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## Higher Education: Growth, Challenges And Opportunities

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### INTRODUCTION

Education is regarded as one that contributes to social, political and cultural and economic transformation of a country. The prosperity of any nation is intrinsically linked to its human resources. Human capital is one of the most important assets of a country and a key determinant of a nation's economic performance. The strength of a nation is dependent on its intellectual and skillful citizens. A quality human capital comes from a quality education process. A carefully designed and well planned education system is critical to developing such human capital.

India, today, is considered as a talent pool of the world, having qualified and educated human resources in abundance. This has been one of the primary reasons for transformation of India into one of the fastest growing economies in the world since liberalization in the 1990s. Economist observed that, on a global scale, wealth and prosperity have become more dependent on the access to knowledge than the access to natural resources." The importance of education in India was recognized by the founding fathers of the country and the subsequent governments, and as a result considerable importance has been given to literacy, school enrolment, institutions of higher education and technical education, over the decades ever since independence. India's aspirations to establish a knowledge society in the contest of increasing globalization, is based on the assumption that higher and technical education essentially empowers people with the requisite competitive skills and knowledge. It has been realized that it is the quality of education that prepares one for all pursuits of life and in the absence of an acceptable level of quality, higher education becomes a mere formalism devoid of any purpose or substance. As a result, from around the turn of the century, increasing attention has also been paid to quality and excellence in higher education.

Post-independence India has witnessed an above average growth in the number of higher educational institutions vis-à-vis its population. While there were just about 20 Universities and 500 Colleges at the time of independence, today these numbers have grown exponentially. India has a total of 634 universities. 44 central universities, 306 state universities, 145 private Universities, 130 deemed universities and 5 institutions established through state legislation, 60 Institutions of National Importance. Currently, the Government spends around 3.8% of its GDP on education and about 1.25 % of GDP on higher education. According to the 2011 census, the total literacy rate in India is 74.04% compared to the world average of 83.4% (2008). The female literacy rate is 65.46 % and male literacy rate is 82.14 %. FDI inflows in the education sector during May 2012 stood at \$31.22 mn

**Higher Education in India: Current State of Play:**

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India possesses a highly developed higher education system, which offers the facility of education and training in almost all aspects of human creativity and intellectual endeavors like: arts and humanities ,natural, mathematical and social sciences ,engineering , medicine, dentistry , agriculture; education, law , commerce and management, music and performing arts national and foreign languages culture ,communications etc. The institutional framework consists of Universities established by an Act of Parliament (Central Universities) or of a State Legislature (State Universities), Deemed Universities (institutions which have been accorded the status of a university with authority to award their own degrees through central government notification), Institutes of National Importance (prestigious institutions awarded the said status by Parliament), Institutions established State Legislative Act and colleges affiliated to the University (both government-aided and unaided)

There are three principal levels of qualification within the higher education system in the country:

**I. Graduation level**

**II. Post-graduation level**

**III. Doctoral degree.**

Besides these three, there is another qualification called a Diploma. It is available at the undergraduate and postgraduate level. At the undergraduate level, the duration of the course varies between one to three years, postgraduate diplomas are normally awarded after one year course, though some diplomas are awarded after two years of study.

**Structure of Indian Higher Education Sector**

	Formal Education	Technical & Professional Education	Skill Development	Vocational Training
<b>Composition</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Institutes of national importance</li> <li>• Universities</li> <li>• Colleges</li> <li>• Polytechnics</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engineering colleges</li> <li>• Management Schools</li> <li>• Law, Medical, Pharmacy</li> <li>• Town planning etc</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ITIs</li> <li>• ITCs</li> <li>• Private Skill Development Centers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Finishing schools</li> <li>• English training</li> <li>• Air hostess Academies</li> </ul>
<b>Key Regulators</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• UGC</li> <li>• State Government</li> <li>• IGNOU</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• AICTE</li> <li>• Bar Council of India</li> <li>• Medical Council of India</li> <li>• ICAI</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DGET incase of ITIs/ITCs</li> <li>• Unregulated for others</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DGET</li> <li>• Various ministries/ dept of vocational education</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pharmacy council of India</li> </ul>		
<b>Accreditation Bodies</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>NAAC</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>NBA</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>None</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>None</li> </ul>
<b>Key Players</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>IITs/IIMs/IISc</li> <li>Amity University</li> <li>Lovely Professional University</li> <li>SRCC</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Vellore institute of technology (VIT)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ITIs/ITCs</li> <li>Private centers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>VETA</li> <li>Frankfinn</li> </ul>

### Growth of Higher Education Sector In India

The 21st century is the age of knowledge-based economy, and the centre-stage of change. Higher education has not escaped the impact and is in the process of challenge, thereby challenging the traditional system of education. Central Government and state Governments are trying to nurture talent through focusing on the number of Universities and Colleges for expansion of higher educations. In the Year 1950-51, there were 30 universities and 695 colleges. This number has increased to 634 Universities and 33023 colleges up to December 2011.

**Table -1: Number, Nature and Category of Institutions (2011-12)**

S.no.	Types of Institutions	Number
1	Central Universities	44
2	State Universities	306
3	State Private Universities	145
4	Deemed Universities	130
5	Institutions of National Importance Plus other Institutions	60
6	Institutions established under state legislative Acts	5
	<b>Total</b>	690
7	Total colleges	35,539
	<b>Grand Total</b>	36,229

Source: Economic Survey of India, Ministry of Finance, New Delhi

In the **Table - 1** the number of institutions related to higher education up to 2011-12 is shown. It indicates that there is expansion of high education In India. The Central and state Government

have taken initiatives to promote higher education. In the year 2011-12, the number of Universities and Colleges was 690 and 35539 respectively in India.

**Table -2: Expenditure on Higher Education**

Year	Expenditure % of GDP
2006-07	1.14
2007-08	1.09
2008-09	1.23
2009-10	1.25

Source: University Grants Commission, New Delhi (2012)

The table no. 2 indicates percentage of GDP in expenditure on higher education in the year 2006-07 was 1.14 which increased to 1.25 in the year 2009-10. It means there is increasing expenditure on higher education by the central Government. Due to this increasing expenditure there is growth in the institutions which is providing higher education to the masses. Though there is increasing expenditure by the central Government in India but comparatively it is less than the developed countries.

**Table – 3 : State wise Number of Universities and University level institutions listed by the UGC**

S.NO	States/ Union Territories	Total (Dec., 2011)
1	Andhra Pradesh	46
2	Arunachal Pradesh	3
3	Assam	10
4	Bihar	21
5	Chhattisgarh	15
6	Delhi	25
7	Goa	02
8	Gujarat	36
9	Haryana	22
10	Himachal Pradesh	18
11	Jammu Kashmir	11
12	Jharkhand	12
13	Karnataka	42
14	Kerala	19
15	Madhya Pradesh	28
16	Maharashtra	44
17	Manipur	03
18	Meghalaya	09
19	Mizoram	03
20	Nagaland	04

21	Orissa	19
22	Punjab	17
23	Rajasthan	48
24	Sikkim	5
25	Tamil Nadu	59
26	Tripura	03
27	Uttar Pradesh	58
28	Uttaranchal	19
29	West Bengal	26
30	Chandigarh	3
31	Pondicherry	4
	<b>Grand Total</b>	634

Source: University Grants Commission, New Delhi (2012)

Though the number of colleges and institutions related to higher education has increased but there is disparity in the growth of higher education at the national level In India. Table-3 reveals the disparity in the growth of Universities and University level institutions in the country.

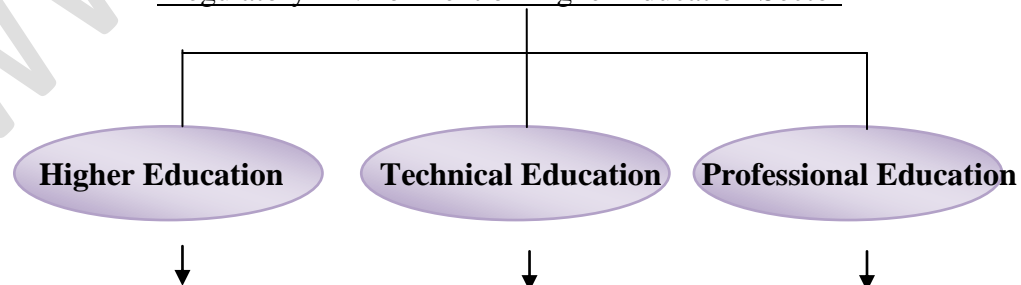
The table no - 3 indicates that the total state wise Universities and University level institutions were 634 in December 2011. Universities and University level institutions were highest in Tamil Nadu (59) followed by Uttar Pradesh (58). It means 18% Universities and University level institutions were in these two states. There is state wise disparity in case with all these institutions related with higher education.

### REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

#### Multiple regulators and onerous regulations

Education under the Indian Constitution is on the concurrent list, which makes it both a Central and a State subject. Over the years, lack of communication and co-ordination between the two spheres of authority has resulted in creation of multiple regulators in this sector. The complexity is further compounded due to a number of onerous regulations governing investment in this sector.

#### Regulatory Environment of Higher Education Sector



Consists of	Universities/Colleges/ Polytechnics	Engineering/Mgmt./ MCA/Pharma/Arch	Law/Medical/Dental/ Nursing
<b>Central Regulators*</b>	MHRD/UGC	MHRD/AICTE	BCI/MCI/DCI/INC
<b>Key Regulations*</b>	UGC Act 1956/ UGC Private Univ regulations	AICTE Act, 1987/ AICTE Regulations/ Approval Handbook	Respective Acts & Regulations
<b>State Regulators**</b>	Dept. of Higher Education/State level committees	Dept. of Technical Education/State level committees	Respective State Dept./ State level committees
<b>Key Regulations**</b>	Private University Act/ Rules and Regulations	Notifications/ Guidelines/ Orders	Notifications/ Guidelines/ Orders
<b>Accreditation Agencies (Not Mandatory)</b>	National Assessment and Accreditation Council	National Board of Accreditation	Respective regulatory bodies

**NOTE:**

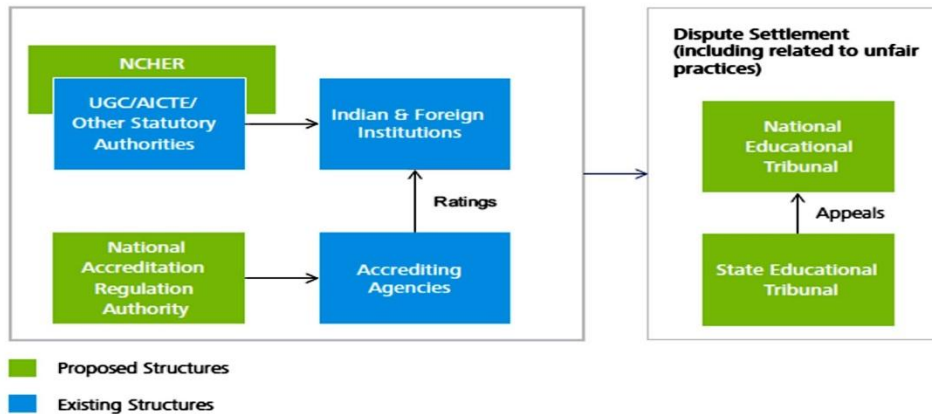
\* In addition to the education sector regulations mentioned above, there are a few other central regulations applicable across the higher education sector such as IGNOU Act, FDI, FCRA, Indian Companies Act (Section 25 Company), Indian Trusts Act, Societies Registration Act, Income Tax Act etc.

\*\* Similarly, in case of States, some local regulations are applicable across this sector such as State Public Trusts Act, State Societies Registration Acts etc.

**Choice of entity:** Formal education in India is considered as a “not for profit” activity by the Government and the courts. Therefore, the choice of entity for setting up a formal education institution has been limited by law to Society, Trust and Section 25 Company. All of these entities operating in formal education sector are restricted under law to declare dividends/income to the promoters/beneficiary. It is important to point out that Planning Commission in its approach paper to the 12th Five Year Plan had suggested re-examining of the “not for profit” tag in formal education to attract investment from the private sector.

**Reforms in the pipeline**

In the last few years, the education sector has witnessed a number of bills addressing key industry issues such as opening the sector to foreign universities, over-arching regulator, tribunals and unfair trade practices, among others, being tabled in the parliament. Some of these bills have been revised and re-tabled in the parliament based on the recommendations of special committees constituted by the Government. Hopefully, one can believe that these bills will be approved by the parliament based on consensus approach.



Key reforms in the offing include:

- NCHER as over-arching regulator to subsume both UGC and AICTE
- Accreditation to be made mandatory for every formal education institution. NAAC to register and monitor accreditation authorities
- Dispute settlement mechanisms put in place to expedite adjudication of disputes in Education Sector
- Universities for Research & Innovation Bill 2012, which envisages setting up of universities of excellence is pending in the parliament. Greater autonomy to be provided to such institutions

## CHALLENGES IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Since we have got independence we are facing challenges to establish a great and strong education system. Various governments came and gone. Off course they tried to establish new education policies in the system but this is very sad to dictate that they were not sufficient for our country. Still we are facing lot of problems and challenges in our Education System. India recognises that the new global scenario poses unprecedented challenges for the higher education system. The University Grants Commission has appropriately stated that a whole range of skills will be demanded from the graduates of humanities, social sciences, natural sciences and commerce, as well as from the various professional disciplines such as agriculture, law, management, medicine or engineering. There are many basic problems facing higher education in India today. We have categories all the problems into main three groups these are discussed below:

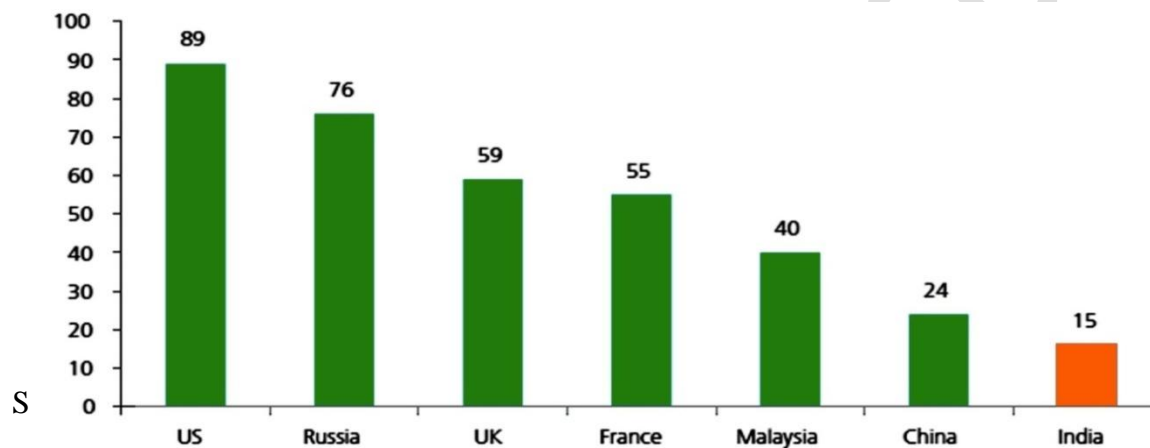
### I - Access and Equity

Students who remain in the education system , until higher education is considerably less. Ensuring equitable access to higher education is also a challenge with disparities seen across gender, regions and socio-economic groups.

- **Enrolment:** In terms of GER in higher education, India with a GER of about 15% lags behind to a great extent as compared to the developed world, as well as, other developing countries. With the rising levels of enrolments in school education, the supply of higher education institutes is insufficient to meet the growing demand in the country.

- **Equity:** According to data for 2009-10, while the GER in higher education in India was 17.1 for males, it was only 12.7 for females. Additionally, while the overall GER for the population was 15%, the corresponding figures for SCs and STs were 11.1 and 10.3, respectively. There are regional variations too with Uttar Pradesh having a GER of 10.9 while Delhi has a GER of 47.9. These figures reflect some of the significant imbalances within the higher education system.

Graph-1  
GER in Higher Education (2009) – International comparison



**II - Quality** There are various dimensions of quality in education, including content, mode of delivery, infrastructure and facilities, employability, etc. Ensuring quality in higher education is amongst the foremost challenges being faced in India today, with few institutes having achieved global recognition for excellence.

- **Curriculum and Pedagogy:** A key concern cited by higher education institutes is the lack of autonomy with respect to framing course curriculum resulting in a course structure that is often outdated. The curriculum is often not oriented to encourage entrepreneurship and innovation among students. Additionally, the adoption of new modes of delivery, such as technology-enabled learning, has not yet become widespread

- **Infrastructure:** Higher education institutes run by the public sector suffer from poor physical facilities and infrastructure. The higher education system also suffers from misalignment of supply in the sense that while there are courses in which the demand is in excess of the available number of seats, there is excess capacity in others.

- **Faculty:** Faculty shortages and the inability of the state educational system to attract and retain well-qualified teachers have been posing challenges to quality education for many years. The quality of teaching is also often poor and there are constraints faced in training the faculty



- **Accreditation:** As per the data provided by the NAAC, as of June 2010, “not even 25% of the total higher education institutions in the country were accredited. And among those accredited, only 30% of the universities and 45% of the colleges were found to be of quality to be ranked at 'A' level”
- **Industry Linkages:** There are insufficient levels of meaningful industry participation in aspects like curriculum development, research and faculty exchange programmes. Placement services in many universities are very limited resulting in a lack of co-ordination between employment seeking graduates and prospective employers who are looking for suitably qualified candidates
- **Employability:** The Indian education system on the whole is not aligned to the skill and manpower needs of the market. Skills shortage across sectors is accompanied by high levels of graduate unemployment, highlighting the need to include employment-linked modules in courses. In addition to job-related skills, graduates are often reported to be lacking adequate soft-skills such as communication and inter-personal skills
- **Research and Innovation:** There is inadequate focus on research in higher education institutes. The causes include insufficient resources and facilities, as well as, limited numbers of quality faculty to advise students<sup>3</sup>. According to the data from 2009, enrolment for Ph.D. / M.Phil. constitutes only 0.48% of enrolment in higher education in India

### III - Management and Governance

The regulatory environment governing higher education in India has been the subject of much debate. In particular, the envisioned role of the private sector needs to be clearly defined, especially in wake of the need for more financial resources in higher education. The higher education system also suffers from an over-centralised structure.

- **Regulatory environment:** The regulatory environment governing higher education in India is characterized by uncertainty and conflicts between multiple regulatory authorities. The role of the private sector in higher education is essential, particularly in the context of a shortage of financial resources for this segment. However, as noted by the Working Group for Higher Education in the 12th Five-Year Plan (2012-17), “while almost all major committees and policy documents have accepted the need for increased involvement of private sector in higher education, there is also lack of clarity on funding pattern, incentives, and regulatory oversight”. There also remains regulatory confusion relating to the role that foreign higher education institutes can play in the country.

Some of the key regulatory hurdles have been briefly explained below:

– **Philanthropic nature:** The “not for profit” tag associated with the higher education sector has been a major roadblock preventing private/foreign investment. The higher education sector is capital intensive in nature with requirement under law for procurement of minimum land, construction of built-up infrastructure/libraries/hostels etc. It would be very challenging for any

private entrepreneur/company to commit a huge investment without any return, unless the goal is to fulfill corporate social responsibility. The planning commission in its approach paper to the 12th Five Year Plan had suggested that given the aggressive GER target of the government in the higher education sector, the authorities must reconsider the “not for profit” character. There are certain apprehensions that permitting ‘for-profit’ institutions would result in commercialisation leading to lack of quality etc However the Government can address this issue by ensuring adequate regulatory checks are put in place to avoid any such situation.

– **FDI Anomaly:** The Government has permitted 100% investment in higher education under the FDI Policy; however, the regulations prescribed by AICTE for setting up technical institutions specifically prohibit direct or indirect investment. Similar, issues are being faced for investment in universities and professional institutions, which permit only Society/Trust and Section 25 Companies as entity options.

– **Restrictions on fees and course curriculum:** The government, through various committees, has placed restrictions on fees, which can be charged for various courses. The course curriculum of certain technical programs, having close industry linkages, is also being prescribed by the Government. AICTE, for instance, prescribes model curriculum/syllabus for MBA programs

--**Tax concerns:** Determination of “arm’s length” pricing for service transactions between two Indian related entities is challenging. In the recent past, the Income Tax authorities have been maintaining an aggressive stand, which has resulted in significant increase in number of litigations. Given the “not for profit” tag, the private entrepreneurs have to be extremely cautious in pricing transactions between educational institution and related private companies.

• **Financial resources** – A shortage of financial resources for higher education is amongst the key concerns in this sector. According to the Planning Commission’s Approach to the 12th Five Year Plan document, “State universities and their affiliated colleges that account for more than 90% of the enrolment suffer from severe fund constraints and poor governance leading to poor quality”. The paper notes that only approximately 18% of all government education spending or 1.12% of GDP is spent on higher education, while the requirement is for these levels to increase to 25% of the total education expenditure by the Government and 1.5% of the GDP

• **Structure of higher education** - Management of the Indian education faces challenges of over-centralisation, 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

## OPPORTUNITIES FOR PRIVATE SECTOR INVESTMENT

### Public expenditure not enough to meet the burgeoning requirements:

The Government of India has set itself an aggressive target of achieving 30% GER in Higher Education by 2020, which translates into doubling the GER in the next 8 years. As per recent estimates by NUEPA, in order to achieve this target an additional investment of Rs. 9.5 lakh

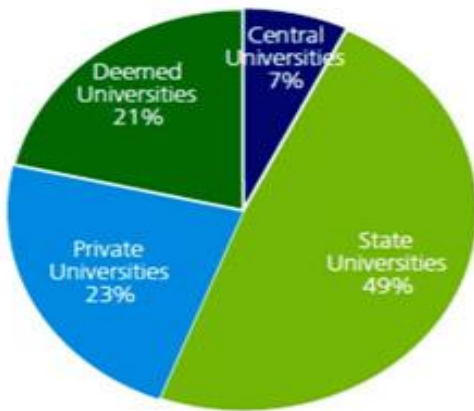
crore (USD 190 bn ), which includes capital expenditure and operating expenditure, has to be made in the next 8 years. To give a perspective, the total allocation to the entire education sector under the 11th Five Year Plan (2007-12) was Rs. 2.7 lakh crore (USD 55 bn) out of which higher education’s share was only about 30%. Therefore, given the limited support, which Government can provide to this sector in terms of investment, the private sector needs to play a much larger role.

**Growing role of private sector**

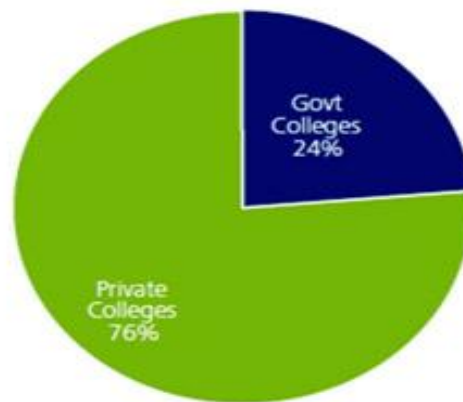
The private sector’s role in the higher education sector has been growing at a rapid pace over the last decade and needs to further expand at an accelerated rate in order to achieve the GER target.

**Current Situation**

**Total Universities 625**



**Total Colleges**



Source: UGC website, UGC Annual Report 2010-11

\*\*Please note that a number of universities conferred the “Deemed Universities” status are private and, therefore, the share of private universities is much higher than 23% depicted above.

**Existing & Future Opportunities for Private & Foreign Sector Participation**

The number of people entering the Indian higher education sector is growing at a significant rate. According to MHRD data, enrolments have increased from 15.5 mn (GER of 12.4%) in 2006-07 to 17.3 mn (GER of 15%) in 2009-10. These figures also reflect an increasing number of young working-age people who continue in the education system instead of dropping out. The number of people in the age bracket of 15-24 years enrolled in educational institutes grew from approximately 30 mn in 2004-05 to over 60 mn in 2009-10. These trends present a huge opportunity for private & foreign sector players looking to provide quality education and services in this sector.

Snapshot of Indian Education Sector

<p><b><u>Strengths</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Few globally renowned educational institutions</li> <li>• Huge demand – estimated 150 mn population in</li> <li>• 18-23 age group</li> <li>• Growing middle class with increasing incomes</li> <li>• Growing economy with numerous employment opportunities</li> <li>• Huge demand for Indian students in overseas markets</li> </ul>	<p><b><u>Weaknesses</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of infrastructure</li> <li>• Shortage of trained faculty to meet the increased demand</li> <li>• Highly complex and unclear regulatory framework at Central &amp; State level</li> <li>• Regional imbalances</li> <li>• “Not for profit” tag in formal education</li> </ul>
<p><b><u>Opportunities</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unsaturated demand for quality global education</li> <li>• Low GER of 15% in Higher education as Compared to 84% in USA</li> <li>• Sharp decline in dependency ratio predicted in the next 30 years</li> <li>• India is expected to emerge as a Global hub in education in Asia Pacific region</li> <li>• Low focus on R&amp;D</li> </ul>	<p><b><u>Threats</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High time lag in introduction of reforms due to various reasons</li> <li>• Deterioration in quality of education specially in private sector due to lack of availability of trained faculty</li> <li>• Over regulation – Control over course curriculum, entrance tests, fees etc</li> </ul>

## CONCLUSION

The central government and the state governments are making more provision to promote higher education. In the Eleventh Five Year Plan the total provision of Rs. 44,000 cr. was made for higher education. In the Twelve Five Year Plan the total provision of Rs. 1, 80,000 cr. is made for higher education. Such provision is made to increase Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) related to the higher education. It is responsibility of the U.G.C. to make more effective regulation over the higher education system in India. Merely growth of higher education will not serve the basic purpose of education policy. It is necessary to see that the Universities and colleges should provide quality education to the masses. In some Universities and colleges there is poor infrastructure, lack of skilled manpower, which are barriers in providing quality education to the age group of 18 to 22. There are also malpractices and unhealthy practices in some institutions related to the higher education. The U.G.C. should made effective regulation and try to control such malpractices. The Universities and Colleges should provide sufficient employable skills so that employability can improve. In the era of globalisation there are more weightage for competitiveness. India’s higher education should be more reliable, competent so that the coming generations can be more competent to face the challenges in their life.

On the eve of a new century, there is an unprecedented demand for and a great diversification in higher education, as well as an increased awareness of its vital importance for socio-cultural and economic development, and for building the future, for which the younger generations will need to be equipped with new skills knowledge and ideas.

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## ABBREVIATIONS

AICTE - All India Council of Technical Education
BCI - Bar Council of India
CAPEX - Capital Expenditure
DCI - Dental Council of India
DEC - Distance Education Council
DGET - Directorate General of Employment & Training
DISE - District Information System for Education
DTTIPL - Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu India Private Limited
FCRA - Foreign Contribution Regulation Act, 1976
FDI - Foreign Direct Investment
FEI - Foreign Educational Institutions
FEP - Foreign Education Provider
GDP -Gross Domestic Product
GER - Gross Enrolment Ratio
GOI - Government of India
HE - Higher Education
HEIs- Higher Education Institutes
IGNOU - Indira Gandhi National Global University
IIM Indian Institute of Management
IISc -Indian Institute of Science
IIT - Indian Institute of Technology
INC - Indian Nursing Council
ITI - Industrial Training Institutes
ITC - Industrial Training Centers
MCI - Medical Council of India
MBA - Master of Business Administration
MHRD - Ministry of Human Resource Development
MIS - Management Information System
M.Phil- Master of Philosophy
NAAC National Assessment and Accreditation Council
NBA National Board of Accreditation
NCHER National Commission for Higher Education &Research
NUEPA National University of Educational Planning and Administration
MCA Master of Computer Application
OPEX- Open and Distance Learning
Ph.D. Doctor of Philosophy
PPP - Public Private Partnership
SC - Scheduled Caste
ST - Scheduled Tribe
UGC - University Grants Commission