

The journey of higher education in India is marked by substantial growth and notable progress, reflecting the nation's commitment to knowledge dissemination and skill development. The expansion of universities and colleges underscores the increasing emphasis on education as a transformative force. The evolving Gender Parity Index (GPI) reveals improvements in gender equality, although there remains work to be done in reducing disparities among different categories. The pupil-teacher ratio (PTR) demonstrates fluctuations over time, with recent increases potentially influenced by the COVID-19 pandemic. This calls for effective strategies to maintain optimal PTR for quality education delivery. The Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) showcases the positive strides in enhancing access to higher education. However, disparities across various categories underline the need for inclusive policies that address underrepresented groups. While female enrolment has shown positive growth, sustained efforts are required to bridge the gender gap fully. To foster a robust higher education ecosystem, policymakers, institutions, and stakeholders must collaborate to ensure equitable access, improve education quality, and bridge gender gaps. Addressing disparities in enrolment, PTR, and gender parity calls for holistic approaches that align with global standards. As the Indian higher education system continues its journey, it must strive to achieve educational excellence that empowers individuals, supports economic growth, and strengthens the nation's fabric. By fostering inclusivity, innovation, and empowerment, India's higher education sector can truly become a beacon of progress and prosperity for the nation.

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