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## **Equity in Indian Higher Education**

### **Issues and Challenges in Access and Participation**

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#### **Introduction**

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Diversity and plurality are an integral part of the Indian society. India being one of the largest democracies the diversity in the Indian society is characterized by miscellany in caste, religion, languages, festivals, attire, economic status and location, among others. Higher education system in India is no exception to the influence of such diversity. The system comprises stakeholders representing such diverse groups of the society in the form of regulators, providers or beneficiaries. However, for various reasons the representation of various groups of the society in terms of participation in the higher education system has remained historically unequal. While the higher education in India faces various challenges in terms of access, efficiency and quality amongst others, the concerns related to the provision of an equitable access to higher education has remained a priority for the policy makers. The emphasis laid on providing an equitable access to higher education to citizens representing various diversified groups is highlighted even in the vision statement of the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD).

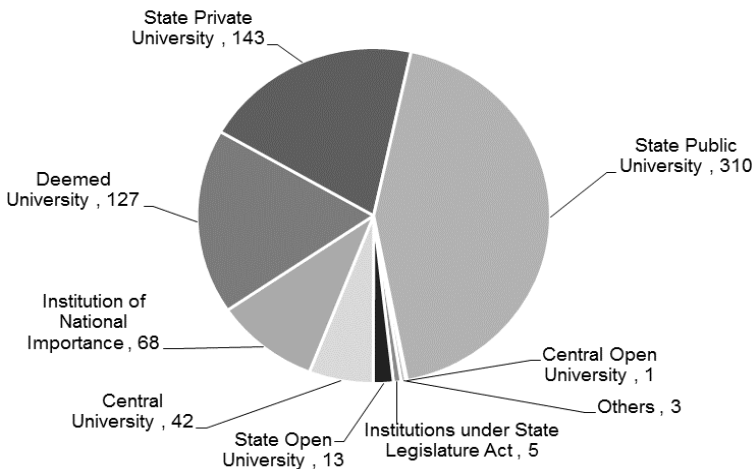
This chapter makes an attempt to highlight the participation of the population from the prevalent diversified Indian society in higher education. The chapter begins by

providing an overview of the growth trend of Indian higher education. The subsequent sections introspect the equity in context of the diversity in institutional availability, inequalities in enrolments along various dimensions and teachers' availability across various social groups follows. Both causes and effects related to equity concerns are closely knitted along the sociological, economic and geographical settings prevalent in the society. Various policy measures taken by the government in order to address the issue of equal participation of all concerned and the degree of accomplishment have also been discussed to envisage effective policy initiatives.

### Historical Growth and Current Status of Higher Education in India

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India registered a phenomenal growth in the number of institutions and enrolments in higher education during last two decades. Educational infrastructure in the form of institutional capacity has grown manifold. In 1950-51, there were 27 universities and 578 colleges. In 2013-14, India had 712 universities and 36,671 colleges making it the world's largest higher education system by the institutional counts (MHRD 2014a). The universities registered about 26-fold rise and colleges registered about 63-fold rise since 1950-51. However, a large share of this growth had taken place during post 2001 period. Universities grew from 27 in 1950-51 to 254 in 2000-01 and further to 712 in 2013-14.



**Figure 4.1 Types of Universities in India**

Source MHRD 2014a

During 2012-13, out of the 712 universities, 310 were state public universities, 143 state private universities, 127 deemed universities and 42 central universities as shown

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## 80 | Equity in Higher Education: India

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