

Contemporary Issues and Future Challenges for Women in Higher Education

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Abstract

Higher education is generally recognized as a powerful instrument for bringing socio-economic advancement as well as it is acting as a vehicle for bringing upward social mobility in all the sections of the society. During the last six decades since independence, there has been phenomenal development of education system in India, resulting in the creation of one of the largest education systems of the world. Now, India has emerged as the third largest higher education system of the world. Although Government of India had set up several educational commissions (appointed timely) and also provided valuable suggestions and recommended various schemes to arrange maximum facilities in order to uplift the education for deprived sections and women welfare. But still women have limited access to higher education. Although there is an enhancement in the GER (Gross Enrollment Ratio) of women from last few decades, But a lot of is yet to be done and yet to be achieved. There is still a huge gap between male (82.14%, in 2011) and female (65.46%, in 2011) literacy rates in India. Women, in India lagging behind to male due to several reasons like gender discrimination, sexual harassments, poverty and economic factors, adequate policy framework and improper implementation of schemes launched by government and non-governmental agencies etc. In this paper, the author has analyzed gender-based educational disparities among various social sections with special reference education of women at higher level. The author has discussed and evaluated the current status of participation of women, issues, some schemes, funding agencies, barriers and challenges and suggestions for further enhancement of women participation at higher education level.

Keywords: Funding agencies and Schemes, Future Challenges, Higher Education.

Introduction

Higher education has made remarkable improvement since independence and has emerged out as third largest system of education in the world. The establishment of UGC was a milestone in this aspect which contributed a lot to raise and maintain the quality of higher education in India, since its conception.

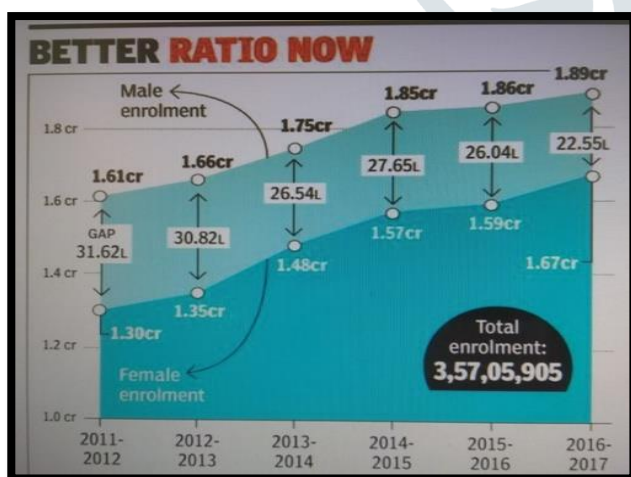
Vision and Mission of higher education

The Department's Vision is to realize India's human resource potential to its fullest in the higher education sector with equity and inclusion. The three pillars of our strategy in higher education are expansion, inclusion and excellence. The Mission of the Department of Higher Education is as follows:

- (i) Provide greater opportunities of access to higher education with equity to all eligible persons and in particular to the vulnerable sections;
- (ii) Expand access by supporting existing institutions, establishing new institutions, supporting State Governments and Non-Government Organizations/civil society to supplement public efforts aimed at removing regional or other imbalances that exist at present;
- (iii) Initiate policies and programmes for strengthening research and innovations and encourage institutions whether public or private
- (iv) Skill development so as to reap the benefits of the demographic advantage of the country;
- (v) Promote the quality of higher education by investing in infrastructure and faculty, promoting academic reforms, improving governance and institutional restructuring;
- (vi) Engage with civil society, state governments and with the international community in furtherance of knowledge, language and culture.

As Indian society is closed society therefore, a big section is still lagging behind to approach and access education in their hands, particularly the deprived, minorities and women are the most vulnerable section amongst the all. Although Government of India did continuous efforts and several educational commissions also provided valuable suggestions to uplift the education in deprived sections and for women welfare, several schemes were also timely made to achieve the same purpose. To speed up women participation in higher education in India our prime minister has also started on 25 Jan. 2015, ‘**Beti Bachao - Beti Padhao**’ scheme, which seeks to address gender imbalance and discrimination against the girl child.

But a lot of is yet to be done and yet to be achieved. There is a huge gap between male (82.14%, in 2011) and female (65.46%, in 2011) literacy rates in India. The gender gap is seen to be narrowing rapidly – women literacy rate has been growing at 11.8% and men at 6.9%.



As an independent group, women constitute 48% of the total population of India. Women's constitute valuable human resource of the country. Their development and growth in the socio-economic area also sets step for sustainable growth of the economy. About 50% of girls and women still do not have the opportunity to gain education. Lack of access remains a serious issue. In 1997, the UN estimated a shortage of 1.5 million teachers if every child attended school at a teacher-pupil ratio of 1:40. The Government

of India estimated a 925,000 shortfall. The most unfortunate are those from the scheduled classes, scheduled tribes, from minorities, and low-income rural areas. The following statistics is reflecting the women enrolment and growth in higher education after independence to till 2005-06.

Women student growth in higher education from 1950-51 to 2005-06

Year	Men (000s)	Women (000s)	Total Enrolment (000s)	Percent of Women Students
1950-51	157	17	174	10.00
1955-56	252	43	295	14.60
1960-61	468	89	557	16.00
1965-66	849	218	1067	20.40
1970-71	1563	391	1954	20.00
1975-76	2131	595	2426	24.50
1980-81	2003	749	2752	27.20
1985-86	2512	1059	3571	29.60
1990-91	2986	1439	4425	32.50
1995-96	4235	2191	6426	34.10
2000-01	4988	3012	8001	37.60
2005-06	6562	4466	11028	40.50

Source: Enrolment of women in higher education (Selected Educational Statistics 2005–06; University Grants Commission, Annual Report, various years)

SCHEMES FOR ENHANCING HIGHER EDUCATION IN CONTEXT TO WOMEN:

Higher Education is the shared responsibility of both the Centre and the States. The coordination and determination of standards in institutions is the constitutional obligation of the Central Government. The Department of Higher Education, MHRD, is responsible for the overall development of the basic infrastructure of Higher Education sector, both in terms of policy and planning. Under a planned development process, the Department looks after expansion of access and qualitative improvement in the Higher Education, through world class Universities, Colleges and other Institutions. The Central Government provides grants to UGC and establishes Central Universities in the country arrange provisions for arranging the scholarships and education loans for the desirous students.

Following are some significant fellowship schemes/scholarships awarded by the various Institutions:

- Higher education of women through Open and Distance Learning (ODL) Mode:
- Post Graduate Indira Gandhi Scholarship for Single Girl Child for Pursuing Higher and Technical Education especially in remote and rural areas of India. Construction of girls' hostel for colleges is also supported by UGC.
- National Scholarships: Junior Research Fellowships
- Post-Doctoral Research Fellow (Scheme)
- All India Council for Technical Education Scholarships
- Department of Science and Technology grants and fellowships
- DST's Scholarship Scheme for Women Scientists and Technologists

- Biotechnology fellowships for doctoral and postdoctoral studies by DBT
- Scholarships /Awards at Undergraduate & Postgraduate level in various science courses at the University of Delhi
- Fellowships/Scholarships/Awards by the Jawaharlal Nehru University
- Sports Authority of India promotional schemes
- Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities - Schemes/Programmes
- Scholarship Schemes for ST Students by Ministry of Tribal Affairs
- Post-Matric Scholarships for SC /ST students
- Scholarships for Minority Students
- Construction of Women's Hostel for Colleges
- Development of Women's Studies in Indian Universities and Colleges
- Capacity Building for Women Managers in Higher Education
- Post Doctoral Fellowship to Women Candidates.

Funding Agencies and Stakeholders for excellence in Higher Education in Women:

The word **Stakeholder** is actually defined as “Any group or individual who is affected by or can affect the achievement of an organization’s objectives”,(Freeman, 1984, p. 46). The term “**stake**” simply implied to a share, interest or investment that a certain party attributes to an entity (Freeman, 1984). Internal and external stakeholders have a substantial impact on the effectiveness of the university’s functioning.

Among the most essential factors connected with the *first degree environment*, also called the *functional environment*. It include the employed staff (qualifications), management style, the culture of an organization, scientific work, works that facilitate development, technological level, availability of laboratories, methods and means to manage human resources and infrastructure, quality assurance methods, marketing means and techniques as well as the functioning of the financial accountant staff (Ulewicz, 2014).

- 1. University Grants Commission (UGC) Post Doctoral Fellowship to Women Candidates :** To accelerate the talented instincts of the unemployed women candidates holding Ph.D. degree in their respective subject areas to carry out the advanced studies and research. The objective of this award is to provide an opportunity to carry out the advanced studies and research in science, engineering and technology, humanities and social sciences in Indian Universities and Colleges recognized under Section 2 (f) and fit to receive assistance under section 12(B) of the UGC Act 1956/Institutes of National Importance established by the Central/State Government.

• Fellowship	Rs. 38,800/-p.m. Rs. 46,500/- p.m. after two years.
• Contingency	@ Rs. 50,000/-p.a. for five years
• Escorts/Reader	@ Rs. 2000/- p.m. (fixed) in cases of PWD (Person with disability)

2. Department of Biotechnology (DBT) Biotechnology Career Advancement and Re-orientation programme (BioCARE) for women Scientists: To enhance the participation of Women Scientists in Biotechnology Research, the Department of Biotechnology launched a Biotechnology Career Advancement and Re-orientation Programme (Bio-CARE) for women Scientists. The purpose is to build capacities for women Scientists employed fulltime in Universities and small research laboratories or unemployed women Scientists' after a career break so as to help them undertake independent Research & Development projects. The scheme is open for all areas of Life Science / biology (including agriculture, veterinary science and medicine). All research related expenses are to be booked under Equipment, Consumables, Manpower, Contingency, Travel etc. as in other ongoing R&D Schemes of the Department of Biotechnology. The budget is restricted to Rs. 60.00 lakhs for 3 years for RGO and Rs. 40.00 lakhs for ECS. This includes manpower to be hired (PA/JRF/SRF/RA for RGO and PA for ECS) in the project. The budget is indicative only. Not mandatory to be funded. Equipment cost should not exceed 30 % of the total cost of the project.

3. Science and Engineering Research Board (SERB) WOMEN EXCELLENCE AWARD: Women scientists below 40 years of age as on 31.3.2017 who have received recognition from any one or more of the following national academies such as Young Scientist Medal, Young Associate etc.

- Indian National Science Academy, New Delhi
- Indian Academy of Science, Bangalore
- National Academy of Science, Allahabad
- Indian National Academy of Engineering, New Delhi
- National Academy of Medical Sciences, New Delhi
- National Academy of Agricultural Sciences, New Delhi

These women researchers will be supported with a research grant of Rs.5.00 lakh per annum for a period of 3 years

4. Department of Health Research (DHR) -ICMR :It is a programme specifically for women: Short /Long term training in Indian institutes followed by fellowship to women candidates who have had a break in their career but having demonstrable aptitude towards health research in front line and emerging areas.

5. Department of Science and Technology (DST): The scheme is meant to encourage women in Science and Technology domain, preferably those having a break in career and not having regular employment, to explore possibility of re-entry into the profession. Following three categories of fellowships, with research grants, are available.

- Women Scientist Scheme-A (WOS-A): Research in Basic/Applied Science.

- Women Scientist Scheme-B (WOS-B): Science & Technology interventions for Societal Benefit.
 - Women Scientist Scheme-C (WOS-C): Internship in Intellectual Property Rights (IPRs) for the Self Employment.
6. **Post Graduate Indira Gandhi Scholarship for Single Girl Child for Pursuing Higher and Technical Education:** The purpose of the scheme is to support higher education through scholarships to such girls who happen to be the only child in their families and also to make them recognize the values of observance of small family norms. Girl students up to the age of 30 years at the time of admission of Postgraduate courses are only eligible. The number of slots for scholarships available under the scheme is 1200 p.a. The scholarship amount is @ Rs.3100/-per month.
 7. **Fair and Lovely Scholarship:** This scholarship for girls offers a scholarship amount of INR 25,000 to INR 50,000 to college going girl students to help them pursue graduation or post graduation from a government-recognized Indian university/institution. A total of 55 girl students are selected under this scholarship scheme.
 8. **L'Oréal India for Young Women in Science Scholarship:** This Scholarship offers a scholarship amount of up to INR 2.5 Lakh to meritorious class 12 passed girl students who wish to pursue a career in Science. This scholarship for girls is meant for girls of maximum 19 years of age. The students belonging to the financially deprived section of the society can apply for the scholarship.
 9. **Internshala Scholarship: Career Scholarship for Girls:** Internshala Scholarship offers a one-time scholarship of INR 25,000 to girl who has fought against odds to pursue a career of her dreams in any field (Academics, Sports, Arts etc.).
 10. **Women Techmakers Scholars Program:** Women Techmakers Scholars Program, formerly named Google Anita Borg Memorial Scholarship, offers financial support to undergraduate and graduate female students who demonstrate leadership qualities and excellent academic record. It is a one-time scholarship which encourages students in the field of Computer Science or related technical field.
 11. **Santoor Women's Scholarship:** Santoor Women's Scholarship, offered by Wipro Consumer Care and Wipro Cares, provides financial assistance of INR 24,000 annually to girl students who have passed class 12 and wish to pursue higher education in the field of Humanities, Liberal Arts and Sciences. The scholarship is given to 900 girl students of Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Telangana.
 12. **Lady Meherbai D Tata Education Scholarship:** This scholarship for girls provides funds to graduate Indian women who have applied or secured admission into reputed educational institutions of the US, the UK or Europe in the following areas to pursue higher education: Social Work, Social Sciences, Education, Education & Welfare of Children with Special Needs, Gender Studies – Violence against Women and Children including Domestic Violence, Child Health – Development and Nutrition, Health Policy and Health Education – Mental Health (with a focus on women and children), Public Health – Community Health Services & Reproductive Health, Rural Development

Work, Needs of Adolescents – Urban & Rural, Communication for Development, Development Studies, Research and Study of Social Norms in Communities

13. Adobe Research Women-in-Technology Scholarship: This scholarship for girls offers a one-time scholarship amount of USD 10,000 to female students who are enrolled in an undergraduate or a master's programmes in the field of Computer Science, Computer Engineering or a related technical subject. While applying for Adobe Research Women-in-Technology Scholarship, applicants must include their resume, academic records, 3 references, 4 essays and an optional 60-second video describing dream career with their scholarship application.

14. Tata Housing Scholarships for Meritorious Girl Students: This scholarship for girls is a merit-cum-means scholarship which provides a financial assistance of up to INR 60,000 to meritorious girl students who belong to economically weaker class. This Tata Housing Scholarship is given to students in the fields of MBA (Construction Project Management), B.Arch. and Civil Engineering.

Programme	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017
Master of Arts	124	147	154	165	169
Master of Science	123	138	147	157	167
Master of Commerce	122	136	145	148	158
MBBS	86	93	95	97	99
BSc (Nursing)	92	95	93	93	384
Bachelor of Education	169	180	188	197	203
Bachelor of Arts	108	115	118	118	121
Bachelor of Commerce	79	83	86	90	93

15. Pragati Scholarship – AICTE-Scholarship Scheme to Girl Child (SSGC): Pragati Scholarship is meant for girl students who are have taken admission in the 1st year of diploma/degree programme of an AICTE approved institution. This scholarship for girls offers a scholarship amount of up to INR 30,000 each to 4000 girl students every year to pursue higher education.

- **Main Barriers Resisting Enrolment of Women in Higher Education**

Although lot of efforts have been done by various government agencies via several schemes launched to enhance women enrolment in higher education but still there is a big gender gap lying in Indian Education system due to gender discrimination and other barriers which are as following:

- **Gender discrimination:** Gender gap in India's institutes of higher studies has reduced by nine lakh in the last five years with girl students outnumbering men in **eight different disciplines** in 2016-17 academic sessions, according to a survey of the [HRD](#) ministry. In comparison to 82.14% of adult educated men, only 65.46% of adult literate women are there in India. While in master's of arts, there are 160 **women** for every 100 men; in Bachelors of Science (nursing) has 384 women for every 100 men.

Even in the postgraduate classes of science and commerce, women have handsomely outnumbered men with 167 and 158 respectively per 100 males. However, in undergraduate and technical and professional courses

like B.Tech, law or management, the enrolment is skewed in favour of males and the gap is significant. The various reasons for having a notable gender gap are as follows:

- Lack of proper educational programme.
- Social and Economic Structure
- Poverty in the Country.
- Female infanticide.
- Atrocities on women.
- Child or early marriage
- Financial constraints.
- Patriarchal order and the subordinate status of women.
- Inequality in sharing the burden of households work.

Future Challenges in Higher Education in India

It is our 69th year of independence still our education system has not been developed fully. We are not able to list a single university in top 100 universities of the world. Various governments changed during these six decades. They tried to boost the education system and implemented various education policies but they were not sufficient to put an example for the universe. UGC is continuously working and focusing on quality education in higher education sector. Still we are facing lot of problems and challenges in our education system. Some of the basic challenges in higher education system for women in India are discussed below:

- **Equity and equal opportunities:** As Indian society is a closed society where there is no equity and equal opportunities to all individuals of society including women. The GER in higher education in India among male and female varies to a greater extent. There are regional variations too some states have high GER while as some is quite behind the national GER which reflect a significant imbalances within the higher education system.
- **Gender Disparity:** Even in the era of 21st century males are more preferred than female child leading to the female feticide. There is a big gender gap in Indian society not only in education sector at higher education but also the situation is similar in other fields. In future it will still be persisting challenge to deal efficiently.
- **Enrolment:** The Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) of India in higher education is only 15% which is quite low as compared to the developed as well as, other developing countries and it is still a big challenge before the Indian educationists and policy makers. It may be due to the supply of higher education institutes is insufficient to meet the growing demand in the country.
- **Difference in Planning of Policies and Their Implementation:** government of India frame many policies for welfare of women but these polices and schemes seem to be fairly good on papers instead

their adequate implementation. Good proportion of educational budget is proposed for women higher education enhancing schemes but it is not properly utilized for the purpose suited.

- **Social and Economic Structure:** It is also noted that the gender inequality is related to social and economic structure, traditional attitude towards women, economic insecurity and negligence of men and lack of sincere efforts of all concerned.
- **Quality:** Quality in higher education is a multi-dimensional, multilevel, and a dynamic concept. Ensuring quality in higher education is amongst the foremost challenges being faced in India today. However, Government is continuously focusing on the quality education. Still Large number of colleges and universities in India are unable to meet the minimum requirements laid down by the UGC and our universities are not in a position to mark its place among the top universities of the world.
- **Infrastructure:** Poor infrastructure is another challenge to the higher education system of India particularly the institutes run by the public sector suffer from poor physical facilities and infrastructure. There are large number of colleges which are functioning on second or third floor of the building on ground or first floor there exists readymade hosieries or photocopy shops.
- **Professional Development of Women Faculty and its Shortage:** Faculty shortages and the inability of the state educational system to attract and retain well qualified female teachers have been posing challenges to quality education for many years. While more than half of all college students are women, less than one-third of all full-time professors are women—and the troubling gaps in academia are proving difficult to close.
- **Job Opportunities:** Large numbers of NET / PhD candidates are unemployed even there are lot of vacancies in higher education, these deserving candidates are then applying in other departments which is a biggest blow to the higher education system. Men are more likely than women to earn a higher salary and to hold a tenure track position.
- **Poverty and Economic Problem:** It is a mammoth challenge to encourage education of women at higher level. A large section of people of India is living below the poverty line and facing hardships related to earning for their livelihood in that case how can they think about achieving education.
- **Structure of Higher Education:** Management of the Indian education faces challenges of over-centralization, bureaucratic structures and lack of accountability, transparency, and professionalism. As a result of increase in number of affiliated colleges and students, the burden of administrative functions of universities has significantly increased and the core focus on academics and research is diluted (Kumar, 2015).
- **Costly and expensive education:** Due to huge increase in the fee structure of colleges and universities has made education cost effective sector. That will certainly influence the women education to seek for education at higher level.

- **Sexual harassment:** It is the form of sexual exploitation of a girl students at home, streets, public places, transports, offices, etc by the family members, neighbors, friends or relatives and even in educational institutions (both school as well as at college and university level). Therefore, some parents fear to allow their girl child to enroll them in schools and for attaining higher education.
- **Child Marriages:** Early marriage of the girls by their parents in order to be escaped from dowry. It is highly practiced in the rural India.
- **Inadequate Nutrition:** Inadequate nutrition in the childhood affects women in their later life especially women belonging to the lower middle class and poor families.
- **Lack of immediate reinforcement and sponsorship:** Although several schemes and scholarships have been arranged for women students but to avail them, the procedure is quite lengthy. They are not immediately reinforced and sponsored for getting admission in attaining further higher education.

Suggestions for Promoting Women Participation in Higher Education

- **Ensure women's safety:** Out in the streets, women fight an unspoken war every day. Some are assaulted, some molested, and some violated. Truth be told, there is no safe haven for women anywhere, since most of these horrific cases occur inside homes, neighborhood, educational institutions and offices. While the government does need to initiate strict laws for the safety and security of women, we too need to keep our eyes open for wrongdoers.
- **Healthcare:** Safety isn't just fighting criminals but also creating a safe, survivable environment for women all over. Ensure a safe, holistic environment and regular health check-ups.
- **Save a Girl:** We focus on women empowerment every now and then, but how will we initiate the steps mentioned above when there will be no women? Girls in many parts of the world including India are killed before birth. Reasons are many, but the consequences are horrific.
- **Raise your voice against gender inequality:** Above all, raise your voice. Stand up for every woman and help, decrease the prevalent gender disparity in all the strata's of society.
- **Give her Freedom:** "Don't travel late, stay within limits." At every step we tend to imply restrictions on women. Now is the time to change the equation. Don't bind them in the chains of orthodox views. Give them the freedom they deserve. If you wish to change something, broaden your mind and see what great achievers women can become.
- **Introduce Attractive scholarships** for both financially poor students and meritorious students to encourage women students in higher education.
- **Provide counseling** for both family and person concerned at the secondary stage of education.
- Make **skill-oriented** higher education.
- Establish non-traditional curricular for women and extend state support for this.

- **Improve transport facilities** for women students.
- Education policy has to be taken to facilitate women participation in higher education.
- Establish more female educational institutions.
- **Provide Bank loan facilities** for women students.
- Establish higher educational institutions in rural and tribal areas.
- Increase women teachers in co-educational institutions of higher education.
- Increase women representations in decision making bodies of higher educational institutions.
- Constitutional provisions should be strengthening for betterment of women so that **equal opportunity** may be provided to them.

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