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## STATUS OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN RURAL INDIA

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*"The Basic Purpose of life and the basic purpose of education is to enhance once Boundaries of perception. I Don't want the children after ten years of schooling here to just survive. they must blossom and flower wherever they go". Sadhguru*

### ABSTRACT:

Higher education is the backbone of the modern society. It has the power to transform human beings into human resources. Along with primary and secondary education higher education is also an instrument to build future generation. In India majority of the 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.



**KEY WORDS:** Higher Education, Rural India.

### INTRODUCTION

Education is one of the most powerful instrument 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. 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 where it is not possible for all the youth to stay away from their families as they may be the only bread earner in

their families. Apart from this poor communication and transportation system of the rural areas also hinders equal access of higher education.

The concept and phenomenon of education based on school-going is of modern origin in India. Education in the past was restricted to upper castes and the content taught was also inscriptive. However, to lead a comfortable life in this fast-changing world, education is seen as the most influential agent of modernization. The educational attainments in terms of enrolment and retention in rural India generally correspond to the hierarchical order. While the upper castes have traditionally enjoyed and are enjoying these advantages, the Scheduled Caste and other backward castes children have lagged behind in primary schooling. Studies have revealed that children of backward castes are withdrawn from school at an early age, by about 8 -9 years.

An important reason for withdrawal of children from school is the cost and work needs of poor households. Income and caste are typically correlated with lower castes having lower incomes and higher castes having better endowments in terms of land, income and other resources. Thus, one fact is certain that there is a clear divide in the villages, along caste lines, regarding access to schools. The very poor children are enrolled in the municipal school because it provides a number of incentives such as lower expenditure on books, uniforms, fees, etc. The well-off children go to the private school, where English and computers are given more importance. The tendency in fevers of private schools in rural areas is influenced by people's perception of private schools, as a means of imparting quality education in English medium. The poor rural girls, if not all, constitute a major junk of disadvantaged groups that are excluded from the schooling process, especially because they enter late into school and drop out earlier.

Parental illiteracy is another cause for lack of interest to become literates. Many rural children enrolled are thus first generation learners, who come from illiterate families thus, they have to single handedly grapple with school life, mastering language and cognitive skills without parental help and guidance. Most of these illiterate parents do whatever is possible to educate their children because education for them acts as a vehicle of social mobility. Moreover, education and the subsequent attainment of town jobs is often looked upon by many of these rural families, especially families belonging to lower castes, as a means to break out of their position in caste hierarchy. The religious beliefs and practices of a community can also largely impact the overall attitudinal and behavioral profile of an individual or group. In the Indian context, religion has a great influence over people's thinking and exerts a great influence over their behavior. The motivation and attitudes of the people towards education are also moulded to a large extent by their religious beliefs.

The literacy rate for Muslims is notably lower compared to Hindus but not better than Christians and Sikhs. Poverty among Muslims, who also happen to be one of the most economically backward groups, is the actual reason for their preference for Madrasas (Islamic schools), because they are absolutely free and more flexible as compared to formal government schools. This seems to be the only option for poor Muslims, who often cannot afford to pay for the education.

Access to school is no more a problem in most parts of India. Ninety eight percent of population has access to school within a walking distance of one kilometre. The core problem is the unpreparedness of the school system for mass education. Classrooms in most primary schools in rural areas are typically uninviting, with leaking roofs, uneven floors and scraggly mats to sit on. Added to that, most of the schools do not have electricity, drinking water or toilets. In some schools, students of different ages are made to sit in one room. These students squat in passive postures, even regimented columns, with often the 'brightest' and the socially advantaged sitting in front. At a given time, a typical school could have at most two teachers trying to 'police' children of all five primary classes. The quality of education is the main issue. For a long time, the educationists had thought that the high dropout rate is because of parental poverty and disinterestedness rather than concentrating on the failure of the school system

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**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 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 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 in education.

**5. 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. It is seen that normal higher education expenses cannot be afforded by some of the families coming under lower middle class tag.

**6. 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.

**7. 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 is not accessible for all.

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**8. 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.

**9. 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 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.

**10. 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.

**11. High dropout rate:**

In rural areas of India the school drop out 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.

**12. 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.

**13. 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

**14. 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 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:****1. 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.

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## 2. 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.

## 3. 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.

## 4. 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.

## 5. 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.

## 6. 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.

## 7. 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 use 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. There are wide social and regional disparities in enrolment rates and availability of institutions of higher education. Although India has made appreciable progress in this regard, particularly with reference to growth in the number of universities and colleges over the years, the rural-urban and regional differentials in availability of institutions of higher education along with other infrastructure such as teaching faculty, hostels, housing for teachers, library, laboratories, and computer facilities etc. have widened over the years.

In conclusion, it may be said, the Higher Education System in India while critical for the development of the economy is afflicted with some serious concerns. It is a long way from a transformational change which is envisaged by various committees. However, recommendations if implemented can pave a way towards at least a beginning of Higher Education moving in the right direction and with time.

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