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Status of higher Education in India - Contribution of Andhra Pradesh

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Lecture in English

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Abstract:

India's higher education system is one of the largest in the world, with a multi-layered structure. Higher education in India is undergoing significant transformation via NEP 2020, focusing on increased enrolment, skill development, and digitalization, with a national GER of 28.4%. Andhra Pradesh stands as a high-performing state, boasting a superior 35-36.5% Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) and 51 colleges per lakh population, emphasizing private sector participation, 4-year undergraduate programs, and industry-linked skill development.

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 aims to transform higher education by emphasizing multidisciplinary education, flexibility in course choices, research culture, industry linkages, and holistic development. Andhra Pradesh has a vast higher education system with hundreds of colleges and dozens of universities spanning technical, agricultural, medical, law, arts, and science domains. Most colleges are affiliated to state universities, with a few autonomous and central institutions. Andhra Pradesh also has many affiliated colleges offering professional and general degree programs under state universities. Academic collaborations, industry partnerships, and startup linkage programs can bridge gaps between education and employability.

- India's higher-education system is growing fast, but access, quality, and funding disparities persist across states.
- Andhra Pradesh performs slightly above the national average on enrollment and GER, with a diverse university ecosystem and recent enrollment growth, yet it faces challenges in research intensity, scholarship coverage, and rural reach.

Key words:

autonomous, disparities, emphasizing, intensity, performs, significance,

Introduction:

Higher education in India is undergoing significant transformation via NEP 2020, focusing on increased enrolment, skill development, and digitalization, with a national GER of 28.4%. Andhra Pradesh stands as a high-performing state, boasting a superior 35-36.5% Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) and 51 colleges per lakh population, emphasizing private sector participation, 4-year undergraduate programs, and industry-linked skill development.

Higher Education in India:

Status of Higher Education in Andhra Pradesh (AP)

- **Enrolment & Access:** AP boasts a 35-36.5% GER, significantly higher than the national average, with a Gender Parity Index of 0.93.
- **Institutional Structure:** The state has over 2,750 colleges, ranking 5th in India for college density. It is dominated by private, un-aided, and affiliated colleges (approx. 81-97% of total institutions).
- **Key Reforms & NEP Implementation:** AP is actively implementing NEP 2020 by introducing 4-year undergraduate programs with multiple entry/exit options, mandatory internships, and a mix of major/minor subjects.
- **Focus Areas:** The state has a strong focus on technical education, specifically engineering and pharmacy, and aims to strengthen AI-driven learning and industry connectivity.
- **Challenges:** Despite high growth, there is a decline in public expenditure on higher education (0.25% of GSDP in 2018-19). There is also a need to improve the performance of traditional and aided colleges and address low enrollment in certain arts courses.
- **Quality & Research:** While 47 universities exist, there is a push to improve research investment and global rankings, with institutions like Andhra University and JNTU-Kakinada showing recovery and growth.

Structure and Governance

India's higher education system is one of the largest in the world, with a multi-layered structure including:

- **Central Universities** – established by Parliament.
- **State Universities** – established by state legislatures.
- **Deemed Universities** – autonomous institutions recognized by the central government.
- **Private Universities** – established through state acts and regulated by the University Grants Commission (UGC).
- **Professional Institutions** – such as Institutes of National Importance (e.g., IITs, NITs, IIMs) recognized by specific legislation.

These institutions offer undergraduate, postgraduate, doctoral (PhD), and professional degree programs in arts, sciences, engineering, management, law, medicine, architecture, agriculture, etc.

- Enrollment size – India now has about 46.5 million students in colleges and universities, up from 43.3 million in 2021-22. Girls make up roughly 48 % of that total, though STEM fields remain male-dominant.

- Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) – The national GER for the 18-23 age group has risen to 32.5 % (from 28.4 % in 2021-22), reflecting the push of the National Education Policy 2020 for more institutions and online options.

- State variations – Uttar Pradesh leads with 70.68 lakh students, followed by Maharashtra (50.22 lakh) and Tamil Nadu (39.53 lakh). States like Bihar (25.5 %) and Ladakh (24.5 %) lag behind due to fewer colleges and rural access challenges. Overall, only 73.7 % of students attend government colleges, which are cheaper but often under-resourced.

- Quality and funding – Just 1.2 % of students receive government scholarships, and many rural areas (e.g., Odisha with GER 27.8 %) lack adequate college infrastructure. The NEP aims to address this by creating at least one large multidisciplinary institution per district by 2030.

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Higher Education in Andhra Pradesh

Scale & Enrollment

- Andhra Pradesh has a **vast higher education system** with hundreds of colleges and dozens of universities spanning technical, agricultural, medical, law, arts, and science domains. Most colleges are affiliated to state universities, with a few autonomous and central institutions.
- According to reports, the **Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER)** in the state is around the mid-30s (%), indicating moderate participation in higher education relative to the eligible population.

Types of Institutions

State & Public Universities

Examples include:

- **Jawaharlal Nehru Technological University, Kakinada** – a well-recognized technical university with NAAC accreditation.
- **Vikrama Simhapuri University** – state public university in Nellore.

Institutes of National Importance / Centrally Funded Technical Institutions

- **National Institute of Technology, Andhra Pradesh** – an NIT offering engineering and research programs.
- **School of Planning and Architecture, Vijayawada** – specialized institute for planning and architecture.

Deemed & Private Universities

- **Madanapalle Institute of Technology and Science** – a deemed-to-be university offering tech and science programs.

Andhra Pradesh also has many affiliated colleges offering professional and general degree programs under state universities.

Recent Policy Changes

Local Admission Quota Revisions

- From the **2025–26 academic year**, the state government has **abolished the 15% non-local quota** in higher education institutions—effectively reserving seats for students from Andhra Pradesh.
- This applies across professional and academic programs (engineering, law, pharmacy, etc.) and ends the decade-long quota arrangement post-bifurcation.

Rankings & Quality

- Some institutions from Andhra Pradesh have gained visibility in national rankings; for example, **Andhra University** and **K L University** are listed among the top universities in the NIRF rankings. However, many others lag in research output and national visibility, indicating **quality disparities and capacity gaps**.

Key Challenges for Higher Education in Andhra Pradesh

Infrastructure & Research Output

- State universities often face **infrastructure limitations, faculty shortages, and limited research activity**, which affects their competitiveness nationally.

GER & Participation

- While higher education access has grown, **GER is below national aspirations**, and there's room for improvement, especially in rural and under-represented communities.

Balance Between Public & Private Sector

- With a high percentage of affiliated and private colleges, maintaining **quality assurance and regulatory compliance** is crucial to uphold academic standards.

Opportunities & Forward Directions

Expanding Central Institutions

- The establishment of national institutions (such as NIT, SPA, IIT, IIM) enhances technical and professional education. Investment in such centers attracts talent and strengthens research capacity.

Strategic Partnerships & Innovation

- Academic collaborations, industry partnerships, and startup linkage programs can bridge gaps between education and employability.
- - Enrollment and GER – AP enrolls about 22.32 lakh students (ranked 9th nationally) and reports a GER of 33.5 %, slightly above the national average. Between 2014-15 and 2020-21, total enrollment grew 12.5 % to 19.87 lakh, with female enrollment rising 20.4 % to 9.31 lakh .¹
- - Institutional landscape – The state hosts 3 central universities, 28 state public universities, 7 deemed universities, and 14 private state universities. Notable public universities include Acharya Nagarjuna University, Andhra University, and Sri Venkateswara Institute of Medical Sciences .² Additionally, there are 169 government degree colleges and 55 private-aided colleges, with about 35 % of them holding NAAC accreditation .³
- - Quality signals – In the NIRF 2025 rankings, AP's engineering and pharmacy schools showed gains, while management and law programs still need stronger research and industry ties. Institutions like Andhra University and JNTU Kakinada regained visibility, indicating potential for public-university recovery .⁴
- - Policy focus – AP's government has emphasized expanding model degree colleges in underserved areas and encouraging multidisciplinary institutions, aligning with NEP goals. However, research output and commercialisation remain weak, and the state still spends only about 2.2 % of its GSDP on education, compared to the national target of 6 % .⁵

Key Trends & Outlook

- **Campus Placements:** A sharp rise in campus placements (89,000 in 2021-22) indicates improving industry-ready skills.
- **Digitalization:** Increasing use of blended learning and online courses for skill-oriented education.
- **Women's Participation:** High participation of women, especially in nursing and paramedical courses.

Key Take-aways:

- - India's higher-education system is growing fast, but access, quality, and funding disparities persist across states.
- - Andhra Pradesh performs slightly above the national average on enrollment and GER, with a diverse university ecosystem and recent enrollment growth, yet it faces challenges in research intensity, scholarship coverage, and rural reach.

NEP-Driven Reforms:

- Implementation of NEP 2020 offers pathways to **multidisciplinary education, flexible curricula, and stronger industry linkages.**

Conclusion:

In India, the establishment of national institutions (such as NIT, SPA, IIT, IIM) enhances technical and professional education. Investment in such centers attracts talent and strengthens research capacity. Andhra Pradesh continues to shift from a high-volume system to one that prioritizes quality and employability to become a knowledge hub by 2029. Andhra Pradesh emphasizes the skill based education encourage every individual as an entrepreneur.

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