ACCESS, EQUITY, EXCELLENCE : CHALLENGES BEFORE HIGHER EDUCATION

Dr. Satya Narayan Misra
Director, School of Leadership, KIIT University
Campus-4, Chintan Building, Patia, Bhubaneswar-751024
Ph-07381109899
E.mail-misra.sn54@gmail.com

Dr. Monalisa Bal
Chairperson, KIIT International School
Campu-9, Patia, Bhubaneswar-751024
Ph-09937064660
E.mail-chairperson@kiitis.ac.in

Abstract:

India is in the cusp of policy prevarication in higher education after the Kothari Commission 1966, National Education Policy 1986 and its update in 1992. The Planning Commission has identified Access, Equity and Excellence as the major challenges for achieving higher inclusive growth in its 12th plan. Considerable improvement in enrolment has taken place since 2000. However in terms of impact on equity for different disadvantaged sections greater sensitivity and initiatives by the government is warranted. For improving quality, a significant change in major policies like FDI inflow and collaboration with reputed foreign universities, public private partnership (PPP) as being practiced in countries like Sweden and Germany, substantial increase in allocation to at least 5% of GDP, and universalization of benefits to both public and private sector universities are the way forward. Through greater equity and excellence in higher education, India can have its rightful place in the global space as a knowledge hub and take advantage of considerable opportunity in highly skilled jobs globally. **(INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND RESEARCH, 5(2), 98-118, 2015)**

Introduction:

India ranks 135th out of 187 countries in terms of Human Development Index (HDI) with a score of 0.582 as per the latest Human Development Report (HDR) 2014. In Mean Years of Schooling (MYS) India has score of only 4.4 (2012) as against around 11-12 years for most of the developed countries and Emerging Market Economies like Korea. What is further disconcerting is that the **Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in Higher Education** is around 17% as against 35% in China, 75% in Russia and around 95% in USA. This is despite the significant contribution made by the private sector for providing impetus to technical education since 2000; increasing GER from about 10% (2000) to around 16.7% now. The 12th plan aims at GER of 25% by 2017 while buttonholing **Equity, Access and Excellence as the three leitmotifs for achieving Higher Inclusive Growth.**

The paper tries to analyze –

- Evolution of policy so far & Plan priorities for higher education
- Growth trends of colleges & universities, Gross Enrolment Ratio and Allocation Trends
- Impact of various initiatives on Access, Equity And Excellence
- Major areas for policy re-orientation
- Suggest a way forward for Bolstering Equity, Quality and Global Connect

Evolution of Policy & Plan Initiatives:

The Kothari Commission (1966) and the National Education Policy (1986) and Revised National Education Policy (1992) have delineated the major policy thrust areas for the government in higher education.

The following table sums-up the major recommendations-

Table -1: Summary of Recommendations for Higher Education

• Kothari Commission (1966): Improve productivity; Treat science as a basic component in education and Improve research in S&T • NPE (1986): Greater role in reinforcing integrative character of research and advanced study and international aspects of Education and Cultural development • NPE (1992): Facilitate Inter Regional mobility by providing equal access to every Indian. In R&D, S&T special measures to establish network arrangement between different institutions in the country to pool their resources.

Source: Higher Education-1: From Kothari Commission to Pitroda Commission by Pawan Agarwal - Economic and Political Weekly February 17, 2007

It is five decades since then, no new policy has been put in place for providing the requisite momentum to improve research, innovation, foster science and improve quality in higher education barring a clutch of elite institutions like the IIS, IITs & IIMs which have global standards. It would be, therefore, be important to look at the Annual Report of the HRD Ministry during 2012-2013 and subsequent Framework Documents issued during 2013-2014 & 2014-2015 to make an assessment of the policy framework to achieve Equity and Excellence and to promote academic freedom & research in India.

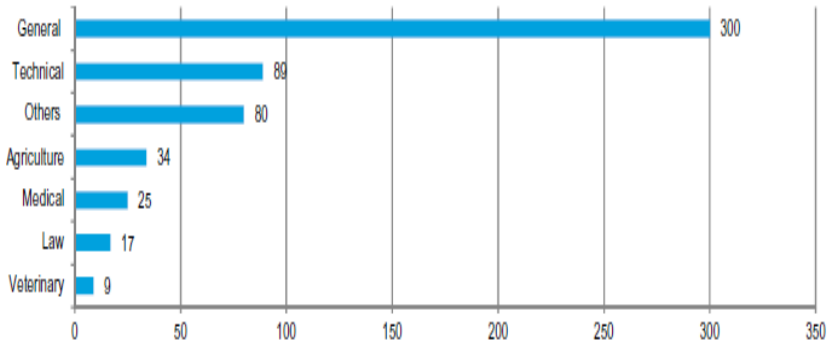
During 2013-2014 & 2014-2015, however, the HRD Ministry came-up with Results Framework Document (RFD) which have setup the following targets-

- **Realize India's Human Resource Potential to its fullest with equity and excellence**
- Greater opportunity for access to vulnerable sections

- Expand access by supporting existing institutions, establish new institutions, supporting state government and non-government organization to supplement public effort
- Encourage Research and Innovation
- **Promote quality by investing in infrastructure and faculty and promoting academic freedom.**

The break-up of number of universities in the country on the basis of type of university is shown below. There are a total of 621 universities (as of 2010-11) across the country, with state public universities constituting the highest share (45.2%). **The top five states with the highest number of universities include Tamil Nadu (59, 9.5% of total in India), Uttar Pradesh (56, 9.0%), Andhra Pradesh (46, 7.4%), Maharashtra (44, 7.1%), and Rajasthan (43,6.9%)**.

Figure-1: Universities by Type - India



Source: Annual Status of Higher Education in States and UTs in India-13-ASHE-13- Deloitte

The break-up of the universities by type indicates variance between the top five states as follows: While Tamil Nadu is ranked first in India in terms of private deemed universities (28, 47.5% of total universities in the state), state public universities comprised the biggest

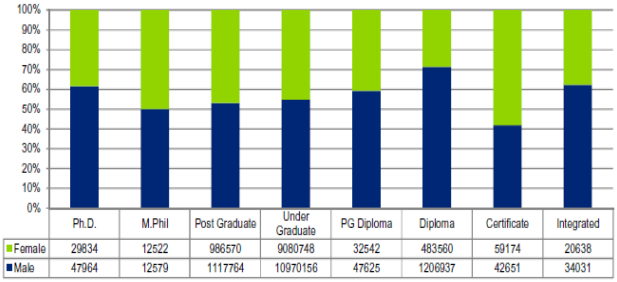
share of universities in A.P (30, 65.2%), U.P. (23, 41.1%), and Maharashtra (18,40.9%). In Rajasthan, state private universities comprised the highest share of universities (17, 39.5%).

Student Enrolment:

Total enrolment of students in regular mode in higher education institutes in India is around 241.8 lakhs, with 55.7% male and 44.2% female enrolments. With a huge population base (highest share of 18-23 population in India, 16.9%), Uttar Pradesh ranked first in terms of enrolment (37.7 lakhs, 15.6%); followed by Maharashtra (32.2 lakhs, 13.4%), Andhra Pradesh (23.7 lakhs, 9.8%), Tamil Nadu (18 lakhs, 7.4%) and Karnataka (16.1 lakhs, 6.6%). The three southern states of Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka accounted for approximately one-third (33.8%) of the total enrolments across India.

By Level: The Enrolment through Regular Mode at various levels is 2.4 crores in India. Break-up across various levels and split by gender is given in the figure / table below. As can be inferred, the highest share of enrolment (82.9%) is at under-graduate level, followed by post-graduate (8.7%) and Diploma (7.0%), with all other levels forming only 1.4%. As can be seen from table above, maximum enrolment share (39.2%) is in government colleges in the country.

Figure-2: Enrolment through Regular Mode at Various Levels - India

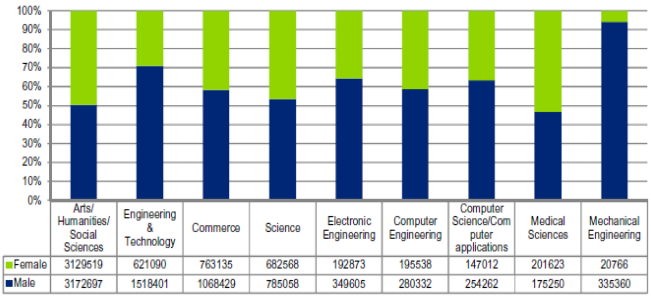


	Ph.D.	M.Phil	Post Graduate	Under Graduate	PG Diploma	Diploma	Certificate	Integrated
Female	29834	12522	986570	9080748	32542	483560	59174	20638
Male	47964	12579	1117764	10970156	47625	1206937	42651	34031

Source: Annual Status of Higher Education in States and UTs in India-13-ASHE-13- Deloitte

By Stream: The total enrolment at under graduate level for the top ten streams (in terms of enrolment) is presented in the figure below. **Arts/Humanities/Social Sciences tops the list with 40.3% enrolment, followed by Engineering & Technology (13.7%).** It is interesting to note that female share of enrolment (48.0%, as a % of total female enrolment) in arts/humanities/social sciences is higher than the male share (34.8%, as a % of total male enrolment) while the male share of enrolment (16.6%) in engineering & technology is much higher than the female share of enrolment (9.5%). Marine Sciences/Oceanography courses had the least enrolment (77 seats).

Figure-3: Enrolment at Under Graduate Level, by Top Ten Students - India

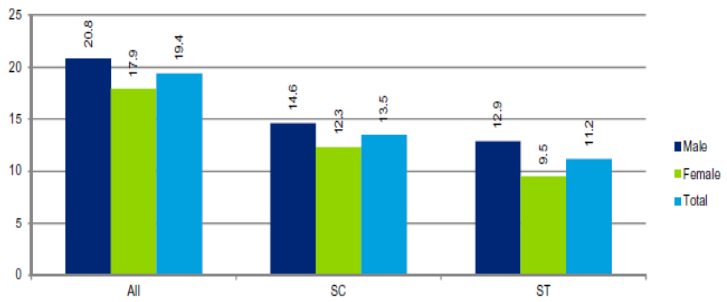


	Arts/ Humanities/ Social Sciences	Engineering & Technology	Commerce	Science	Electronic Engineering	Computer Engineering	Computer Science/Computer applications	Medical Sciences	Mechanical Engineering
Female	3129519	621090	763135	682568	192873	195538	147012	201623	20766
Male	3172697	1518401	1068429	785058	349605	280332	254262	175250	335360

Source: Annual Status of Higher Education in States and UTs in India-13-ASHE-13- Deloitte

The GER for males (20.8) is higher than GER for females (17.9), resulting in the Gender Parity Index (GPI) of 0.86. **In terms of overall GER, Chandigarh ranks first (41.4) with highest male (42.2) and female (40.4) GER as well.**

Figure- 4: GER for ALL, SC & ST - India



Source: Annual Status of Higher Education in States and UTs in India-13-ASHE-13- Deloitte

Trends in Allocation:

A disaggregation of allocation to General, Technical and Distance Education is as under:

Table-2: Allocation to Higher Education Trends in Rs. crore

	2012-13 (Actual)	2013-14		% of Change	2014-15 (BE)	% of Change
		BE	(RE)			
General Education	11878	15693	14539	+22.4	14637	0.6
Technical Education	8513	9390	8441	-0.9	9463	12.1
Distance Education & ICT	354	448	186	-48	593	318.8
Total	20423	26750	24885	21.8	27656	+11.1

Source: Budget 2014-2015

What is disconcerting to note from the above table that there is considerable under spend at the RE stage last year. This is particularly disturbing in case of distance education and ITC which can be a powerful source of knowledge multiplier without setting up infrastructure.

Impact on Equity

It would be interesting to analyze how increase in access to higher education and GER has impacted different sections of the society & promoted our march towards an egalitarian society.

Table-3: Impact of Access to Education on Different Sections of Society

Grouping	1999-2000	2007-2008	Population Share
SC	5.1	11.6	16
ST	6.4	7.7	7
MUSLIM	-	9.6	13
OBC	7.1	14.8	27
National Average	10.1	17.2	100

Source – NSSO Data

It would thus be seen from the above that while there has been considerable improvement in access to education; the SC, ST & Muslims do not have access to higher education commensurate with their population share. The OBCs are likely to improve their share with 27% reservation for them; thanks to the Mandal Commission. However, the Muslims, seem to be significantly lagging behind in terms of their representation in higher education despite implementation of Maulana Azad Fellowship Scheme and increase of the MAEF corpus to Rs.910 Crore during 13-14 as a follow-up to the Sachhar Committee Report (2006).

Impact on Quality:

The poor quality of Higher Education is a perennial lament. It is largely due shortage of well trained faculty, poor infrastructure, irrelevant curriculum, inadequate use of technology and research which is far below International standards. In order to meet the huge shortage of highly skilled workers globally, the 12th Plan reiterates the commitment of 11th plan for expansion, equity and excellence. **To move up the ladder of quality India has to go beyond 3 R's viz. Reading, Writing and Arithmetic to 4 C's viz. Critical thinking, Communication, Collaboration and Creativity**.

The share of services in India's GDP has increased for 33% in (1950-51) to 56.5% (2012-2013). Innovation and quality play an important role in ensuring significant global imprint. However, India ranks 64th in Global Innovation Index. India's capacity for innovation has been lower than that of other BRICS countries as scores in the following table would show:

Table-4: Trends of Research & Patents Globally

Country	Quality of Research Institutions	Industry Collaboration	PCT Patents Granted/(Million)
USA	5.8	5.6	137.9
Brazil	4.1	4.1	2.8
South Korea	4.9	4.7	161.1
China	4.2	4.4	6.5
India	4.4	3.8	1.2

In particular, what's disconcerting is the number of patents granted per million (1.2) in India against around 140/161 in USA and South Korea.

While in terms of availability of no. of engineers and scientists India is well placed, the lack of quality in higher education and low percolation of research for commercial usage remains a major challenge.

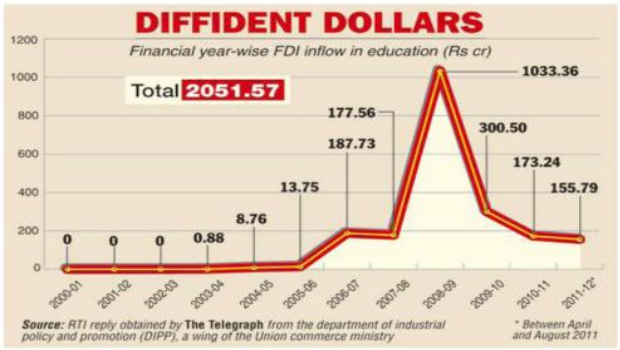
One related issue is the policy approach of the government; whether to foster only the elite academic institutions like IITs, IIMs and IISC or to broad base allocation to state universities in a massive way. China and Russia have adopted the elitist route, i.e. to promote a few select universities to improve their position in the Global Pecking Order.

Major Areas for Policy Re-orientation:

(a) FDI in Higher Education

Suhag and Rani (2013) have brought out that FDI in higher education will bring in quality programmes from foreign universities of repute and will improve market orientation. Given the fact that only around Rs.2051 crores came of India since 2001 as FDI with 75% from Mauritius to Manipal University, there is a need to encourage inflow of FDI and setting up viable Joint Venture enterprises & MoU with these companies. The position of FDI inflow over the years is as under.

Figure-5:FDI Inflow & Higher Education Sector



Source-RTI reply obtained by The Telegraph from the department of industrial policy and promotion (DIPP), a wing of the Union Commerce Ministey-April-Aug-11

(b) Public Private Partnership (PPP)

Sectors like telecom, airports, national highways and power have witnessed significant progress through Public Private Partnership models and have brought in significant FDI inflow into the country. During the 12th plan an investment of one trillion dollar is proposed through a PPP route within the ratio of 50:50. While economic infrastructure is very high on government agenda the social infrastructure like education which is a vital complement to overall economic growth has been given a short shrift.

It would be worthwhile to draw experience of other countries like Sweden, Germany, Singapore & China where the PPP model has worked wonders. The key success factors have been agreement on shared objectives from the beginning of the partnership and political will for participation of the private sector, transparency and accountability within the PPP. Sweden has regarded higher education as a 'merit good' and has a long tradition of substantial public spending. It has substantive relationship with the private sector which includes sharing of roles, responsibility, risks and rewards. In Germany, public commitment to take most risks has encouraged many small private enterprises to participate in the PPP model. Such models have important lessons for India.

(c) Towards Full Cost Recovery

There has been an ongoing debate as to whether full cost recovery from students who are capable of paying should be introduced both in public and private universities. In US where most of the top grade universities are privately managed they are able to attract students from different parts of the world because of the quality and employability that they offer. For instance MIT charges around 57000$ per year from university students while the average annual salary is around 65000$. While such exorbitant charging of fees may not be advisable in the Indian context and the private sector should not be given a free hand in charging capitation fees and extorting students, it makes eminent sense to recover cost of running a quality education institutions substantially.

This debate has gone to the Supreme Court which has constantly castigated tendency to commercialize education. The famous case in this regard is Prof. Yashpal Vs. Government of Chhatisgarh (2002) when the Supreme Court had opined that controlling the quality of higher education is the legitimate responsibility of the UGC as per Item 66 of the Union list (7^{th} Schedule) of Indian Constitution.

The 12th Plan, however, makes a strong pitch for revisiting "not for profit criteria" by the universities by amending Section 25 of Indian Company Act (1956). Sudhansu Bhusan (2013) in an article has brought out the dichotomy in judicial thinking and need for pragmatism in terms of charging of fees in colleges/universities to improve infrastructure and academic content. This issue needs to be revisited by a Committee of Experts.

(d) Regulatory Mechanism

There is a near unanimity in view that existing regulatory control by UGC, created under Act of 1956 is not lending itself to quality improvement flexibility in charging fees, offering reasonable remuneration to teachers & finalization of curriculum of either public or private universities. UGC's primordial concern is with central and elite universities like DU, JNU etc. This has to be abdicated in favour of a regulatory mechanism which is academically less asphyxiating. Arvind Panagariya (2012) makes a powerful plea against such frustrating control mechanism of UGC and recommends privatization to bring quality improvement.

In this context is must be mentioned that there is a dissonance in the approach of the UGC and Knowledge Commission under Mr. Pitroda. While the UGC is pitching for greater inclusivity and improving GER in small places which name less than the national average, the Knowledge Commission is aiming at exclusivity, augmenting framework for encouraging private players and foreign collaboration and maximal cost recovery through tuition fees. An independent regulatory body with the thrust to improve research and collaboration should be seriously looked at.

(e) Quality Improvement in Major Programmes

Distance Education through ICT is a very powerful multiplier to spread education to nook and corner of the country. As has been brought out at Table-4 that during 2013-2014, there was 50% surrender of funds in implementing various initiatives under Distance Education.

IGNOU has been a pioneer in the field of distance education and is a well known initiative globally. The news in Times of India that IGNOU is closing a large number of courses/ departments need to be carefully deliberated. A Committee of Experts should go into the whole gamut of major programmes like TEQIP, RUSA, IGNOU/Distant Education and also the need to universalize scholarships/financial aid inorder to improve quality and greater inclusivity.

The Way Forward for Bolstering Equity, Quality & Global Connect:

India has made tremendous strides in terms of enrollment in higher education since independence cutting across gender, caste and religion. The private sector has contributed handsomely to improved access to higher education. However in terms of equal access and excellence, India still has considerable distance to traverse. Though the Constitution guarantees positive discrimination to disadvantaged sections, the ground reality stultify the process of equal access and academic excellence. This is not unsurprising given the historic nature of such deprivation in respect of SC/ST & Women; **alienation in case of tribals, segregation in case of scheduled castes and in grained bias towards women and the sub-optimal secular orientation towards the Muslims**.

A few concrete measures will go a long way to bridge such dissonance. The delivery mechanism by government agencies is leaky and often patently inept. It would be better to outsource the delivery mechanism of major programs to responsible NGOs. To foster increased access to deprived segments, financial aid and scholarships must be universalized and the overall allocation be substantially augmented. India is caught-up in the cusp of a meaningless debate on Private vs. Public Education; and whether higher education is to be treated as **merit or non-merit good**. It must be mentioned that in US where most universities

are private, their management is out of government control; though most of them receive significant government grants in different ways.

The whole education system in India, primary, secondary, vocational and higher education must be revamped and looked at in a holistic manner. As Prof. Amarya Sen observes "to improve performance Indian Higher Education it is crucially important to reform, indeed to remake the entire system of school education in the country".

Global economy has shifted from **'manufacturing centric'** to a **knowledge driven one**, prompting economist Clark Kerr to observe that **"on a global scale wealth and prosperity have become more dependent on access to knowledge than access to natural resources"**. Therefore the challenge is **not merely to increase Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) to 25% by 2017 but to rev-up the quality and reorient our major policy initiatives as brought-out in the preceding paragraphs**. The best entrepreneurial energy have to be harnessed towards the cause of education. As *John Maynard Keynes* had observed "The difficulty lies not in introducing new ideas but in replacing old ones". The new government should take a leaf out of this while formulating the New Education Policy and revisiting the priorities for Equity & Excellence.

References:

1. 12th Plan Document, Government of India
2. Agarwal, P.(2007). Higher Education-I-From Kothari Commission to Pitroda Commission. *Economic and Political Weekly February 17, 2007*
3. Altbach, G.P.(2009). The Giants Awake: Higher Education Systems in China and India *Economic & Political Weekly, June 6, 2009 VOL XLIV No 23*
4. Annual Report, Ministry of Human Resource Development, India, 2010-2011

5. Annual Report, Ministry of Human Resource Development, India, 2012-2013
6. Economic & Political Weekly, June 6, 2009 VOL XLIV No 23
7. Economic Survey 2013-2014, Government of India
8. Guidebook on Promoting Good Governance In Public-Private Partnerships - United Nations Economic Commission for Europe-2008
9. Higher Education in India: Twelfth Five Year Plan (2012–2017) and beyond FICCI Higher Education Summit 2012
10. Human Development Report, 2014-Sustaining Human Progress: Reducing Vulnerabilities and Building Resilience-UNDP
11. India's Budget Document 2014-2015
12. Results Framework Document (RFD) of the Department of Higher Education For the Years 2013-2014 and 2014-2015
13. Social, Economic and Educational Status of the Muslim Community of India Prime Minister's High Level Committee Cabinet Secretariat Government of India November, 2006- A Report by Rajinder Sachar Committee
14. Suhag, V. & Rani, K. (2013). FDI and Higher Education in India. *International Journal of Social Science & Interdisciplinary Research, IJSSIR, Vol. 2 (8), AUGUST (2013)*
15. Tilak, B.G.J. (2013). Higher Education in the BRIC Member-Countries – Comparative Patterns and Polices. *Economic & Political Weekly, April 6, 2013 VOL XLVIII No 14*
16. Debroy, B., Tellis, A.J. & Trevor, R. Getting India Back on Track- An Action Agenda for Reforms. Random House Publisher India Pvt. Ltd. Gurgaon, Haryana
17. Dreze, J. & Sen, A. An Uncertain Glory India and its Contradictions. Penguin Books India Pvt. Ltd, Panchsheel Park, New Delhi
18. Bakshi, P.M. The Constitution of India. Universal Law Publishing Co. Pvt. Ltd. Delhi

19. Malhotra, R. India Public Policy Report-2014 Tackling Poverty, Hunger & Malnutrition. Oxford University Press, Jai Singh Road, New Delhi

20. Mohan. R. Growth in Financial Stability-Central Banking is an Emerging Market. Oxford University Press, Jai Singh Road, New Delhi

21. Sharma, V. (2010). Facilitating Trade in Higher Education, Chpter-1-Crisis of Higher Education in India. A CPI(M) Publication. http://indiaeducrisis.wordpress.com

List of Tables

Table -5: Summary of Recommendations for Higher Education

- Kothari Commission (1966): Improve productivity; Treat science as a basic component in education and Improve research in S&T
- NPE (1986): Greater role in reinforcing integrative character of research and advanced study and international aspects of Education and Cultural development
- NPE (1992): Facilitate Inter Regional mobility by providing equal access to every Indian. In R&D, S&T special measures to establish network arrangement between different institutions in the country to pool their resources.

Source: Higher Education-1: From Kothari Commission to Pitroda Commission by Pawan Agarwal - Economic and Political Weekly February 17, 2007

Table-6: Allocation to Higher Education Trends in Rs. crore

	2012-13 (Actual)	2013-14		% of Change	2014-15 (BE)	% of Change
		BE	(RE)			
General Education	11878	15693	14539	+22.4	14637	0.6
Technical Education	8513	9390	8441	-0.9	9463	12.1
Distance Education & ICT	354	448	186	-48	593	318.8
Total	20423	26750	24885	21.8	27656	+11.1

Source: Budget 2014-2015

Table-7: Impact of Access to Education on Different Sections of Society

Grouping	1999-2000	2007-2008	Population Share
SC	5.1	11.6	16
ST	6.4	7.7	7
MUSLIM	-	9.6	13
OBC	7.1	14.8	27
National Average	10.1	17.2	100

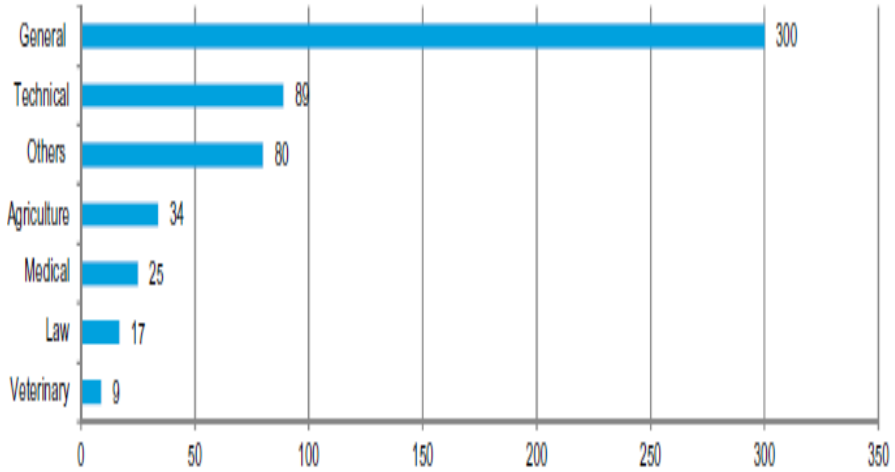
Source – NSSO Data

Table-8: Trends of Research & Patents Globally

Country	Quality of Research Institutions	Industry Collaboration	PCT Patents Granted/(Million)
USA	5.8	5.6	137.9
Brazil	4.1	4.1	2.8
South Korea	4.9	4.7	161.1
China	4.2	4.4	6.5
India	4.4	3.8	1.2

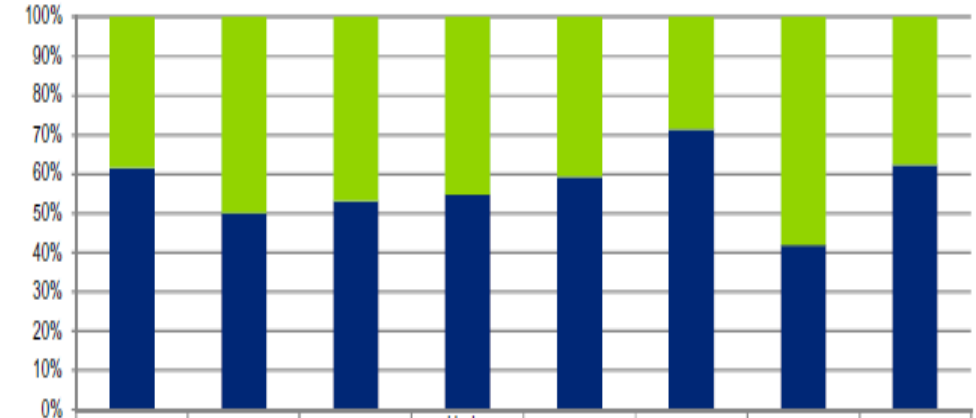
List of Figures

Figure-6: Universities by Type - India



Source: Annual Status of Higher Education in States and UTs in India-13-ASHE-13- Deloitte

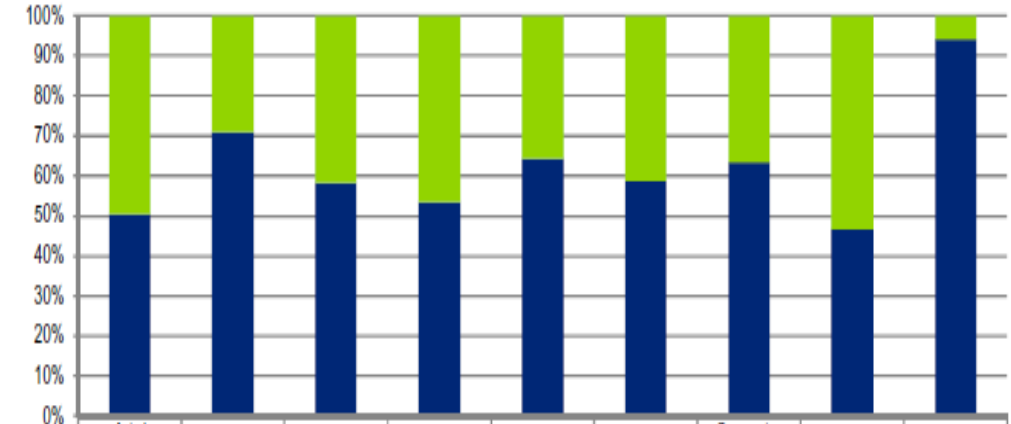
Figure-7: Enrolment through Regular Mode at Various Levels - India



	Ph.D.	M.Phil	Post Graduate	Under Graduate	PG Diploma	Diploma	Certificate	Integrated
Female	29834	12522	986570	9080748	32542	483560	59174	20638
Male	47964	12579	1117764	10970156	47625	1206937	42651	34031

Source: Annual Status of Higher Education in States and UTs in India-13-ASHE-13- Deloitte

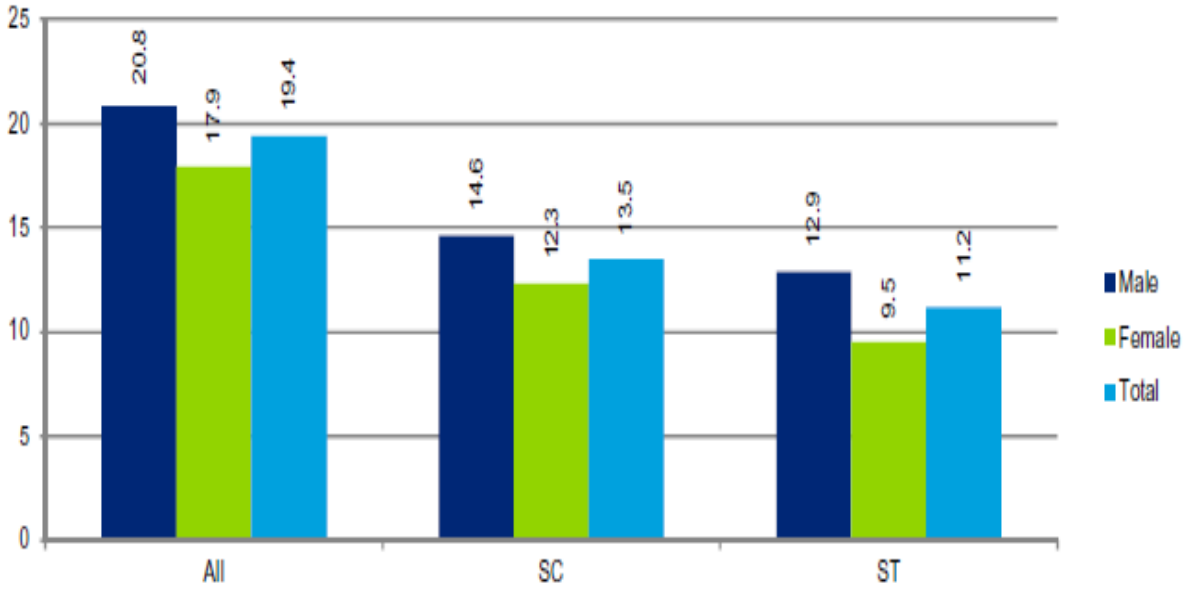
Figure-8: Enrolment at Under Graduate Level, by Top Ten Students - India



	Arts/ Humanities/ Social Sciences	Engineering & Technology	Commerce	Science	Electronic Engineering	Computer Engineering	Computer Science/Computer applications	Medical Sciences	Mechanical Engineering
Female	3129519	621090	763135	682568	192873	195538	147012	201623	20766
Male	3172697	1518401	1068429	785058	349605	280332	254262	175250	335360

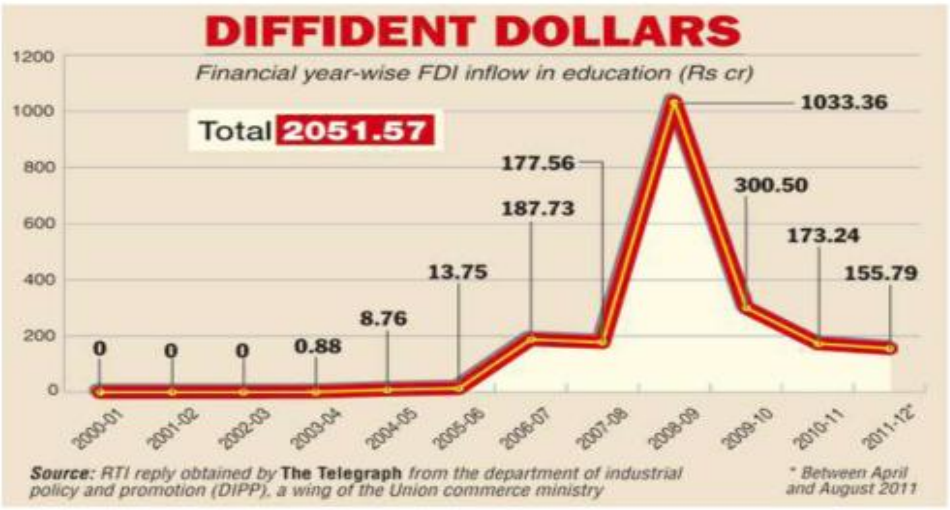
Source: Annual Status of Higher Education in States and UTs in India-13-ASHE-13- Deloitte

Figure- 9: GER for ALL, SC & ST - India



Source: Annual Status of Higher Education in States and UTs in India-13-ASHE-13- Deloitte

Figure-10:FDI Inflow & Higher Education Sector



Source-RTI reply obtained by The Telegraph from the department of industrial policy and promotion (DIPP), a wing of the Union Commerce Ministey-April-Aug-11