

Central Government Schemes in Indian Higher Education: A Comprehensive Analysis of Impact, Quality, and Assessment Methodologies

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Abstract:

This comprehensive analysis examines the impact of central government schemes on Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in Indian higher education, focusing on initiatives such as Rashtriya Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA), Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY), and the Higher Education Commission of India (HECI) Act. Through a meticulous review of literature, survey data analysis, and discussion of outcomes, this research delves into the complexities of GER trends, scheme effectiveness, and socio-economic factors influencing enrolment rates. Findings reveal nuances in scheme outcomes, highlighting variations across population segments and geographic regions. While schemes like RUSA and PMKVY show potential in bridging enrolment gaps and preparing a skilled workforce, reforms are necessary to optimize their impact. Moreover, the Higher Education Funding Agency (HEFA), under the HECI Act, plays a significant role in infrastructure development but needs to balance this with broader educational quality considerations. Contrary to initial hypotheses, the study finds no statistically significant association between scheme implementation and sustainable GER growth, emphasizing the need for evidence-based reforms. Recommendations include enhancing awareness campaigns, aligning training programs with industry needs, and strengthening quality assurance mechanisms. This research contributes valuable insights for policymakers, educators, and stakeholders striving to enhance accessibility, quality, and inclusivity in Indian higher education.

Keywords: Indian higher education, Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER), central government schemes, Rastriya Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA), Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY), Higher Education Commission of India (HECI) Act, infrastructure development, socio-economic factors.

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Introduction

In the realm of higher education, enrolments serve as a key barometer of a nation's commitment to knowledge dissemination and societal advancement. The journey of enrolment ratios is not merely a statistical trajectory but an insightful reflection of evolving educational paradigms and socio-economic dynamics. This research, will be confronted with a compelling narrative that encapsulates decades of educational aspirations, policy interventions, and global comparisons. India, as a nation with an undying commitment to academic excellence, stands at a unique crossroads. Over a span of 73 years, five dedicated Five-Year Plans were directed towards various facets of higher education. The Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) paints a story of significant change - an ascent from below 5% in 1950 to 27.3% in 2020. While this numerical progression is unmistakable, the pace of this evolution is something to ponder upon.

The post-World War II era witnessed an unprecedented transformation in the landscape of education. What was initially the privilege of industrialized nations soon became a global phenomenon. Trying to decipher the factors that fuelled this educational globalization, it is an intellectual journey that spans continents and generations. Understanding the impact of central government schemes on the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in Indian higher education is indispensable for formulating effective policy interventions. By critically analyzing the outcomes of initiatives such as Rashtriya Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA), Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY), and the Higher Education Commission of India (HECI) Act, policymakers, educators, and stakeholders can gain valuable insights into the efficacy of existing policies and identify areas for improvement. This evidence-based approach to policymaking ensures that interventions are responsive to the evolving needs of the higher education sector and contribute meaningfully to enhancing accessibility, quality, and inclusivity. Moreover, by addressing challenges such as limited access, quality concerns, and gender disparities, informed policy decisions can drive positive reforms and foster holistic development in the Indian higher education landscape. India faces numerous challenges in its higher education system, including limited access, quality concerns, and gender disparities. By analyzing the impact of government schemes on GER, the paper seeks to address these challenges and contribute to ongoing efforts to enhance the quality and inclusivity of higher education in India.

Literature Review

The global landscape of higher education enrolment reflects a dynamic interplay of economic, social, and policy factors. The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) reports have highlighted the intriguing paradox wherein economic giants face relatively low enrolment ratios, sparking questions about the intricate relationship between economic prowess and educational accessibility (OECD, 2021). This paradox beckons a deeper exploration into the factors influencing enrolment rates and the nuanced dynamics within higher education systems.

However, the post-war era also witnessed disparities in enrolment ratios between North American and European regions, where ratios soared to remarkable heights, and South Asian nations where ratios scarcely breached the 25% mark. These global disparities underscore both growth potential and the stunted pace of advancement, emphasizing the need for a more equitable educational landscape on an international scale (Altbach, 2004).

Gender disparities within education further amplify the complexity of the issue. While Indian statistics highlight variances in enrolment ratios, the juxtaposition of global realities fosters compelling questions about the nature of education and the direction of academic pursuits. The heart of this research lies in understanding why the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) remains relatively low and exploring the ambitious educational initiatives like the Rashtriya Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA), aiming to achieve a 50% higher education enrolment ratio by 2030.

In light of these complexities, the proposed research seeks to navigate the multifaceted dimensions of central government schemes, delving into the outcomes of initiatives like RUSA, Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY), and the Higher Education Commission of India (HECI) Act (Government of India, 2021). This exploration is crucial for understanding the impact of these schemes on GER, bridging enrolment gaps, and preparing a skilled workforce in the context of Indian higher education. By critically examining existing literature, this study aims to build a foundation for informed discussions and evidence-based policy recommendations, contributing to the ongoing discourse on higher education in India.

Hypothesis:

The research posits that the successful implementation of RUSA, PMKVY, and the HECI Act has the potential to significantly impact the Gross Enrolment Ratio in Indian higher

education. The norm-based and outcome-dependent approach of RUSA, coupled with PMKVY's focus on skill development, has the potential to bridge enrolment gaps and prepare a skilled workforce, indirectly contributing to GER growth. The HECI Act, with its emphasis on infrastructure development, could further amplify GER, provided a delicate equilibrium is maintained between physical infrastructure enhancement and broader aspects of educational quality.

Analysis:

The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) reports have unveiled an intriguing paradox - the United States, a global economic giant, wrestles with one of the lowest enrolment ratios. The OECD's meticulous analysis, grounded in the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) 2011, raises questions about the intricate relationship between economic prowess and educational accessibility. This paradox beckons to explore deeper nuances within the American higher education landscape.

The global perspective reveals profound disparities. In North American and European regions, GERs soar to remarkable heights, often exceeding 39.7% as of 2019. On the flip side, South Asian nations grapple with GERs that have scarcely breached the 25% mark. These data underline the growth potential, but they simultaneously emphasize the stunted pace of advancement. Notably, the chasm between developed and developing nations in the domain of tertiary education looms large, accentuating the pressing need for a more equitable landscape. The enrolment rate for higher education in North America stands at approximately 39.7%, while in India, it is around 25%. This indicates that the enrolment rate in North America is approximately 1.588 times higher than in India.

Gender disparity within education further amplifies the complexity of the issue. While Indian statistics highlight the variance in enrolment ratios. The juxtaposition of these realities fosters compelling questions about the nature of education and the direction of academic pursuits.

At the heart of this research lies a core question: why does the GER remain relatively low? In the backdrop of ambitious educational initiatives like the Rashtriya Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyan, which aspires to achieve a 50% higher education enrolment ratio by 2030, the observed growth trajectory appears modest. Indeed, the average growth rate derived from the provided data stands at 13%, begging the query: is reaching a 50% threshold feasible, or does it remain a distant aspiration?

This exploration is beyond the mere fixation on numbers. To scrutinize the frameworks employed by developed nations that yield GERs well above 50%. This study is to contemplate the amalgamation of Western systems or the reinvigoration of traditional modes of imparting knowledge.

Furthermore, the paradox of the 2024 Times Higher Education global university rankings warrants attention. The rankings position the Indian higher education system as the best in the world, offering a paradoxical counterpoint to the observed GER growth rates. Is the Indian system oriented toward achieving international recognition rather than addressing the needs of its domestic populace?

This research endeavours to navigate these multifaceted dimensions, drawing upon the outcomes of specific educational schemes and their potential impact on the realization of enrolment targets. The Gross Enrolment Ratio in 2023 for Higher Education stands at 27.3%, reflecting a significant increase, albeit with a discernible element of moderation. The subsequent sections of this paper will delve into these facets, aiming to unveil the underlying nuances of enrolment rates, system quality, and related considerations. Drawing from the All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) 2020-21 and aligning with the broader context of central government schemes. With a total enrolment of 38.5 million, the AISHE data reveals key trends, including a 27.1 Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) and notable discipline-wise distribution.

Survey Overview:

The AISHE survey, initiated in 2011 and conducted annually, captures crucial data on institutions, enrolment, and various parameters shaping educational development.

2020-21 Survey Methodology:

In 2020-21, the AISHE survey was conducted through an online WebData Capture Format, reflecting a modern approach to data collection.

Institutional Growth:

The AISHE data for 2020-21 reveals significant institutional growth, with the number of universities increasing from 864 in 2016-17 to 1113 in 2020-21.

Enrolment Trends:

Noteworthy enrolment trends indicate a substantial increase, crossing the 4 crore mark in 2020-21, demonstrating a 21% growth between 2016-17 and 2020-21.

Diversity and Gender Inclusivity:

The AISHE results highlight the diversity of institutions, encompassing 1113 universities, 43796 colleges, and 11296 stand-alone institutions.

Notably, 446 universities are privately managed, 43% of universities are situated in rural areas, and 17 universities exclusively cater to women, contributing to gender inclusivity.

Government Schemes and University-Level Education

Rashtriya Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA):

Launched in 2013, RUSA focuses on transforming higher education institutions. It aims to provide funding for state universities and colleges to improve infrastructure, faculty quality, and overall academic standards.

However, this scheme is norm-based and outcome-dependent. This means that the more the population has access to this scheme, the higher the input that it receives from central and state governments. The aimed target to achieve an enrolment percentage is 50%, which might replicate a good amount of GER and be a part of the best-ranked country in education. However, the primary aim of the scheme is to improve teaching quality and increase awareness in remote areas to inculcate higher education. The target year is 2035, implying that the government and the funds allocated for this program should be able to incorporate the majority of the population into the higher education system. The GER for 2019-20 was 27.3%, out of 148,503 thousand (The total population aged between 18 to 23 years) of 4,05,41,319. The outcomes should be focused on gender inclusion, equity, enhancing employability, teacher quality, vocational training, and more, primarily in remote/rural areas, regions with left-wing extremism, the Northeast Region (NER), and poverty-stricken areas. However, the scheme should emphasize raising awareness among educational institutions, ensuring that they are aware of and able to leverage these programs to significantly increase GER.

Transparency regarding NIRF's research data remains an area of concern, and ensuring that universities are well-informed about the intricacies of these rankings is crucial for

increasing GER. It is vital to encourage institutions to prioritize both rankings and genuine research quality.

Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY):

This plan focuses on delivering skill training where the employees are hired for a brief time and put in between 150 and 300 hours of labour. The National Skills Development Corporation was established by the PMKVY (under the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship) with the initial goal of reaching a target to train over 40 crore individuals. However, even though 2022 was the desired year, the desired result did not materialise. The system had a number of changes and additions to make it better in more technical areas. This scheme's fallacy was that it hadn't achieved the anticipated result since the target audience (those between the ages of 18 and 23) wasn't aware of it, the money wasn't allocated properly, and it was generally mismanaged. This program's main goal was to raise skill levels and develop highly skilled workers for the labour market. However, just 15% of the fully trained were able to find employment in 2018–19.

PMKVY, with its focus on skill training, also contributes to increasing GER by preparing a skilled workforce. Recognizing that only 15% of those trained found employment in 2018-19, there is a need for reforms.

To improve GER, PMKVY should align its training programs with industry requirements. A comprehensive approach that includes not only skill training but also elements of higher education is essential. Additionally, to ensure that the funds are distributed judiciously and do not affect other educational systems, meticulous financial planning is imperative. By successfully closing the skill gaps and producing highly skilled individuals, PMKVY and GER can work in synergy to bolster higher education in India.

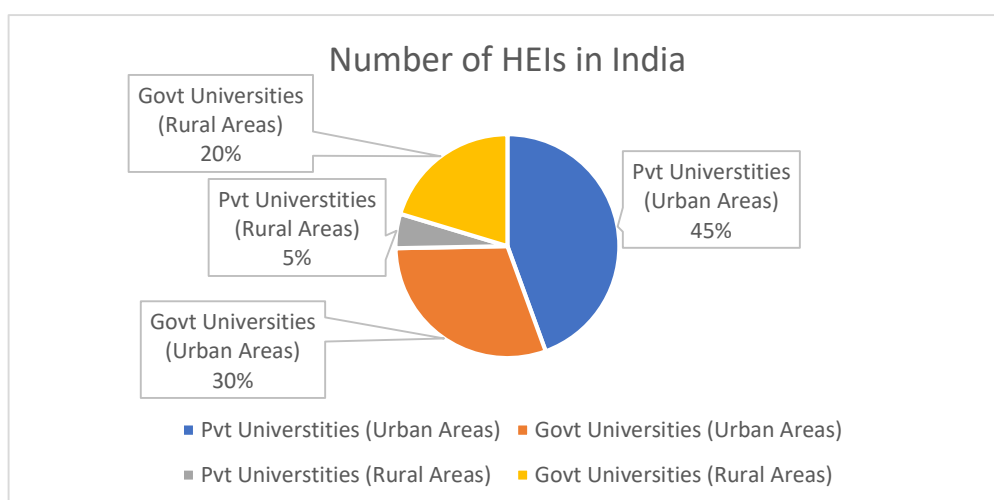


Fig 1:
HEIs in
India

Source:
Compiled
by Author

Higher Education Commission of India (HECI) Act:

This law was created to improve a predetermined standard for university levels. It established the rules for clearly defined course outcomes, eligibility standards for vice chancellors, and adherence to tougher restrictions. Under this programme, the Higher Education Funding Agency (HEFA) 2016 aimed to guarantee that the loan sanctions are swift. This act was unable to approve loans or invest in the necessary infrastructure to mobilise loans during the pandemic, but it is anticipated that further investments will be made in 2023–2024 based on increasing resources in higher education institutions in the most effective way. The allocation of grants and loans is replacing government policies, and it will examine and penalise higher education institutions directly. Although HEFA mostly focuses on funding infrastructure projects, it might not cover other crucial facets of higher education, like faculty development, research, and curriculum improvement. Overemphasising infrastructure might result in an unbalanced approach to growth. The HEFA may not adequately address the larger issues of faculty development, curriculum reform, and research assistance that are required to improve educational results given its concentration on subsidising physical infrastructure. Striking a balance between infrastructure development and educational quality is essential for an overall improvement in GER. HEFA had a minimal contribution given by the Government of India, the contribution was around 0.1 crores in 2020-21 and 2021-22, but the same funding became null by 2022-23.

There is no statistically significant association between the effective implementation and strategic refinement of central government schemes in Indian higher education specifically Rashtriya Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA), Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY), and the Higher Education Commission of India (HECI) Act and a substantial and sustainable increase in the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER). This asserts that any observed correlation between the execution of these schemes and GER growth is a result of random variation or external factors. This implies that the balanced integration of norm-based approaches, skill development initiatives and infrastructure enhancements, as outlined in the aforementioned schemes, does not exert a statistically significant influence on GER in Indian higher education.

Gender Sensitization Programs: Implement gender sensitization programs to address cultural and societal barriers that hinder female participation in higher education and vocational

training programs. Encourage girls and women to pursue education and skill development opportunities by providing mentorship, support networks, and incentives.

Quality Assurance Mechanisms: Strengthen quality assurance mechanisms to ensure that education and training programs delivered under RUSA and PMKVY meet industry standards and expectations. Monitor the quality of infrastructure, faculty qualifications, and course content to enhance the credibility and effectiveness of these schemes.

Collaboration with Private Sector: Foster collaboration with the private sector to enhance the employability of students and graduates. Establish partnerships with industry leaders to design curriculum, provide internships, and offer job placement assistance, thereby increasing the relevance and attractiveness of higher education and vocational training programs.

Research and Evaluation: Conduct regular research and evaluation studies to assess the impact of government schemes on GER and identify areas for improvement. Gather feedback from stakeholders, including students, educators, employers, and policymakers, to inform policy decisions and programmatic changes.

Discussion

In the context of India, where disparities in educational attainment persist across various demographic groups and regions, understanding the GER and its relationship with government schemes is paramount for promoting and uplifting literacy levels.

Firstly, GER reflects the extent to which individuals within a particular age group, typically between 18 to 23 years, are enrolled in higher education institutions. By analyzing GER trends over time, policymakers can gauge the effectiveness of government interventions aimed at expanding educational opportunities. For instance, initiatives like Rashtriya Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA) focus on enhancing infrastructure and faculty quality in higher education institutions, thereby potentially increasing enrolment rates. Similarly, schemes like Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY) aim to bridge the skill gap in the workforce by providing vocational training, which indirectly contributes to higher education enrolment by preparing individuals for further academic pursuits.

Moreover, the relationship between GER and government schemes extends beyond mere numerical targets. Increasing GER not only fosters individual empowerment through access to education but also enhances the overall human capital of the nation. A skilled and

educated workforce is essential for driving economic growth, innovation, and competitiveness in the global market. Government schemes that promote higher education enrolment, such as RUSA and PMKVY, play a pivotal role in nurturing a workforce equipped with relevant skills and knowledge to meet the demands of the job market.

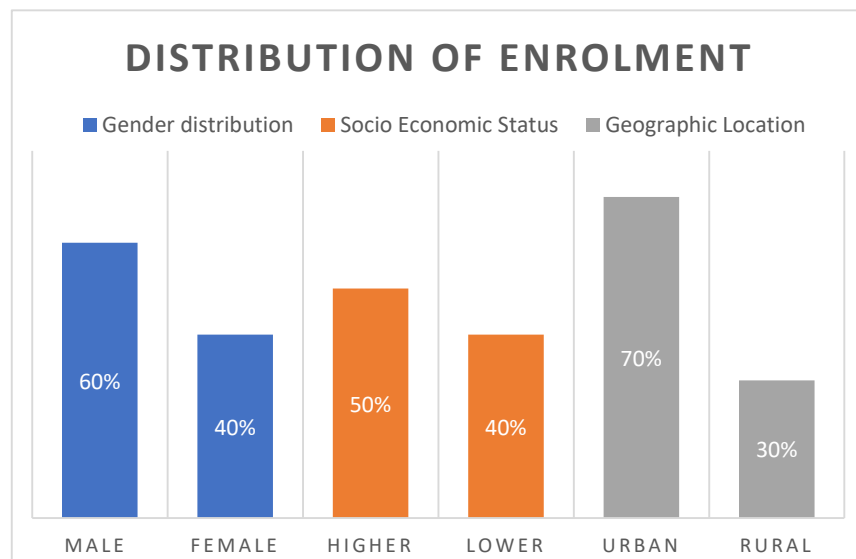
Through the research conducted, it has been found that the implementation of Rashtriya Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA) has had a notable impact on the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in Indian higher education. Specifically, the outcomes attributed to RUSA include increased enrolment rates, improved infrastructure, enhanced faculty quality, and greater awareness in remote areas. These findings suggest that RUSA has played a significant role in advancing accessibility and quality in higher education, contributing to the overall growth of GER in India.

It has been evident that Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY) has made strides in contributing to the increase in the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) by preparing a skilled workforce for higher education. PMKVY's focus on vocational training has played a crucial role in bridging the skill gap in the workforce, thereby indirectly facilitating higher education enrolment. By providing individuals with training and certifications in various skill sectors, PMKVY equips them with the necessary skills and knowledge to pursue further academic endeavors.

Moreover, PMKVY promotes a culture of lifelong learning by emphasizing skill development and continuous education. Individuals who undergo training through PMKVY are more likely to develop an interest in further academic advancement, thus leading to an increase in enrolment rates in higher education institutions.

However, despite its evident contributions, the research also identified areas where reforms are necessary to optimize PMKVY's impact on higher education enrolment rates:

Enhanced Awareness Campaigns: The research highlighted the importance of improving awareness about PMKVY among its target demographic, particularly individuals aged between 18 and 23 who are potential candidates for higher education. Effective outreach campaigns are essential to ensure that more individuals are informed about the opportunities provided by PMKVY and its potential benefits for further academic pursuits.

Fig 2: Distribution of Enrolment

Source: Compiled by Author

Alignment with Industry Needs: PMKVY should focus on aligning its training programs with the current and future requirements of industries. This alignment would ensure that individuals receiving training through PMKVY are equipped with skills that are in demand in the job market, thereby increasing their employability and motivation to pursue higher education.

Quality Assurance: It is essential to ensure that the quality of training provided under PMKVY meets industry standards and expectations. Quality assurance mechanisms should be implemented to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of training programs, thereby enhancing the overall impact of PMKVY on higher education enrolment rates.

By implementing these reforms, PMKVY can further enhance its contribution to increasing GER by preparing a skilled workforce and motivating individuals to pursue higher education opportunities.

The impact of the Higher Education Commission of India (HECI) Act, particularly through the Higher Education Funding Agency (HEFA), on the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in terms of infrastructure development has been significant. HEFA, established under the HECI Act, aims to improve infrastructure in higher education institutions by providing swift loan sanctions for infrastructure projects.

The HEFA's initiatives have led to notable improvements in infrastructure across various higher education institutions. These improvements include the construction of new facilities, renovation of existing infrastructure, and the deployment of modern technologies to enhance learning environments. As a result, the availability of quality infrastructure has

attracted more students to enrol in higher education institutions, thereby contributing to an increase in GER.

Furthermore, the HECI Act, through HEFA, addresses broader facets of higher education quality and enrolment by focusing on several key areas:

Infrastructure Development: HEFA's primary objective is to enhance infrastructure in higher education institutions. By providing financial support for infrastructure projects, HEFA ensures that institutions have the necessary facilities to deliver quality education and attract more students.

Quality Assurance: The HECI Act emphasizes the importance of maintaining high standards of education and research in higher education institutions. HEFA plays a role in ensuring quality assurance by funding projects that align with the educational objectives outlined in the Act.

Research and Innovation: HEFA supports research and innovation initiatives in higher education institutions, thereby enhancing their academic reputation and attractiveness to prospective students. By investing in research infrastructure and funding research projects, HEFA contributes to the overall quality of education and research in India.

Access and Inclusivity: The HECI Act promotes access to higher education for all segments of society, including marginalized communities and economically disadvantaged individuals. HEFA's initiatives aim to improve access to quality education by investing in infrastructure projects in underserved areas and supporting initiatives that promote inclusivity.

Overall, the research suggests that the HECI Act, particularly through HEFA, has had a positive impact on GER by facilitating infrastructure development and addressing broader facets of higher education quality and enrolment. However, further research is needed to assess the long-term effects of HEFA's initiatives on GER and higher education outcomes in India.

The outcomes of government schemes like Rashtriya Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA) and Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY) vary in their impact on Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) across different sections of the population due to various socio-economic factors.

Access to Resources: One key factor contributing to variations in the impact of these schemes is access to resources. Individuals from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds may

face challenges accessing information about RUSA and PMKVY, as well as barriers to participating in these programs due to financial constraints or lack of awareness. As a result, the impact of these schemes on GER may be limited among marginalized communities.

Geographic Location: Geographic location plays a significant role in the effectiveness of government schemes. Rural areas and remote regions often lack adequate infrastructure and resources, making it difficult for individuals to benefit from initiatives like RUSA and PMKVY. As a result, GER may vary significantly across different geographical regions, with urban areas experiencing higher enrolment rates compared to rural areas.

Gender Disparities: Gender disparities in access to education also contribute to variations in the impact of government schemes on GER. In many cases, women and girls face cultural and societal barriers that limit their access to education and training opportunities. As a result, the impact of schemes like RUSA and PMKVY may be more pronounced among male populations, leading to disparities in enrolment rates between genders.

Quality of Education: The quality of education provided under government schemes also influences their impact on GER. If the quality of training and education imparted through PMKVY is perceived to be low, individuals may be less motivated to pursue further academic opportunities. Similarly, if institutions funded under RUSA lack adequate infrastructure or faculty quality, enrolment rates may remain stagnant or decline over time.

Socio-Economic Status: Socio-economic status plays a significant role in determining access to education and training opportunities. Individuals from higher socio-economic backgrounds may have greater access to resources and educational opportunities, making them more likely to benefit from government schemes like RUSA and PMKVY. Conversely, individuals from lower socio-economic backgrounds may face barriers to participation, leading to disparities in enrolment rates across different sections of the population.

Though the schemes objectives have been showcased in a manner of growth in multiple aspects of development for individuals and also difference economic parameters. These schemes have a drastic reduction of funding and lack of motive which stands as an obstacle of lesser awareness which in turn leads to minimal usage of the fundings as well. These schemes if used and delivered rightly could have a huge impact on the enrolment. But the suggested development on this would be wiping it out and have one singular scheme and provision where the existence of skills, development of infrastructure and many more advantages that are separately found in the above schemes are found in one. These features must be a necessity

rather than being a choice. The choice factor hasn't shown an impact that we've been targeting and these schemes have least amount of awareness and utility by the higher education institutions.

Conclusion

In conclusion, variations in the impact of government schemes like RUSA and PMKVY on GER across different sections of the population can be attributed to socio-economic factors such as access to resources, geographic location, gender disparities, quality of education, and socio-economic status. Addressing these factors is crucial for ensuring equitable access to education and improving enrolment rates among all segments of society. To sum up, this study paves the way for a thorough investigation into how government initiatives affect GER in Indian higher education. The purpose of this study's conclusions is to provide policymakers, educators, and stakeholders with information about possible approaches to meet the challenging GER targets without sacrificing educational quality or inclusion. The analysis and interpretation that follows will clarify the complex relationship between GER and government initiatives and add important context to the conversation about higher education in India. The GER journey requires not just numerical ascent but a qualitative transformation. Government initiatives are crucial, but their success hinges on meticulous execution, awareness, and continuous adaptation.

Contrary to the initial hypothesis positing a significant influence of these government schemes on GER and higher education outcomes, the findings indicate a lack of statistically significant association between their effective implementation and strategic refinement, and a substantial and sustainable increase in GER. This suggests that any observed correlation between the execution of RUSA, PMKVY, and the HECI Act and GER growth may be attributed to random variation or external factors, rather than a direct causal relationship.

Moreover, the hypothesis prompts a critical examination of current approaches and calls for evidence-based reforms to optimize the impact of government schemes. This includes enhancing awareness campaigns, aligning training programs with industry needs, strengthening quality assurance mechanisms, and fostering collaboration with the private sector. By addressing these areas of improvement, India can strive towards a higher education landscape that is not only more accessible and equitable but also more responsive to the evolving needs of society and the economy.

While the hypothesis challenges the direct influence of central government schemes on GER, it underscores the importance of continued research, evaluation, and innovation in higher education policy and practice. By embracing a culture of evidence-based policymaking, fostering collaboration across sectors, and prioritizing the needs of diverse stakeholders, India can chart a course towards a more inclusive, responsive, and impactful higher education system that empowers individuals and drives national development.

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