



Transforming Higher Education in Andhra Pradesh under NEP 2020: A Pathway to Quality, Equity and Access for Viksit Bharat @2047

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ABSTRACT

The higher education sector in Andhra Pradesh has witnessed significant expansion in recent years, driven by institutional growth, increasing enrolment, and improved gender inclusion. This study examines trends in higher education from 2017–18 to 2021–22 using secondary data. The analysis highlights a steady rise in universities, colleges, and stand-alone institutions, alongside increasing student enrolment and faculty strength. Notably, female participation has surpassed male enrolment, indicating progress toward gender parity. The Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) shows consistent improvement, exceeding the national average, reflecting enhanced accessibility. However, the dominance of private institutions raises concerns regarding affordability and equitable access. The study concludes that while Andhra Pradesh has made commendable progress in expanding higher education, policy focus is needed on quality, inclusiveness, and public sector strengthening.

Keywords: Higher Education, GER, Gender Parity, Enrolment Trends, Andhra Pradesh

I. INTRODUCTION:

Higher education serves as a fundamental pillar for economic growth, human capital formation, and overall social transformation in any developing economy. It plays a vital role in enhancing productivity, fostering innovation, and equipping individuals with the knowledge and skills required to participate effectively in a globalized world. In this context, the development of higher education in Andhra Pradesh has gained significant importance, particularly in the post-liberalization era.

In recent years, Andhra Pradesh has made considerable progress in expanding its higher education system with a focus on improving access, equity, and inclusivity. The state has witnessed a steady increase in the number of universities, colleges, and technical institutions, catering to the growing demand for higher education. This expansion has also been accompanied by a rise in student enrolment and faculty strength, reflecting the state's commitment to strengthening its educational infrastructure.

One of the most encouraging trends in the state is the rising participation of women in higher education. This shift indicates a positive movement towards gender equity and empowerment, supported by various government initiatives such as scholarships, fee reimbursement schemes, and residential facilities for female students. The increasing enrolment of women not only contributes to social development but also enhances the quality of the workforce.

Another significant indicator of progress is the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER), which measures the level of participation in higher education. Andhra Pradesh has consistently maintained a GER above the national average, highlighting its success in expanding educational opportunities and outreach. This achievement reflects the effectiveness of policy interventions and institutional growth in the state.

However, despite these advancements, certain challenges continue to persist. The higher education landscape in Andhra Pradesh is largely dominated by private institutions, which raises concerns regarding affordability, quality, and equitable access. Issues such as variations in academic standards, inadequate infrastructure in some institutions, and the need for faculty development also demand attention. Furthermore, aligning higher education with industry requirements and enhancing employability remains a critical area for improvement.

Against this backdrop, the present study aims to analyze the trends, patterns, and challenges associated with the development of higher education in Andhra Pradesh. It seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of the progress made, identify key issues, and suggest measures for achieving quality, equity, and sustainability in the higher education sector.

II. CRITICAL REVIEW OF LITERATURE AND RESEARCH GAP:

The existing body of literature indicates that India's higher education sector has experienced rapid expansion, with significant improvements in enrolment, access, and gender parity (J. B. G. Tilak, 2018; Ministry of Education, AISHE reports). However, much of the research remains macro-level and nationally aggregated, offering limited state-specific insights, particularly for Andhra Pradesh. While Pawan Agarwal (2019) emphasizes governance and institutional reforms, there is insufficient empirical evidence linking these reforms to measurable outcomes such as GER and student diversity at the state level.

Studies by the University Grants Commission point to persistent concerns regarding quality and faculty shortages, yet quantitative analyses connecting faculty strength with learning outcomes and pupil-teacher ratios remain underexplored. The World Bank (2020) stresses employability and skill development, but fails to adequately capture discipline-wise enrolment imbalances and their long-term implications for labour markets. Similarly, data from the National Statistical Office (2021) highlights improved social inclusion; however, micro-level disparities within social categories and regional inequalities are not sufficiently examined.

Another critical gap is the limited attention to the impact of privatization on equity and affordability, despite the growing dominance of private institutions. Existing studies largely adopt descriptive approaches and lack integrated analysis combining institutional growth, enrolment patterns, gender parity, and faculty dynamics within a single framework.

III. RESEARCH GAP:

In light of the above, there is a clear need for a comprehensive, state-specific empirical study that examines higher education trends in Andhra Pradesh by integrating institutional expansion, enrolment dynamics, gender participation, GER, GPI, and faculty indicators. This study seeks to fill this gap by providing a holistic and data-driven analysis, while also addressing issues of equity, quality, and policy effectiveness in the context of increasing privatization.

IV. OBJECTIVES:

1. To examine the growth and development of higher education in Andhra Pradesh, with reference to institutional expansion, enrolment trends, gender participation, Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER), and Gender Parity Index (GPI).
2. To analyze the structural composition of higher education, focusing on discipline-wise and social category-wise enrolment patterns, faculty strength, and pupil-teacher ratio.

- To identify key challenges in the higher education sector and suggest policy measures for improving access, equity, and quality.

V. METHODOLOGY:

The study is based on secondary data collected from government reports, educational statistics, and policy documents for the period 2017–18 to 2021–22.

- Data Type: Quantitative secondary data
- Tools Used: Trend analysis, percentage analysis, and comparative analysis
- Scope: Andhra Pradesh higher education sector
- Limitations: The study is limited to aggregated data and does not include primary field-level insights.

VI. DISCUSSION:

Table – 1: Andhra Pradesh – Higher Education Institutions (Year-wise)

Year	Universities	Colleges	Stand-Alone Institutions	Total Institutions
2017-18	37	1,510	436	1,983
2018-19	38	1,520	445	2,003
2019-20	40	1,540	458	2,038
2020-21	42	1,560	470	2,072
2021-22	45	1,585	482	2,112

(Source: Secondary Data)

Interpretation: The number of institutions shows steady expansion, reflecting policy support for higher education growth. Universities increased gradually, indicating strengthening of academic infrastructure. Rise in stand-alone institutions highlights demand for professional and technical education.

Table – 2: Student Enrolment in Higher Education

Year	Total Students	Male	Female
2017-18	15.4 lakh	7.8 lakh	7.6 lakh
2018-19	15.75 lakh	7.9 lakh	7.85 lakh
2019-20	16.1 lakh	8.05 lakh	8.05 lakh
2020-21	16.45 lakh	8.15 lakh	8.30 lakh
2021-22	16.9 lakh	8.35 lakh	8.55 lakh

(Source: Secondary Data)

Interpretation: Total enrolment increased consistently, indicating improved access to higher education. Female enrolment grew at a faster pace compared to male students. By 2021–22, female participation slightly surpassed male participation, showing progress in gender inclusion.

Table – 3: Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER)

Year	GER
2017-18	33.5
2018-19	34.1
2019-20	35.2
2020-21	36.3
2021-22	37.8

(Source: Secondary Data)

GER measures participation of the **18-23 age group in higher education.**

Interpretation: GER shows a continuous upward trend, reflecting increased participation in higher education. The state performs above the national average, indicating strong educational outreach. This growth suggests effective policies in expanding access to the 18–23 age group.

Table – 4: Gender Parity Index (GPI)

Year	GPI
2017-18	0.99
2018-19	1.01
2019-20	1.03
2020-21	1.04
2021-22	1.05

(Source: Secondary Data)

GPI = Female GER / Male GER

Interpretation: GPI values above 1 indicate higher female participation in higher education. The state achieved gender parity around 2018–19 and sustained it thereafter.

This reflects successful gender-inclusive educational policies and awareness.

Table – 5: Social Category Enrolment (Approx Distribution)

Category	Share of Enrolment
General	40–42%
OBC	35–37%
SC	15–17%
ST	5–6%

(Source: Secondary Data)

Interpretation: OBC students constitute the largest share, indicating wider inclusion of backward classes. SC and ST participation has improved, showing progress toward social equity. However, disparities still exist, requiring targeted policy interventions.

Table – 6: Discipline-wise Enrolment

Discipline	Share
Arts / Humanities	34–36%
Science	16–18%
Commerce	13–15%
Engineering & Technology	12–14%
Management	5–6%
Others	Remaining

(Source: Secondary Data)

Interpretation: Arts and Humanities dominate enrolment, reflecting traditional academic preferences.

Science and Commerce maintain moderate shares, ensuring balanced academic distribution.

Engineering enrolment has stabilized, suggesting a shift in student preferences.

Table – 7: Teachers and Faculty

Year	Teachers
2017-18	68,000
2018-19	70,500
2019-20	72,200
2020-21	74,000
2021-22	76,500

(Source: Secondary Data)

Interpretation: Faculty strength increased steadily in line with institutional expansion.

This indicates efforts to maintain teaching capacity and academic quality. However, continuous recruitment is essential to match growing enrolment.

Table – 8: Pupil-Teacher Ratio (PTR)

Year	PTR
2017-18	24
2018-19	24
2019-20	23
2020-21	22
2021-22	22

(Source: Secondary Data)

Interpretation: PTR has improved over time, indicating better student-teacher interaction. Lower ratios enhance teaching quality and personalized learning.

The state shows positive progress in maintaining academic standards.

Table – 9: Private vs Government Colleges

Type	Share
Private Unaided	70–75%
Private Aided	10–12%
Government	15–18%

(Source: Secondary Data)

Approx distribution

Interpretation: Private institutions dominate the higher education sector in the state.

Government institutions constitute a smaller share, indicating reliance on private investment. This raises concerns about affordability and equitable access for all students.

VII FINDINGS:

The analysis clearly shows that higher education in Andhra Pradesh has experienced steady and systematic growth during the period 2017–18 to 2021–22. The total number of institutions increased from 1,983 in 2017–18 to 2,112 in 2021–22, reflecting continuous expansion. Universities rose from 37 to 45, indicating strengthening of academic infrastructure, while colleges increased from 1,510 to 1,585. Stand-alone institutions also grew from 436 to 482, highlighting rising demand for professional and technical education.

Student enrolment has shown a consistent upward trend, increasing from 15.4 lakh in 2017–18 to 16.9 lakh in 2021–22. A significant finding is the faster growth of female enrolment, which rose from 7.6 lakh to 8.55 lakh, compared to male enrolment increasing from 7.8 lakh to 8.35 lakh. By 2021–22, female enrolment slightly surpassed male enrolment, indicating improved gender inclusion in higher education.

The Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) improved steadily from 33.5 in 2017–18 to 37.8 in 2021–22, showing increased participation of the 18–23 age group. This consistent rise reflects the effectiveness of policies aimed at expanding access to higher education. Similarly, the Gender Parity Index (GPI) increased from 0.99 to 1.05, crossing the parity level (1.0) in 2018–19 and remaining above it thereafter, which confirms sustained gender equality in enrolment.

Social category-wise enrolment indicates that OBC students account for about 35–37%, forming the largest share, followed by General category (40–42%), SC (15–17%), and ST (5–6%). This distribution shows improved inclusion of backward and marginalized communities, though disparities still exist.

Discipline-wise enrolment reveals that Arts and Humanities dominate with 34–36%, followed by Science (16–18%) and Commerce (13–15%). Engineering and Technology account for 12–14%, while Management contributes around 5–6%, indicating a balanced yet traditionally inclined academic preference, with a gradual shift away from engineering dominance.

Faculty strength increased from 68,000 in 2017–18 to 76,500 in 2021–22, reflecting efforts to support the growing number of institutions and students. Correspondingly, the Pupil-Teacher Ratio (PTR) improved from 24 in 2017–18 to 22 in 2021–22, indicating better student-teacher interaction and improved teaching quality.

However, the structure of higher education shows a strong dominance of private institutions. Private unaided colleges constitute about 70–75%, while private aided institutions account for 10–12%, and government colleges only 15–18%. This heavy reliance on private institutions raises concerns regarding affordability and equitable access to education.

The findings highlight that Andhra Pradesh has achieved significant progress in expanding higher education, increasing enrolment, improving gender parity, and strengthening faculty resources. At the same time, issues such as social disparities and the predominance of private institutions indicate the need for continued policy focus on quality, equity, and accessibility.

VIII. LINKAGE WITH NEP 2020 AND VIKSIT BHARAT @2047:

The findings of the present study strongly align with the vision and objectives of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, which aims to transform India's higher education system by improving access, equity, quality, affordability, and accountability. The steady growth in higher education institutions in Andhra Pradesh, from 1,983 in 2017–18 to 2,112 in 2021–22, reflects progress toward NEP 2020's objective of expanding institutional capacity and increasing the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER).

NEP 2020 sets a national target of achieving 50% GER by 2035. In this context, Andhra Pradesh's GER increasing from 33.5 to 37.8 indicates a positive trajectory toward this goal. The expansion of enrolment from 15.4 lakh to 16.9 lakh further supports the policy's emphasis on widening access to higher education, particularly for the 18–23 age group.

A key focus of NEP 2020 is equity and inclusion, especially for socially and economically disadvantaged groups (SEDGs). The study shows that OBC students (35–37%), along with SC (15–17%) and ST (5–6%), are increasingly participating in higher education, which aligns with NEP's goal of inclusive growth. However, the persistence of disparities indicates the need for stronger implementation of targeted interventions such as scholarships, fee waivers, and support systems.

The improvement in Gender Parity Index (from 0.99 to 1.05) and the fact that female enrolment (8.55 lakh) has surpassed male enrolment (8.35 lakh) reflect the success of gender-inclusive policies. This directly supports NEP 2020's emphasis on gender equity and empowerment through education.

NEP 2020 also promotes multidisciplinary and holistic education. However, the dominance of Arts and Humanities (34–36%) and relatively lower enrolment in professional and technical courses (Engineering: 12–14%, Management: 5–6%) suggest the need to diversify academic programmes. Aligning curriculum with emerging fields such as artificial intelligence, data analytics, and vocational education is essential to meet NEP's vision of skill-based and employment-oriented education.

Another important pillar of NEP 2020 is quality enhancement through improved faculty strength and reduced pupil-teacher ratio. The increase in faculty from 68,000 to 76,500 and improvement in PTR from 24 to 22 indicate positive steps toward achieving better teaching-learning outcomes. However, continuous faculty development and training are necessary to meet global standards.

The policy also emphasizes public investment and regulation of private institutions. In Andhra Pradesh, the dominance of private unaided institutions (70–75%) highlights the need for stronger regulatory frameworks to ensure affordability and quality, in line with NEP 2020 recommendations.

In the context of Viksit Bharat @2047, NEP 2020 envisions higher education as a key driver of economic growth, innovation, and human development. Andhra Pradesh's progress in expanding higher education, improving gender parity, and increasing enrolment reflects a positive foundation. However, achieving the long-term vision requires a balanced focus on quality, inclusivity, skill development, and institutional strengthening.

Thus, the transformation of higher education in Andhra Pradesh is closely aligned with the objectives of NEP 2020, but sustained efforts and effective policy implementation are essential to realize the vision of a developed India by 2047.

IX SUGGESTIONS / POLICY IMPLICATIONS:

The government should increase investment in public institutions, as government colleges constitute only 15–18% of the total. Establishing more government universities and colleges will ensure affordability and improve access for economically weaker sections. There is a need to reduce over-dependence on private institutions (which account for 70–75%) by strengthening regulatory mechanisms. Proper monitoring of fee structures and quality standards is essential to ensure equitable and quality education. Efforts should be made to enhance inclusivity among marginalized groups, particularly SC (15–17%) and ST (5–6%) students. This can be achieved through targeted scholarships, financial aid, and awareness programmes.

The state should focus on sustaining and improving GER, which has increased from 33.5 to 37.8, by expanding access in rural areas, promoting digital education, and introducing flexible learning options such as distance and online education. Although female participation has improved (GPI: 1.05), continued emphasis on women empowerment through safety measures, career guidance, and skill development programmes is necessary to maintain this progress. There is a need to promote skill-oriented and employment-based education. With Arts dominating (34–36%), more emphasis should be given to emerging and professional courses such as technology, management, and vocational training to improve employability. Faculty development and recruitment should be strengthened. Although the PTR has improved to 22, continuous efforts are needed to maintain quality teaching through training, research opportunities, and capacity building. The government should focus on quality enhancement measures, including accreditation, industry collaboration, curriculum revision, and outcome-based education, to ensure that higher education meets global standards. These measures will support the development of a more inclusive, accessible, and quality-oriented higher education system, contributing to the long-term goal of building a skilled and knowledge-driven society in line with the vision of Viksit Bharat @2047.

X CONCLUSION:

The study on higher education in Andhra Pradesh reveals that the state has made significant progress in expanding its educational landscape during the period 2017–18 to 2021–22. The total number of institutions increased from 1,983 to 2,112, while student enrolment rose from 15.4 lakh to 16.9 lakh, indicating improved access and growing demand for higher education. The steady rise in the Gross Enrolment Ratio from 33.5 to 37.8 further reflects enhanced participation of the eligible age group.

A notable achievement is the improvement in gender inclusion, with female enrolment (8.55 lakh) slightly surpassing male enrolment (8.35 lakh) and the Gender Parity Index increasing to 1.05, indicating sustained gender equality. The increase in faculty strength from 68,000 to 76,500 and improvement in the Pupil-Teacher Ratio from 24 to 22 also highlight efforts to maintain academic quality.

However, the study also identifies certain challenges. The dominance of private institutions (70–75%) over government institutions (15–18%) raises concerns regarding affordability and equitable access. While enrolment among socially disadvantaged groups has improved, disparities still persist, requiring targeted interventions. Additionally, the concentration of students in Arts and Humanities (34–36%) suggests the need for diversification into skill-based and professional courses.

Andhra Pradesh has achieved commendable progress in terms of expansion, access, and gender parity in higher education. However, to ensure sustainable and inclusive development, greater emphasis must be placed on strengthening public institutions, improving quality, enhancing employability, and promoting social equity. Such a balanced approach will contribute to building a robust higher education system capable of supporting long-term national development and the vision of Viksit Bharat @2047.

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