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Higher Education in India - Especially In A.P

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Introduction

India has millions of students enrolled in higher education. Higher education in India is the world's second-largest system, featuring over 1,300 universities and 52,000+ colleges as of 2025, providing tertiary education after 12 years of schooling. It includes central, state, deemed, and private universities, alongside prestigious institutions like IITs and IIMs. The sector is regulated by the University Grants Commission (UGC) and heavily focused on STEM, with significant growth in capacity and a shift towards research-driven, multidisciplinary learning under the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020.

Types of Institutions:

Central Universities: Funded by the Union Government (e.g., Delhi University).

State Universities: Established by state legislation, catering to regional needs.

Private Universities: Funded by private entities, rapidly expanding.

Deemed Universities: High-performing institutions with autonomy.

Institutes of National Importance (INI): Specialized, premier institutions like IITs, IIMs, and AIIMS.

Structure:

Primarily follows a three-layered structure: Universities, Colleges, and Courses. Most colleges are affiliated with a central or state university for curriculum and examinations.

Regulatory Body: The University Grants Commission (UGC) oversees standards and coordination.

Growth and Trends

Expansion: The number of institutions has grown significantly, with 1,338 universities and over 52,000 colleges as of June 2025.

Global Ranking: India has seen a 318% increase in representation in global rankings, the highest among G20 nations.

Geographic Concentration: States with the highest college density include Karnataka, Telangana, Kerala, and Tamil Nadu.

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Vijayawada, Andhra Pradesh, India.

NEP 2020 Reforms: The National Education Policy 2020 promotes flexible, multidisciplinary, and research-based education.

Challenges

Quality Variation: Significant disparities in quality exist between top-tier institutions (IITs/IIMs) and many regional colleges.

Employability: A major focus is shifting toward practical, industry-aligned skills to improve employability.

Access: While access has expanded, providing quality, affordable education to a large population remains a challenge.

The number of universities and colleges has been growing. Many new colleges and universities have been added over the past decade to improve access.

Quality and Accreditation

Institutions are assessed by bodies like the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC), which sets quality standards for universities and colleges. The University Grants Commission (UGC) actively identifies fake/unauthorized universities across the country to protect students — ensuring degrees are valid.

National Education Policy (NEP 2020)

NEP 2020 aims to reform higher education with a focus on multidisciplinary learning, flexibility, and research culture. Many states including AP are implementing its changes.

Andhra Pradesh is a premier higher education hub in India, ranking fifth nationally with over 2,750 colleges and a 35% Gross Enrolment Ratio. The state hosts premier institutes like NIT Andhra Pradesh IIIT Sri City, and Andhra University, focusing heavily on private, unaided engineering and technical education (81% of institutions).

Key Aspects of Higher Education in Andhra Pradesh:

Ranking & Reputation: AP aims for top-3 national ranking, with universities like Andhra University, JNTU-Kakinada, and SVU being prominent.

Infrastructure: Key institutions include IIIT Sri City (high placements) NIT Tadepalligudem GITAM University, and SRM University AP.

Key Areas of Study: Strong focus on engineering, technology, and science, with a high volume of students in undergraduate BA, BSc, and BCom programs.

Admissions: Driven by state-level exams like AP EAMCET (engineering/pharmacy) and AP PG CET.

Reforms & Initiatives: The state is aligning with NEP 2020, focusing on skill development, digital learning, and industry-oriented courses, supported by the APSCHE.

Key Educational Hubs: Visakhapatnam, Vijayawada, Tirupati, Guntur, and Kakinada.

Notable Institutions (2025-26):

Central: NIT Tadepalligudem, IIIT Sri City IISER Tirupati.

State/Private: Andhra University, JNTU-Kakinada/Anantapur, SVU, KL University, Vignan's Foundation, and SRM University

Ongoing Reforms

The state government is conducting manpower audits in universities to improve governance and remove irregular appointments — aiming to boost credibility and academic standards.

Skill and AI Initiatives

AP plans to launch an AI skill development portal to connect higher education with job opportunities and industry needs.

Rankings and Quality

From the National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF) 2025:

Andhra University and KL University were among the top-ranked institutions from AP nationally.

Other universities also appear but many institutions need improvement in areas such as research output and infrastructure.

Challenges

Many AP colleges, especially smaller affiliated ones, struggle with Limited research culture, Infrastructure gaps and faculty shortages in specialized subjects. This mirrors similar issues seen in other Indian states' education systems.

Infrastructure & Research: Many universities need better labs, libraries, and research funding.

Quality Tuning: Improving teaching quality, industry linkage, and global competitiveness remains a priority.

Opportunities

NEP 2020 Implementation: Offers a long-term vision for flexible, multidisciplinary, research-oriented education.

Technology and Industry Collaboration: Initiatives like the AI portal and partnerships with foreign universities can prepare students for future jobs.

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