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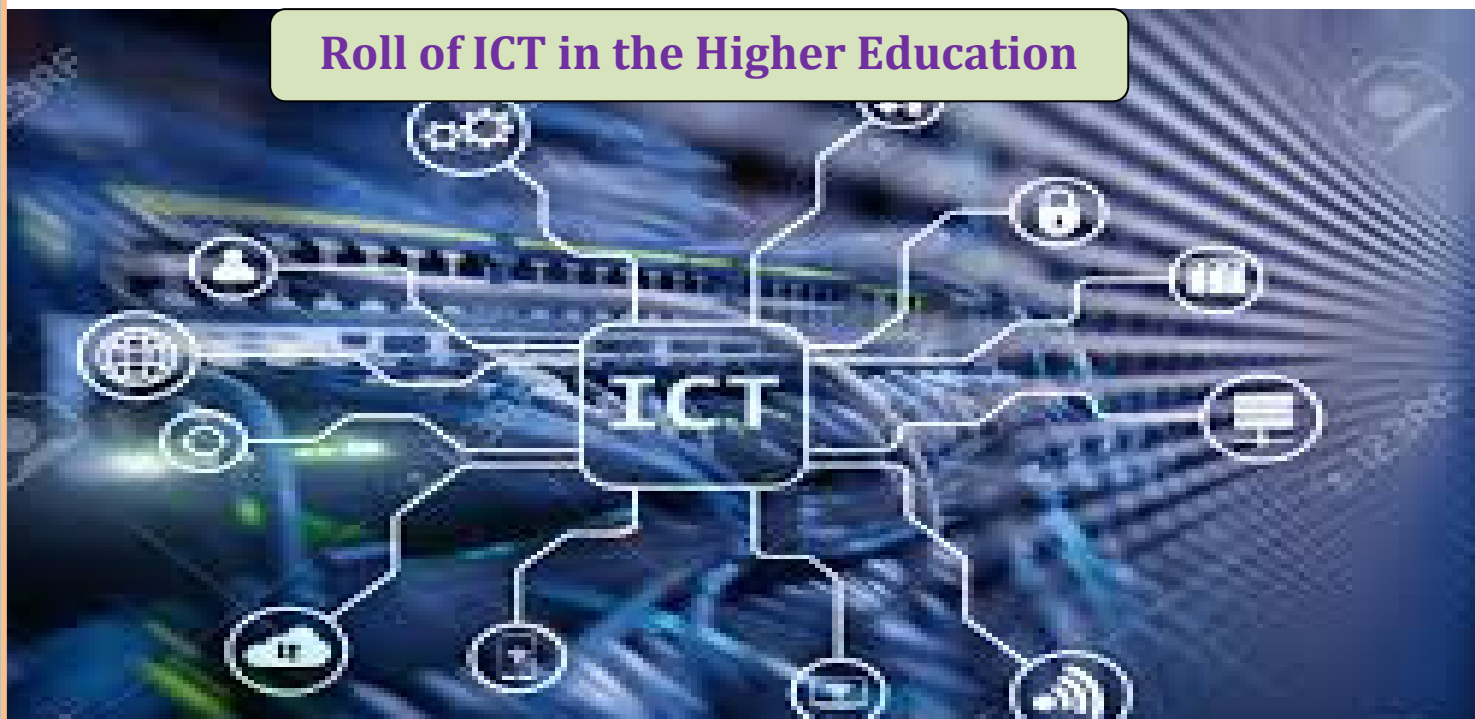
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Roll of ICT in the Higher Education



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Higher Education in Rural India: Challenges and Strategies

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Abstract:-

Education is the powerful way to fulfill our expected dreams. “शिक्षा का मकसद है एक खाली दिमाग को खुले दिमाग में परिवर्तित करना”, said by Melcom Fo. In Every National as well as State Educational System, Higher Education is the backbone of the modern society. “The foundation of every state is the education of its youth”, said by Diogenes Laertius. Our Hon’ble Prime Minister of India, Shri Narendra Modi, said that “Education should become a force for the nation’s character building”.

A quality education for all, in particular for the poor and rural population, is central to the economic and social development. The Gross Enrolment Rate (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. 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 inputs. UGC has recommended an ideal ratio of 1:30 for the general undergraduate courses. Unfortunately, in our country lesser number of educational institutes in rural areas. One of the main factors of lower enrolment in rural area is the cost of education. This is one of the biggest problems being faced by the students going to village colleges.

We can see high percentage of drop out among rural students. One of the major challenges facing by the higher educational institutes in rural areas is the standard of input students, especially in general education. Most of the rural colleges and universities do not use ICT during teaching. Apart from the course curriculum rural colleges are not able to involve students in other activities. It has been seen that not more than 20% of all students enrolled in a doctoral research program complete their work and almost 80% dropped out.

However the Higher Education in Rural India is facing many challenges. To win over it, the need is to prepare good management strategy with perspective view for better Higher Education in Rural India.

Introduction:-

Higher education is very important for the creation and development of the modern society. Higher education has the power to transform human beings into human resources. It is the backbone of the modern society. Along with primary and secondary education higher education is also an instrument to build future generation. Majority of India still lives in villages and so the topic of rural education in India is of utmost importance. 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. This project 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 we tried to find out possible remedies to overcome those barriers.

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 higher education is essential for personal as well as societal development. Higher education in India can be divided into two areas:

- i. Urban areas
- ii. Rural areas

The higher education in urban areas has brought significant development in urban areas. The youths of the country are continuously benefited from higher education in urban areas. However, in rural and remote areas the means of higher education are not up to the mark. The major reason for this are:

Major Reasons:

- i. Poverty
- ii. Inequality
- iii. Lack of quality education
- iv. Lack of fundamental facilities
- v. Difficulty in residing outside for education
- vi. Lack of means of education –
 - a. Internet facilities
 - b. Social Network
 - c. Education material
- vii. Inconvenience for women



Exceptions:

1. Lack of quality – the means of education are old
2. Middle and lower class families
3. Monetary contribution in the family
4. Limited employment
5. Dependency on village for fundamental needs
6. Medium of educational instructions

In rural and remote areas the parameters of education are framed but they are hardly accomplished:

- e.g. i. Elimination of economic inequality
ii. Inequality

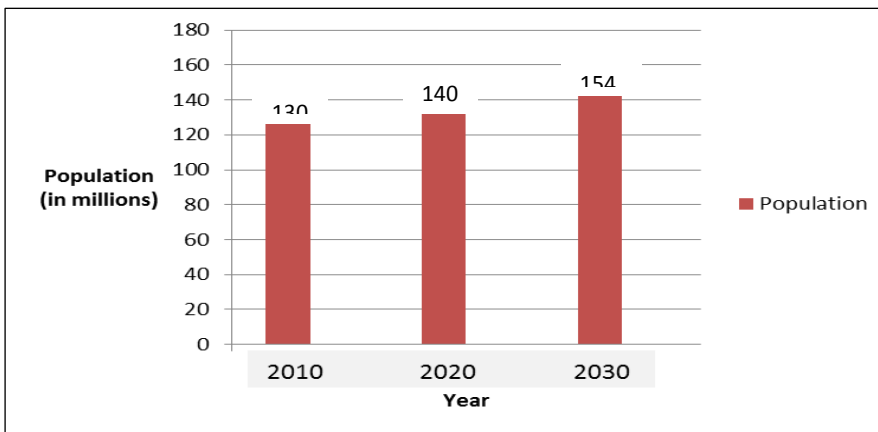
The village people are economically and socially backward in comparison to urban people, the major reason for which is lack of essentiality of higher education. There are few youths in village areas that are from the first generation of educated members in their family. There were 20 Universities and 500 Colleges at the time of independence. Recently massive growth in number of institutions of Higher Education System can be seen.



Current Status:-

Higher Education is the most powerful tool to build a knowledge-based society for the future. Higher Education provides people with an opportunity to reflect on the critical social, economic, cultural, moral and spiritual issues facing humanity. The National Policy on Education-1986, revised in 1992 (NPE) states that in Higher Education, steps will be taken to facilitate inter-regional mobility by providing equal access to every Indian of requisite merit regardless of his origins.

India will have the largest population in the world, in the higher education age bracket by 2030; increasing urbanization and income levels will drive demand for higher education.



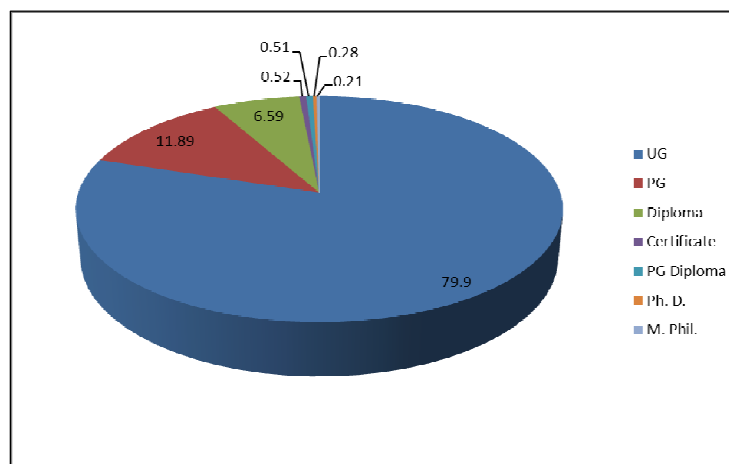
The current higher education system in India is massive with over 30 million students enrolled across 47,000 institutions.

A Statistical Overview:

Type of Institutions	2011 – 12	2012 – 13	2013 – 14
Universities	642	665	728
Colleges Stand alone	33649	34852	35829
Institutions	11126	11443	12000+
Enrolment (in Lakh)	291.84	296.29	305.00
Enrolment in Distance mode(in Lakh)	34.15	35.25	--

Level-wise Enrolment in Higher Education (Percentage):

UG	PG	Diploma	Certificate	PG Diploma	Ph. D.	M. Phil.	Integrated
79.9	11.89	6.59	0.52	0.51	0.28	0.21	0.09





The UGC in a report released in early part of 2010 has identified 374 districts of the country as educationally backward districts (EBD). This number as compared to the total nos. of 650 district of the country amounts to approximately 60% of the districts.

Educationally Backward Districts In India:

Category	Number
EBD with no Colleges	14
EBD with only one College	32
EBD with less than 10 Colleges	81
EBD with more than 100 Colleges	02

Gross Enrolment Ration (GER) in Higher Education:

Category	2010 – 11	2012 – 13
Male	20.8	22.3
Female	17.9	19.8
Total	19.4	21.1

Gross Enrolment Ratio has increased to 21.1 in 2012 – 13 from 19.4 in 2010 – 11 showing growth of 8.76 percentage point during that period. It may be seen that GER for male population is marginally higher which clearly indicates that women are also pursuing Higher Education and posing a challenge to male dominated society which is overall a healthy sign for Indian society.

Rural – Urban Pattern Of Ger:-

The rural urban divide continues as urban GER is about two times higher (33.5) than the rural (14.2). For women it is three times higher (32.6 for urban as compared to 11.3 for rural) whereas for urban men it is about twice the rural men, the corresponding figures being 24.77 for urban and 9.28 for rural.

Analysis of about 111 Universities and 3,492 colleges assessed by the NAAC indicates that the deficiencies in availability of human resources in terms of quantity and quality teachers and physical and other infrastructural facilities caused qualitative gaps between 'A' and 'C' grade Universities and colleges. The higher educational institute of rural areas are lacking behind in different aspects as compared to the institutes of urban areas which leads to lower grading by NAAC.

If colleges at rural level are to be brought at parity with high quality ones; a substantial improvement in the physical and academic infrastructure is necessary in the higher educational institutions located in remote areas.

There is a wide disparity in the GER across genders, social groups and regions, with rural areas and minority groups having a GER significantly lower than the national average. The southern states have a higher GER than northern and eastern states.



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.

Non-availability of Qualified Staff: 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.

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.

Cost of Education: One of the main factors of lower enrolment in rural area is the cost of education. Technical education is an only dream for most of the students of rural areas. These people are mostly dependents on the agriculture. Even sometimes it is seen that normal higher education expenses cannot be afforded by some of the families coming under lower middle class tag.

Lack of Transportation Facilities: This is one of the biggest problems being faced by the students going to village colleges.

High Dropout Rate: We can see high percentage of drop out among rural students.

Poor Input: One of the major challenges facing by the higher educational institutes in rural areas is the standard of input students, especially in general education.

Inadequate Physical Infrastructure: The higher educational institution of rural areas are bound to grade in the lower side since quality of input is also very low, and due to this grants are also given on the lower side which hinders improvement in physical infrastructure.

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.

Lack of Extra-Curricular Activities: Apart from the course curriculum rural colleges are not able to involve students in other activities.

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.

Misuse of Grants: For this funding is needed which has been made on the basis of grades given by NAAC on the basis of various parameters. 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.

Naturally the question arises in this context of quality of Higher Education in Rural India, Who is accountable? the institute? the university? the state? the judiciary? the education ? or All of them?

All over the world, Higher Education Institutes are being functioned at their ability in educational environment. However the Higher Education in Rural India is facing many challenges. To win over it, the need is to prepare good management strategy with perspective view.

Management Strategies:-

With the entry of Globalization along with Liberalization and Privatization there is urgent need for making available various policies, programs and facilities in higher education and this requires giving equal attention to the rural areas. It is therefore essential that we take a feed-back from the rural students, about the awareness and utilization of facilities introduced from time to time, as also to check the status of the availability of these facilities in the institutions where they are enrolled. As seen earlier Indian system of higher education has increased by leaps and bounds, but unfortunately it has not been accompanied by improvement in the quality imparted. The situation is worse in the rural areas. Care must be taken to develop skills of teachers for improving teaching learning transaction, creating a conducive academic environment, improving infrastructure, and introducing technology enabled learning wherever possible. Financial Paucity is an important impediment affecting higher education in general and rural education in particular. Education is essentially a merit good. With increasing demand for higher education the government may not be in a position to cater to all the needs. Therefore, steps have to be taken to supplement government efforts.

Research plays an important role in the economic development of any country and rural higher education is no exception to the rule. Providing for comprehensive study and innovation, is a necessary ingredient of progress of a nation. Therefore, the need arises for the establishment of research centers in the rural areas.

1. Due 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.
2. Establishment of professional education and agricultural colleges: All plans for expansion must lay emphasis on improving the quality of education. In this context, one can mention the need for establishing high quality higher educational institutions with respect to general education, in the rural areas. The local need of the rural area must be taken care off while establishing such institutions viz. agriculture, animal husbandry etc.
3. Wattage in admission to students from rural background: Due wattage should be given in these institutes for enrollment to the students from rural background.
4. Human resource development: 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.

5. Creation 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 benchmarking in teaching and research, support curricula updation, 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.
6. Review 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.
7. Establishing career guidance and 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.
8. 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.
9. 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.
10. Tackling the problem of rural dropouts: This calls for creation of a social awareness of the advantages of seeking and completing higher education and its repercussions on the future generations. A sense of awakening has to be generated, where the rural population is made to realize the significance of female education and the resulting employment prospects. This will help us in tackling the two basic problems of poverty and population explosion.
11. Education at subsidized rates: Keeping in mind the humble background of rural students efforts have to be made to provide education available at subsidized rates. This will help in addressing two crucial issues namely access and equity.

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. Some of the challenges in this context are as follows:

- Growth of both population and participation
- Drop-out rates
- Confidence crisis in public institutions
- Private Sector, Internationalization
- Economic Growth, Urbanization & Social Mobility
- Linguistic Diversity & English
- Curriculum and Pedagogy
- Governance and Accountability
- Educating Educators and Administrators
- Balancing quality and excellence with social justice

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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