Story of Higher Education in India

What are the facts?

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- As many as 44.81 million Indian undergraduate students are too poor to pursue higher education, according to data from the National Sample Survey, 2014.
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- As many as 34.2 million students were enrolled in institutions of higher education in 2014-15, according to the 2016 All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) report.
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- Nearly 22 million (from 34.2 million) students are enrolled in private institutions in various courses. Private sector accounts for 76 per cent of total institutions of higher education.
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Is there an increase in higher education institutions?

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- While government-owned institutions for higher education increased 49 per cent, private sector institutions recorded a 63 per cent growth in the same period (2006-12), according to the 12th Five-Year Plan document.
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- The first decade of the 21st century witnessed expansion of higher educational institutions, according to National Higher Education Mission (known as **Rashtriya Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyan — RUSA**), a programme by the UGC.
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Are students forced to enroll in private institutions?

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- Around 53 per cent college students are enrolled in private institutions because there are not enough public higher educational institutions, according to the 2014 NSS report.
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- Students have also been drawn to short-term diploma and certificate courses because of their employability prospect.
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- Nearly 64 per cent students enrolled in private institutions would rather be in government-run institutions, according to the NSS report.
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- So, while there is high demand for public higher educational institutions, **successive governments have failed to meet the demand,** pushing students towards private education.
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What is "commodification of education"?

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- Private (out-of-pocket) expenditure on education for general courses has increased 175.8 per cent (during 2008-14), according to the NSS report.
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- The **TSR Subramanian Committee report on New Education Policy,** admitted that uncontrolled privatisation of higher education has resulted in the proliferation of private institutions for higher education.
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- While there are a few (institutions) which can be identified as 'Centres of Excellence', both in the public and private sectors, there are a large number, which could well be described as 'degree shops'.
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- **Fees at private institutions are more than double** those charged by government institutions, according to the NSS report.
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- The private sector accounts for around 74 per cent of enrolment in technical and professional courses, yet, it shares only 39 per cent of enrolment in general under-graduate and postgraduate courses.
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What is the status of Indian GER?

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- Low gross enrolment ratio (GER) in higher education has been a concern in India. The GER of higher education has increased from 10 per cent in 2004 to 23.6 per cent in 2014, according to MHRD data.
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- Despite the increase, **India's GER is the lowest among major emerging economies** such as Brazil (46 per cent), China (30 per cent), Russia (78 per cent) according to World Bank data.
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- More than half the students aged between 16 and 17 years did not enroll for higher education after completing schooling.
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What are the hurdles in increasing enrolment?

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- Successive governments have argued that allowing private sector in higher education would lead to higher enrolment. It was with this objective that both state and centre governments allowed expansion of private educational institutions.
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- While it is true that GER in higher education has recorded growth during this period, **the increased cost of higher education due to privatisation has deprived millions of aspirants from education**.
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Way Forward:

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- Higher per capita expenditure on higher education in some states has resulted in better GER. For example, the per capita expenditure of Goa is Rs 14,634 and the GER is 33.2 per cent.
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- Global experience also suggests that higher public investment in education yields positive results, according to the mission document of RUSA.
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Source: Business Standard

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