CHAPTER I
FORMULATION OF THE RESEARCH PROBLEM AND METHOD OF STUDY

The word ‘education’ has wide connotations; therefore it is not easy to give the concept a precise definition. Philosophers and thinkers from Yajnavalkya (around 1000 B.C) to Gandhi (1869-1948 A.D.) in the East and from Socrates (469-399 B.C.) to John Dewey (1859-1952 A.D.) in the West have defined education in accordance with their philosophy of life resulting into different interpretations and definitions of education. The word ‘education’ is derived from the Latin word ‘educare’, which means ‘to rear’, ‘to nourish’, ‘to bring up’, ‘to draw out’, ‘to foster’, and ‘to lead’. Thus education implies ‘drawing out’ or ‘leading out’ something from ‘within’.

Education does not merely entail an acquisition of knowledge or experience but also the development of habits, attitudes and skills, which help a man to lead a full and worthwhile life. Through education a person learns not only to fit in the environment, but also modify it to make life more convenient and enjoyable (Rajput 2003). On a higher plane, education aims to locate the individual, vis-à-vis his environment and cosmos in total harmony by the purification and cultivation of various domains of outer space and inner space.

In the history of mankind, education has formed a continuum and a basis for the progress of human society through development of attitudes, values and capabilities. It has provided strength and resilience to people to respond to the changing situations. History itself points towards the crucial role played by human resources in the development of nations and education has been universally recognized as one of the basic requirements for human development playing a vital role in social transformation. The quality of human resource of a nation is easily judged by the number of literate population living in it. This is to say that education is a must if a nation aspires to achieve growth and development and more importantly sustain it. Education encompasses teaching and learning specific skills, and also something less
tangible but more profound: the imparting of knowledge, good judgment and wisdom. One of its fundamental goals is transmitting of culture from generation to generation, thereby making it a powerful carrier of heritage, which helps in transmitting to the new generations the lessons of the accumulated experience of the past for further progress in the present and the future.

The process of education involves the training of a human being, enabling him to receive information from the external world; acquainting him/her with past history and receiving all necessary information regarding the present in order to prepare him/her for future. With the help of education, a person can aim for liberation — liberation from bondage of ignorance and can aspire for a better life. Higher and better quality of life is one of the outstanding, visible and explicit human expectations globally. Even developed and advanced nations feel the need for improvement and betterment in the quality of life for all. If we visualize a better future for the masses, we must offer a good quality of education as education is victory of knowledge over ignorance, of reason over superstition and of light over darkness. It gives impetus to the social maturity and helps in awareness about the world. Education refines sensibilities and perceptions that contribute to individual growth and development, social cohesion and national spirit (Kaur 2001).

So the importance of education in the life of a human being can not be underestimated. An educated person is better equipped to participate in the modern economy and society. Being aware of his rights and duties he can overcome vulnerability and marginalization. Education is the best investment for the people because well educated people have more opportunities to avail, they enjoy respect among their colleagues and can effectively contribute to the development of their family, community, country and society.

Education inculcates in the individual social efficiency through which he comes to imbibe worthy traits of character. All round development of the personality of the individual is the first aim of education equipping her/him with power of judgment, scientific thinking, attitude of mind for non-exploitation, spirit of understanding, sympathy, cooperation, tolerance, emotional balance.
etc. Thus education is more than just gathering and correlating facts; it is to see the significance of life as a whole.

**Theoretical Framework**

Sociologists have long been concerned with the socio-cultural implications of education on society. Basically there are four major theoretical perspectives in the field of Sociology of education: the Structural-Functional, the Conflict, the Interactionist and Deschooling Society.

The Structural-functional perspective on education examines the relationship between the structure of society and the functions of education in maintaining, legitimizing and internalizing the collective conscience as a sub system of the society. Durkheim, a major proponent of this School believes that the major function of education is the transmission of society’s norms and values (Alexander 2005). He maintained that society could survive only if there existed among its members a sufficient degree of homogeneity. Education perpetuates and reinforces this homogeneity by fixing in the child from the beginning the ‘essential similarities’, without which social life would be impossible. Hence education, and in particular, the teaching of history provides the link between the individual and society. Drawing on Durkheim’s ideas, the American sociologist Parsons explains that the system of education is an agency through which individuals are trained to be motivationally and technically adequate in order to perform the adult roles. Writing in the late 1950s, he argues that after primary socialization within the family, the school takes over as the ‘focal socializing agency’. Parsons, like many functionalists, maintains that value consensus is essential for society to operate effectively and education helps in securing it (Parsons 1951).

Like Parsons, Davis and Moore see education as a means of role allocation, but they link the educational system more directly with the system of social stratification. Davis and Moore view social stratification as a mechanism for ensuring that the most talented and able members of the society are allocated to those positions, which are functionally most important for society. High rewards which act as incentives are attached to those positions, which means that all will compete for them and the most talented
shall win through. The education system is an important part of this process. In Davis’ words, it is the proving ground for ability and hence the selective agency for placing people in different statuses according to their capacities. Thus the educational system sifts, sorts and grades individuals in terms of their talents and abilities. It rewards the most talented with high qualifications, which in turn provides entry to those occupations, which are functionally most important for society (Davis and Moore 1945). The Structural Functional perspective presumes a functional relationship between people’s education and the economic system. It points to the fact that mass formal education began in industrial society and is an established part of all industrial societies. Thus the functions of education in industrial society may be summarized as the transmission of society’s norms and values, the preparation of young people for adult roles, the selection of young people in terms of their talents and abilities for appropriate roles in adult life and attainment of knowledge, skills and training necessary for an effective participation in the labour force.

Parallel to Functionalist arguments, Liberal perspective explains the role of education in society in a different way. The liberal view is not a sociological perspective as such, though it has influenced the thinking of many sociologists. According to this view, education fosters personal development and self-fulfillment. It encourages the individual to develop his mental, physical, emotional and spiritual talents to the full. Many of the reforms in the educational system of western industrial societies have been directed by the liberal ideals (Bloom 1987).

The Conflict approach focuses upon the power dynamics in human society based upon ownership of means of production. Relations in society, in this view, are mainly based on exploitation, oppression, dominance and subordination. Conflict theorists believe that education is controlled by the State, which is manipulated by those in the power, and its purpose is to reproduce the inequalities already existing in the society as well as legitimize the ruling ideology, which actually works to reinforce the privileged position of the dominant groups (Joseph 2006). The Marxian analysis has emphasized the economic base of social organization including education through the capitalist mode of production, assuming an exploitative form.
Louis Althusser, a French philosopher, presents a general framework for the analysis of education from a Marxian perspective (http://www.marxists.org). As a part of the super-structure, the educational system reflects the relations of production and serves the interests of the capitalist ruling class. For the ruling class to survive and prosper, the reproduction of labour force is essential. Althusser argues that the reproduction of labour power involves two processes; first, the reproduction of the skills necessary for an efficient labour force, second, the reproduction of ruling class ideology and the socialization of workers in terms of it. He argues that no class can hold power for any length of time simply by the use of force. Ideological control provides a far more effective means of maintaining class rule. Althusser says that education not only transmits a general ruling class ideology which justifies and legitimizes the capitalist system, it also reproduces the attitudes and behaviours required by the major groups in division of labour. It teaches workers to accept and submit to their exploitation.

A very interesting perspective comes from Ivan Illich (1973) in the form of Deschooling society. Although not a Marxist, Ivan Illich is highly critical of both functionalist and liberal views of education. He views the educational system as the root of the problems of modern industrial society. He regards education as a repressive institution, which indoctrinates a person’s smoother creativity and imagination. He argues that education should be a liberating experience in which the individual explores, creates, uses his initiative and judgment and freely develops his faculties and talents to the full. He explains that real learning is not the result of instruction, but of direct and free involvement by the individual in every part of the learning process. In sum, most learning requires no teaching. So his suggestion for the progress of the mankind is the abolition of the present system of education and deschooling society to rewind the process.

Interactionists, far more than any other school of sociologists have researched into the details of day-to-day life in schools. To Interactionists, the explanation of human behaviour needs to take account of the subjective states of individuals, and the meanings that individuals attach to external stimuli. For example, a pupil who achieves poor test result might interpret the
result in different ways and attach different meanings to it. Within education, as in a society as a whole, other people are perhaps the most important source of external stimuli: their words and actions will constantly be interpreted and given meanings. To interactionists, your view of yourself, or self-concept, is produced in interaction with others. The self-concept of a pupil may be modified if others constantly contradict it (Turner 1994). Blumer (1962) has also mentioned that structural features such as culture, social systems and social stratification may set conditions for directions but these in no way to determine the actions, which are determined by meanings learnt by an actor through symbolic interactions.

The Interactionist approach has added fresh and valuable perspective to the sociology of education. It has questioned basic concepts such as ability and conduct which previously researchers had tended to take for granted by their acceptance of teachers' definitions of high and low ability students, well and ill behaved students. It has argued that 'bright' and 'dull' students are a product of meanings and definitions which are created in interactive situations. It has claimed that these meanings and definitions are not fixed and unchangeable. The Interactionist perspective has important implications for the question of equality of educational opportunity. In particular, it suggests that if teachers did not associate social class characteristics with ability, there would be a greater equality of educational opportunity. Education has been given much importance by all the sociologists and psychologists. If Structural – Functional approach considers education as an important factor reinforcing homogeneity in the behaviour of individuals by training them in the social environment, Interactionist perspective stresses on the development of self by interacting with others in the society while Conflict approach gives pessimistic explanation of the role of education in which the dominant group takes hold of education and establishes inequalities in society

In the present study an attempt has been made to understand the problems in higher education with the help of these perspectives. Which of these perspectives best explains the problems of rural youth in higher education has been examined while drawing inferences of the study in the last chapter.
Development of Higher Education in India

Interest in higher education has greatly increased all over the world during the last 50 years. For the developing countries, higher education is the most important means of scientific, technological and industrial progress leading to eradication of poverty. It is also seen as an instrument in modernizing the societies and for producing highly educated leaders in all walks of life imbued with higher ethical and moral values. The relevance of higher education is understood primarily in terms of its role and place in society, its functions with regard to teaching, research and the resulting services as well as in terms of its links with the world of work, its relations with the State and Public funding and interaction with other levels and forms of education (UNESCO 1998).

Historically India had a very strong and internationally acclaimed system of education. The preservation of ancient heritage and culture was the most important aim of the Indian system of education. There was strong ‘Guru-Shishya’ parampara (tradition). There is no country where the love of learning had such an early origin and has exercised such lasting and powerful an influence (Vakil and Natrajan 1966).

Pre-independence Period

India had reputed universities like Taxshila in the north, Nalanda and the Vikramashila in the East, Vallabhi in Kathiawad, Kanchi in the South and Nadia in Bengal. The control of education was in the hands of Brahmins and religion played a very important role in this system. During the period of invasions, the system of education was disrupted and for a long period no university existed in the country nor was there any organized educational system. The new era of education started with the initiatives of Britishers in the nineteenth century. East India Company came to India for exploring business possibilities but it ultimately thought of establishing its own empire in the country. Lord Macaulay through the Macaulay Minutes in 1835 stressed that educating Indians was the responsibility of the British Government (Edward 1967). So a few colleges at different places were established by the British regime but till 1853, the British authorities had no clear policy on the
education of Indians. Later on it was felt that education of Indians would be of
great help to the British government. This feeling led to the famous Despatch
of 1854 from Charles Wood, who proposed the establishment of universities
in India. Accordingly, Bombay, Calcutta and Madras Universities were
established. In 1882, the first Indian Education Commission was established
under the chairmanship of W. W Hunter. The report submitted by the
Commission in 1883 dealt with indigenous education including primary,
secondary and university education. Lord Curzon, who was sincerely
concerned with the improvement of Indian education, convened a conference
in Shimla in 1902 and appointed the Indian University Commission there. The
Commission recommended that an ideal university should expand and
encourage knowledge and should build the character of the students. On the
basis of this, Education Act was passed in 1904.

In 1913, the Education Policy was drafted by the then British
Government, which proposed the establishment of new universities in each
province in India. As a result of this policy, 6 new universities came into
existence between 1913 and 1921; the Central Hindu College was converted
into Banaras Hindu University in 1916. Accordingly, Mysore University (1916),
Osmania University (1918), Lucknow University (1920) and Mohammedan
Anglo Oriental College which later changed into Aligarh Muslim University in
1920 were established as teaching universities. During this period in 1917,
Calcutta University Commission was appointed under the chairmanship of
M.E Sadler to look into the affairs of the universities and to suggest measures
for reforms in them. After 1921, education was transferred to Indian control
and the development of universities became more rapid. In the next two
years, the total number of universities reached twelve. To facilitate
coordination of the activities of these universities, the Inter-University Board
was established in 1925, which was changed into Association of Indian
Universities in 1973. Simon Commission, working on the demand for political
independence of India, appointed a committee under the chairmanship of
Hartog. This Committee submitted its report in 1929 saying that India had
shown commendable interest in primary, secondary and university education
between the periods 1918-1927. The demand for education increased rapidly
during freedom movement and the political leadership recognized education as a pre-requisite for socio-economic empowerment of people, social integration and national development.

Later the Sargeant Report of 1944 constituted another effort to develop a national system of education in India. It was a comprehensive treatise on the problems and future organization of primary to university education in India. This report paved the way for the formation of University Grants Commission.

**Post-Independence Period**

Since August 15, 1947 various Commissions and Committees have been appointed by the Government of India with the sole purpose of bringing about radical changes in the education system. Higher education has been given a place of special importance as it provides ideas, which can enable the people to carve a better future for themselves. While delivering the Convocation address at the University of Allahabad in 1947, the first Prime Minister of India, Jawahar Lal Nehru summed up the basic objectives of a university and its role in national life in the following words, “University stands for humanism, for tolerance, for reason, for the adventure of ideas and for the search of truth. It stands for the onward march of the human race towards even higher objectives. If the universities discharge their duties adequately, then it is well with the nation and the people” (Quoted in Ahmed 2004). The first Education Commission was highly impressed, motivated and guided by these words of wisdom.

**University Education Commission 1948-49**

During the post independence period, the First University Education Commission was constituted in 1948 under the chairmanship of an eminent educationist Dr. Sarvapalli Radhakrishnan. The Radhakrishnan Commission stressed on an autonomous status for the universities and pointed out that democracy depended on high standards of general, vocational and professional education. The dissemination of learning, incessant search for new knowledge, unceasing efforts to plumb the meaning of life and provision
for professional education to satisfy occupational needs of our society were the vital tasks of higher education (Government of India 1948).

The main objectives of higher education defined by the Education Commission included an all round development of students’ personality by inculcating in them the basic principles and qualities of democracy namely equality, liberty, fraternity and social justice to help citizens acquire the qualities of leadership necessary for different professions. The Commission claimed that education is the source of all life. It is an instrument which can awaken the innate qualities of youth. Its aim is to acquaint the youth with a social philosophy ultimately guiding all our national institutions – educational, economic, and social as well as political. The Education Commission recommended that our universities must educate on the right lines and provide proper facilities for educating larger number of people.

**University Grants Commission 1953**

As an outcome of these recommendations, the University Grants Commission was established in 1953 by an Act of Parliament with the statutory authority of recommending to universities the measures necessary for improvement of education and also advise them to take necessary actions in that regard. Section 12 of the UGC Act 1956, calls upon the Commission to take in consultation with the universities or other bodies concerned, all such steps as it may think fit for promotion and co-ordination of university education and for the determination and maintenance of standards of teaching, examination and research in universities (UGC Annual Report 1990-91). The scope of the Commission’s responsibilities covers all sectors of higher education including agriculture, engineering, and medicine. For proper functioning of UGC and for a balanced and coherent development of the whole educational system, some suggestions were given by the Education Commission for UGC, e.g. all higher education should be regarded as an integral whole and the UGC should eventually represent the entire spectrum of higher education; it should adopt a practice of working through Standing Committees set up to deal with important responsibilities entrusted to them and larger funds should be available to the UGC to enable it to deal effectively
with the problems and responsibilities of coordinating standards. Most of the recommendations of Education Commission regarding functioning of UGC were implemented.

Secondary Education Commission 1952-53

The Secondary Commission was appointed in 1952, under the chairmanship of Dr. Lakshmanaswami Mudaliar, the Vice Chancellor of Madras University to look into the prevailing system of higher education and secondary education. It was to suggest recommendations for improvement of the education system of that time. Although this particular Commission was mainly concerned with the Secondary education yet it gave some valuable recommendations for the improvement of higher education in India as introduction of three-year first degree course for higher secondary pass outs; duration of teacher training courses; duration of graduate and post graduate courses, to be increased to two academic years and other suggestions regarding curriculum.

The Education Commission 1964-66

In July 1964, the Second Education Commission known as Kothari Commission was appointed to establish a well designed, balanced, integrated and adequate system of national education, capable of making powerful contribution to national life. The Commission emphasized upon the expansion of higher education, enhancing the quality of higher education and research and use of dynamic techniques for management and organization in the universities (Government of India 1964).

This Commission interpreted education in the context of national goals. It discussed various aspects of higher education at length and opined that higher education should seek and cultivate new knowledge, interpret old knowledge and beliefs in the light of new needs and discoveries, provide right sort of leadership, provide the society with competent men and women trained in agriculture, arts, medicine, science and technology, promote equality and social justice and finally foster in the society attitudes and values needed for developing a good life. The Commission did a commendable job by providing...
detailed recommendations on national goals, revised pay scales for teachers, revised three-language formula, university autonomy, interdisciplinary approach in research, equalization of educational opportunities etc.

National Policy on Education 1968

In 1968, the National Policy on Education was adopted, based on the recommendations of the Kothari Commission, which led to a considerable expansion of educational facilities all over the country. The National Policy listed five main goals of higher education, which included greater access, equal access, quality and excellence, relevant and value based education, but these did not get translated into a detailed structure of implementation (NPE 1968). Emphasizing research in higher education, the NPE 1968 added that there was need to give an increased support to research in universities. It explained that the number of whole time students to be admitted to a college or university department should be determined with reference to the laboratory, library and other facilities and to the strength of the staff.

When the Janata Government came to power in 1978, the existing education system was reviewed and the UGC was requested to prepare a statement on the development of higher education in India. This statement outlined the basic philosophy, policy and strategies for development of universities and colleges with a view to fulfill the statutory obligations for improvement of standards of higher education and research. Again in eighties, the Government of India in its document, “Challenge of Education: a Policy Perspective (1985) made a review of the entire educational system. In the context of higher education it reported that there are conflicting views among the educationists about the relative importance of school versus higher education. Despite the key role assigned to higher education, the development in this field has been extremely uneven and of low standard.

National Policy on Education 1986

After a comprehensive review and nationwide deliberation, the National Policy on Education was adopted again in 1986, which was in response to the non-implementation of 1968 educational policy. This Policy emphasized on
elimination of disparities, equal access to every Indian of requisite merit and enhancement in support to research and inter-disciplinary research promotion’. This Policy suggested that urgent steps should be taken for protecting the system from degradation. So, state level planning and coordination of higher education should be done through councils of higher education. It further suggested that research in the universities should be provided enhanced support and steps should be taken to ensure its higher quality. This policy emphasized Open University and Distance Learning as effective alternatives, which could help in reducing disparities in higher education especially on the question of access to higher education for rural youth (NPE 1986).

**Programme of Action 1986 and 1992**

For implementing the NPE 1986 effectively, the National Document POA 1986 was prepared to work out the details. According to this document, the State Councils of Higher Education were asked to coordinate plans of development of higher education in each state for consolidation of the existing institutions and to address their infrastructural problems. Higher education programme was aimed to be designed to meet the growing demands of specialization, to provide flexibility in the combination of courses, to facilitate mobility among courses, to update and modernize curricula and to facilitate reforms in the evaluation system (Mohanty 1993).

The Government of India’s National Policy on Education, 1986 was further modified in the year 1992, which defined education as an empowering agent. While making certain modifications in National Policy on Education of 1986, the Central Government took a significant decision in 1992 to direct the State Governments to have their own state programmes of action for implementing the thrust areas of the policy, keeping in view the local conditions.

In 1990, the Ramamurthy Committee was appointed to review the National Policy on Education 1986, which laid emphasis on quality of higher education, besides its relevance to the needs of society and industry. So, with the efforts of various Commissions and Committees, the perspectives on
education, especially higher education, has been constantly growing in India, taking the country ahead on the path of development.

The Central Advisory Board of Education (CABE)

The Central Advisory Board of Education, the oldest and the most important advisory body of the Government of India on education was first established in 1920 and dissolved in 1923 as a measure of economy. It was revived in 1935 and has been in existence ever since. Central Advisory Board of Education (CABE) was reconstituted in July 2004 by the Central Government. Soon thereafter, CABE constituted a number of committees to review various aspects of education. Two prominent committees on higher education submitted their reports in June 2005 i.e Report of the CABE Committee on Autonomy of Higher Education Institutions and Report of the CABE Committee on Financing of Higher and Technical Education.

National Literacy Mission 1988

National Literacy Mission came into being in 1988 and started striving to involve all sections of the community in the literacy endeavour. Since women account for an overwhelming percentage of the total number of illiterates, the National Literacy Mission is for all practical purposes a mission towards imparting functional literacy to women. Literacy campaigns have heightened social awareness among women regarding the importance of education, both for themselves as well as for their children.

EDUSAT

EDUSAT, the first Indian satellite built exclusively for serving the educational sector is a collaborative project of Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD), Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) and Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO). It was launched in 2004 to meet the demand for an interactive satellite based distance education system for the country. It strongly reflects India’s commitment to use space technology for national development, especially for the people from rural and backward areas.
National Knowledge Commission

To advise the Prime Minister on matters relating to institutions of knowledge production, knowledge use and knowledge dissemination with a view to make India a knowledge powerhouse, Government of India set up an advisory body – The National Knowledge Commission on 2 June 2005 under the Chairmanship of Shri Sam Pitroda.

The Commission submitted its final report in March, 2009. The mandate of the Commission was to promote excellence in the education system to meet the educational challenges of the 21st century.

The main objectives of National Knowledge Commission were to:

- Build excellence in the educational system to meet the knowledge challenges of the 21st century and increase India’s competitive advantage in the fields of knowledge;
- Promote creation of knowledge in Science & Technology laboratories;
- Improve the management of institutions engaged in Intellectual Property Rights;
- Promote knowledge applications in Agriculture and Industry;
- Promote the use of knowledge capabilities in making government an effective, transparent and accountable service provider to the citizens and promote widespread sharing of knowledge to maximize public benefit (National Knowledge Commission: 3).

The Commission was given the duty to suggest ways in which the Government’s knowledge generating capabilities could be made more effective, making the Government more transparent and accountable as a service provider and exploring ways in which knowledge could be made more widely accessible in the country for maximum public benefit.

The National Knowledge Commission has pointed out that higher education has made a significant contribution to economic development, social progress and political democracy in independent India, but there is a
serious cause for concern at this juncture. The proportion of our population, in the relevant age group, that enters the world of higher education is about 7 per cent. The opportunities for higher education in terms of the number of places in universities are simply not adequate in relation to our needs. Large segments of our population just do not have access to higher education. Moreover, the quality of higher education in most of our universities leaves much to be desired. The National Knowledge Commission has reported that there is a silent crisis in higher education in India which runs deep and the time has come to address this crisis in a systematic manner (http://www的知识commission.gov.in).

The National Knowledge Commission argues that providing access to knowledge is the most fundamental way of increasing the opportunities of individuals and groups. Therefore, it is essential to revitalize and expand the reach of knowledge in society. In this context National Knowledge Commission has submitted some recommendations on areas such as Right to Education, libraries, language, translation, portals and knowledge networks.

In higher education National Knowledge Commission recommendations have focused on the three key aspects of expansion, excellence and inclusion. The Commission has recommended increasing GER in higher education to 15 and above by 2015. In addition to an increased public spending, this would involve diversifying the sources of financing to encourage private participation, philanthropic contributions and industry linkages (National Knowledge Commission: 14).

To bring about expansion, National Knowledge Commission has suggested the creation of 1500 universities by 2015 partly by restructuring the existing ones. In order to reduce the current barriers to entry, it has also recommended setting up an Independent Regulatory Authority for Higher Education (IRAHE) which would be at an arm’s length from all stakeholders and would accord degree granting power to universities. To ensure quality, the Commission has called for reform of existing universities to ensure frequent curricula revisions, introduction of course credit system, enhancing reliance on internal assessment, encouraging research and reforming governance of institutions.
National Knowledge Commission has also suggested creating a model for community colleges that will provide credit and noncredit courses leading to two year associate degrees. These would include general education programs as well as employment oriented programs, creating the flexibility for students to pursue higher education later in life. The Commission believes that all deserving students should have an access to higher education, irrespective of their socio-economic background. While the government heavily subsidizes university education by keeping fees low, there is better value created for this subsidization by ensuring well funded scholarships and affirmative action that takes into account the multi dimensionality of deprivation (op.cit. :15).

**National Knowledge Commission and Eleventh Five Year Plan (2007-2012)**

Education agenda outlined in the 11th Plan is a critical step towards realizing the objective of an equitable society. It is also fundamental to continuing growth, employment generation, infrastructure development and other developmental priorities. National Knowledge Commission was envisaged by the Government as one of the key concurrent processes for the XI Plan: 2007-12. Recommendations of National Knowledge Commission have been key inputs in formulating broad contours of the XI Plan. Some of these are highlighted below:

- 11th Five Year Plan adopted by the National Development Council places high priority on education as a central instrument for achieving rapid and inclusive growth with specific emphasis on expansion, excellence, and equity. This is reflected in the proposed allocation of Rs. 3 trillion, a four-fold increase over the Tenth Plan. The share of Education in the total Plan will accordingly increase from 7.7 to 20 per cent, representing a credible progress towards the target of 6 per cent of GDP.

- Initiatives to improve school education in the Plan include reorienting Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan with a strong focus to make Right to Education a reality. Under the Scheme for Universal Access and Quality at the
Secondary Stage, 6000 new high quality model schools are to be set up, with at least one school in each block.

- In Higher and Technical Education the focus of the Eleventh Plan is on expansion, inclusion and rapid improvement in quality by enhancing public spending, encouraging private initiatives and initiating the long overdue major institutional and policy reforms. The Eleventh Plan aims at expansion with the establishment of 30 new universities. Further, 8 new IITs (Indian Institute of Technology), 7 new IIMs (Indian Institute of Management), 5 new Indian Institutes of Science, 2 Schools of Planning and Architecture, 10 NITs (National Institute of Technology), 373 new degree colleges and 1000 new polytechnics will also be set up. In establishing these institutions the scope for Public Private Partnership will be explored. The Plan also recognizes the need for the review of regulatory institutions such as the UGC (University Grants Commission), AICTE (All India council for Technical Education), MCI (Medical Council of India) and BCI (Bar council of India).

- Subsequently, a High Level Committee has been set up to suggest a specific reforms agenda in this context. For rejuvenation of research in Universities a National Science& Engineering Research Board is proposed.

- The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Bill, 2008 proposed in the plan has come into force from April 1, 2010.

- Twenty five states have already introduced English as a subject from Class I, as recommended by the National Knowledge Commission. With the help of NCERT (National Council for Educational Research and Training) and CIEFL (Central Institute of English and Foreign Languages), the MHRD (Ministry of Human Resource Development) is guiding English Teaching in schools in the states/UTs by developing appropriate curriculum, materials and training of teachers with skills in English (National Knowledge commission:168).
• To expand capacity and improve quality of higher education, the Government has sanctioned the setting up of 15 new Central Universities and 14 new Universities based on world-class standards.

• The Committee for Rejuvenation and Renovation of Higher Education set up for the review of UGC/AICTE has submitted its report.

• During 2008-09 Rs.100 crore has been allocated for the National Knowledge Network (NKN) which proposes interconnecting all knowledge institutions in the country with gigabit capabilities, for sharing resources and research.

• Based on the recommendations of NKC, the Department of Culture (DOC) proposed setting up a National Mission for Libraries (NML) in the XI Plan as a Central Sector Scheme (National Knowledge commission: 166-169).

National Knowledge Commission believes that providing universal access to quality school education is a cornerstone of development and a minimum necessary condition for any progress towards making India a knowledge society (National Knowledge commission: 25).

The Committee on ‘Renovation and Rejuvenation of Higher Education’ 2008 (Prof. Yash Pal Committee)

To the emerging demands of access, equity, relevance and quality of higher education/technical education and the university system, Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India constituted a committee under the chairmanship of Prof. Yash Pal on 28th of February 2008. ‘The Committee to Advise on Renovation and Rejuvenation of Higher Education’ submitted its report on June 23, 2009 to Human Resource Development Minister, Kapil Sibal. The report of the committee stressed that the Indian higher education system, given the enormity of the challenges it is facing, needs a drastic overhaul.

The Report pointed out to the National Policy of Education 1986 and the Plan of Action, 1992, which envisaged the establishment of a national apex body for bringing about greater co-ordination and integration in the
planning and development of higher education system (Yash Pal Committee Report 2009, p54). The Yash Pal committee suggested the scrapping of all higher education regulatory/monitoring bodies and creation of a super regulator: a seven-member Commission for Higher Education and Research to be called 'The National Commission for Higher Education and Research (NCHER).

The Report further pointed out that NCHER (National Commission for Higher Education and Research) shall be responsible for comprehensive, holistic evolution of higher education sector and also strategize and steer the expansion of higher education by ensuring autonomy of the universities by shielding them from interference by external agencies (Yashpal Committee Report 2009). The "Objectives of the Commission for Higher Education"—"to prevent chaos", "ensure autonomy", "encourage individual uniqueness", "eliminate the divide between state and central universities", "enable the rural masses to interact with universities", etc. – are laudable, indeed. The desire to become world leaders in education would remain a dream if we are not able to create new knowledge. So the Report submitted by the committee showed its disagreement with those who argue that since quality is in short supply here in India, so we need to import it and invite foreign universities to plug the gap.

The Report explained that the true universities grow in organic connection with the geo-political and cultural soil and develop their unique character over a very long period of time and therefore cannot be transplanted mechanically. It is the metaphor of agriculture and not engineering which needs to be evoked when we talk of any level of education or knowledge. Our universities should have space for academics from all over the world and they should not feel constrained by ‘universal’ rules regarding compensation packages etc., while inviting them. It is here that the principle of autonomy becomes crucial.

After receiving the Report the Human Resource Development Minister Kapil Sibal said on June 24, 2009 that the Government will try to implement the recommendations of the Committee set up to
suggest measures for restructuring higher education in the country in 100
days as according to him such reforms should not wait. Sibal pointed
out report of Yash Pal Committee as a roadmap for future of education
in India (http://www.zeenews.com/news). However, University
Grants Commission (UGC) and the All India Council for Technical Education
(AICTE) expressed reservations on the recommendations of the Yash Pal
Committee which suggested dismantling of regulatory bodies in higher
education (The Tribune June 25, 2009). To deal
with all such issues, Kapil Sibal discussed recommendations of the Yash Pal
Committee Report with Vice Chancellors of all central universities in
Hyderabad, regarding the establishment of the National Commission
for Higher Education and Research (NCHER) on 13th March 2010
(http://www.educationmaster.org).

Right to Education Bill, 2010

Free and compulsory education to all children up to the age of fourteen
is a constitutional commitment in India. The Supreme Court in its 1993 ruling
held that children had a fundamental right to free education. Ex-President
A.P.J Abdul Kalam gave his assent to the Constitution (83rd Amendment) Bill,
2000, and the “right to education” was incorporated in the Constitution as a
fundamental right. The landmark passing of the Right of Children to Free and
Compulsory Education (RTE) Act 2009 marks a historic moment for the
children of India. For the first time in India's history, children were given the
right to quality elementary education by the state with the help of families and
communities. The RTE Act has come into force from April 1, 2010. Draft
Model Rules have been shared with states, which are required to formulate
their state rules and have them notified as early as possible. RTE provides a
ripe platform to reach the un-reached, with specific provisions for
disadvantaged groups, such as child labourers, migrant children, children with
special needs, or those who have a “disadvantage owing to social, cultural,
economic, geographical, linguistic, gender or such other factor”. RTE focuses
on the quality of teaching and learning, which requires accelerated efforts and
substantial reforms (The Tribune April 1, 2010).
Contribution of United Nations Educational, Scientific and cultural Organization (UNESCO)

UNESCO stands for United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization. It was established in 1945 with the main aim to raise the world literacy levels and to spread awareness among people regarding the importance of literacy. “Right to Literacy” is a human right and a means for personal empowerment and social development. Some of the functions of the UNESCO are: helping nations develop a strategy for national development; promoting education in natural and human sciences and celebrating ‘International Literacy Day’ every year on September 8th. The first literacy day was observed in 1966. The main aim behind starting a day on literacy was to spread awareness among individuals, communities and countries regarding the importance of a fully literate society.

UNESCO's Commission on Education for the Twenty-First Century, chaired by Mr. Jacques Delors agreed to focus on the following 6 major areas of enquiry

- Education and culture
- Education, the nation state and citizenship
- Education and social fabric
- Education and sustainable development
- Education, economic growth and employment
- Education, research and the progress of science

The Jomtien World Conference held in 2008, made a strong plea for broader partnerships in education, which should span, all forces and groups of society which have a stake in, and contribution towards education. Education for all, it was argued in Jomtien Conference, needs to be education by all. UNESCO’s "Global Monitoring Report on Education for All" (2008) established a direct relation between poverty and illiteracy.

The UNESCO World Conference on Higher Education (2009) called upon governments to increase investment in higher education and strengthen
regional cooperation to serve societal needs. The final communique, adopted at the end of the World Conference on Higher Education that gathered over 1,000 participants from around 150 countries at UNESCO Headquarters notified that at no time in history has it been more important to invest in higher education as a major force in building an inclusive and diverse knowledge society and to advance research, innovation and creativity (http://www.unesco.org).

These days education is taken as a main factor for human development. It is well indicated by different studies that higher the level of education, greater the economic development. Jometian Declaration (UNESCO 1990) states that every person – child, youth and adult, shall be able to benefit from educational opportunities designed to meet their basic learning needs. UNESCO in the Paris Conference declared that education is critical for achieving environmental and ethical awareness, values and attitudes, skills and behaviour consistent with sustainable development and effective public participation in the decision-making. Both formal and informal education is indispensable for changing people’s attitude so that they have the capacity to assess and address their sustainable development concerns (2002). Education has been taken as an indicator of the economic growth of a country. It helps in the specialization of labour and in the removal of poverty. Studies have shown that education is not only an indicator of the economic and social development but also an agency of empowerment of people.

**Education in India: Overview of the Present scenario**

Planning Commission (2006) interpreted literacy as a qualitative attribute of the population, one of the most important indicators of the socio-economic and political development of a society (http://www.planningcommission.nic.in). Literacy and education are indicators of the development of the society and investment in education yields the highest rate of return and has a significant impact on the quality of life of the people. As illiteracy has remained a major problem in the implementation of all the developmental projects, the National knowledge commission also held
that literacy programs cannot be ignored or given less importance. Expenditure on the National Literacy Mission (NLM) must be expanded rather than reduced, and given a different focus (National Knowledge Commission: 49).

Different Commissions and Committees on education in India have stressed upon the important role played by education. Kothari Commission (1964-66) opined that if social transformation and change on a grand scale are to be achieved without violent revolution, there is only one instrument that can be used, i.e. education. National Policy on Education (1986) states that education has an acculturating role, it builds sensitivities and perceptions that contribute to the national cohesion, a scientific temper and independence of mind and spirit, thus furthering the goals of socialism, secularism and democracy enshrined in the Constitution. Higher education provides people with an opportunity to reflect on the critical social, economic, cultural, moral and spiritual issues facing humanity. It contributes to national development through dissemination of specialized knowledge and skills. It is, therefore, a crucial factor for survival (NPE 1986).

Scholars have described education as the main factor for the development of human resources and most influential agent of modernization apart from industrialization and urbanization in India. They claim that India is the world leader in education. During the British period and basically after independence arena and vista of education have been opened to one and all. Education meant all round development of individual's personality for leading successful life, doing duties and discharging responsibilities properly towards family, community, state, country in general and the society as a whole with honesty (Singh 1973 and Kaur 1992).

India has made significant progress on the education front. By and large the improvements made at different levels of education, i.e, Primary, Secondary, Higher and Technical education, have been quite substantial and
India is in a better position as compared to the neighbouring countries like Afghanistan, Bangla Desh, Nepal and Pakistan.

**Table 1.1: Adult Illiteracy in India and Some of the Neighbouring Countries in 2001**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Countries</th>
<th>Percentage of adult illiterate population in 2001</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>World</td>
<td>20.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Afghanistan</td>
<td>63.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bangladesh</td>
<td>59.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nepal</td>
<td>58.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pakistan</td>
<td>56.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>39.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Myanmar</td>
<td>15.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>15.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>13.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sri Lanka</td>
<td>8.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thailand</td>
<td>4.40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: World Development Indicators Database, World Bank, 2004*

As shown in Table 1.1, although India has a position of advantage in comparison to countries like Pakistan and Nepal, yet it has a long way to go in order to catch up with countries like China, Thailand, Sri Lanka and Indonesia. It is a matter of great concern that nearly 40% of Indian population cannot read or write. As compared to most of the Asian countries, the enrolment rate in India is quite low.

Soon after gaining independence in 1947, making education available to all had become a priority for the government of India. However, discrimination on the basis of caste and gender became a major impediment in the healthy development of the Indian society. Such discrimination was therefore declared unlawful by the Indian constitution. According to the 2001 census, the total literacy rate in India was 65.38%, while the female literacy
rate was only 53.67%. The gap between rural and urban literacy rate was also very significant in India. This is evident from the fact that only 59.21% of rural population is literate as against 80.06% urban population according to the 2001 census. As education is the means for bringing socio-economic transformation in a society, various measures are being taken to enhance the access of education to the marginalized sections of the society. Efforts are also being taken to improve the access to higher education among the women of India by setting up various educational institutes exclusively for them.

Despite all the measures taken by Government of India, the crudest fact is that only 65% of Indian population was literate according to Census of India 2001 and this figure has gone to 74.04% in 2011 (Provisional Population Totals 2011). Educational development in India suffers from two serious drawbacks. The first is that the progress made by different geographical regions and social groups differs considerably. Literacy in rural India in comparison to the urban literacy is relatively low; secondly there is a huge gap between the literacy rates of both the genders in urban and rural areas. Table 1.2 shows the literacy rate in India from 1951 to 2011. Although India has made progress in the field of education, yet these figures are also pointing out towards some disparities found in the field of education.

It is very strange to note that most of the educational facilities are available in urban areas, where, as per 2001 Census, only 27.78% of the population of India resides. Although under Sarav Shiksha Abhiyan, Government has provided one school in the radius of 1 km of every village, yet when it comes to higher education, rural people have no option but to look towards the cities.

Even at the turn of the century the gap in male-female literacy rate has remained fairly consistent. Table 1.2 shows very clearly that even after planned development since independence, the gap in male-female literacy rate was 21.59% in 2001 and even in 2011 this gap is more than 16% (Provisional Population Totals 2011).
Table 1.2: Literacy Rates in India 1951 To 2011 (in %age)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Census Year</th>
<th>Persons</th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Females</th>
<th>Male-Female Gap in Literacy Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>18.33</td>
<td>27.16</td>
<td>8.86</td>
<td>18.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>28.30</td>
<td>40.40</td>
<td>15.35</td>
<td>25.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>34.45</td>
<td>45.95</td>
<td>21.97</td>
<td>23.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>43.57</td>
<td>56.38</td>
<td>29.76</td>
<td>26.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>52.21</td>
<td>64.13</td>
<td>39.29</td>
<td>24.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>65.38</td>
<td>75.26</td>
<td>53.67</td>
<td>21.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011*</td>
<td>74.04</td>
<td>82.14</td>
<td>65.46</td>
<td>16.68</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Table 1.2 shows the disparities in education not only in urban and rural areas but also between both the genders. The data given shows that accessibility to education is not equal to all. There are rural-urban and male-female disparities in the field of education, calling for immediate attention.

Table 1.3: Rural-Urban Literacy Rates (Gender wise) in India 1991-2001 (%age) (7 years and above)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>MALE</th>
<th>FEMALE</th>
<th>PERSONS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RURAL</td>
<td>57.87</td>
<td>30.62</td>
<td>44.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>URBAN</td>
<td>81.09</td>
<td>64.05</td>
<td>73.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>64.13</td>
<td>39.29</td>
<td>52.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RURAL</td>
<td>71.18</td>
<td>46.58</td>
<td>59.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>URBAN</td>
<td>86.42</td>
<td>72.99</td>
<td>80.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>75.26</td>
<td>53.67</td>
<td>65.38</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Census of India 2001

The situation gets worse, when it comes to education of rural girls. In 2001 more than half of the female population of rural areas was illiterate. Even the gap between the literacy rate of urban and rural girls was more than
26%. There, the two extremes in literacy rate in India can be seen as the most advantaged group being the urban male with 86.42% literacy and the most disadvantaged group being the rural female with 46.58% of literacy, Table 1.3 gives details about the rural-urban literacy (gender wise) in India according to the Census of India 2001.

The National Policy on Education (1968) pointed out the fact that rural areas with poor infrastructure and social services will not get the benefit of trained and educated youth unless rural-urban disparities were reduced and determined measures were taken to promote diversification and dispersal of employment opportunities.

**Higher Education in India – The Challenges**

The main function of higher education is to deepen a person’s understanding of the universe and of oneself and to use this understanding for the service of mankind. Higher education can enhance self-reliance of a nation in the emerging scenario of globalized interdependence. It has been given a place of special importance because it can provide ideas to give shape to the future and also sustain all other levels of education. It supplies a wide range of increasingly sophisticated and ever changing variety of manpower needed in industry, agriculture, administration and services (Jain 1989). Higher education contributes to overall development of a nation by providing educated and trained manpower especially for its economic and industrial set-up. Thus, higher education and economy are closely related and have a direct impact on each other.

Higher education today is facing new challenges in a changing dynamic world. It is not only one of the foundation stones of the national life, but is also one of the greatest instruments of social change, which make it a crucial factor in the development of a country. Modern era is characterized by transition, change, transformation leading to uncertainty and instability on all fronts. The old notions have become obsolete; the new ones are in the process of making. In this delicate situation, the safest course would be to integrate and evolve a system of education best suited to the nation – both indigenous as well as progressive. Education is also at the heart of both
Keeping in view, the changing paradigms of social structure in the 21st century, India confronts unprecedented challenges in the higher education system. One of the major challenges today that plagues our society with uncompromising tenacity is gender disparities especially in the rural areas and among the disadvantaged communities. Other challenges include non-accessibility of higher education to rural youth. Quality of education is another area which needs to be addressed urgently. The inability to check the drop out rates among the marginalized sections of the population is another cause of worry. It is true that enhancing social access to higher education is still important in the country. But, the major challenge before the Indian higher education system is to bring equity in quality of education across the length and breadth of the country. “Schooling is too expensive” was the first among reasons cited by the study conducted by the Public Report on Basic Education (PROBE) to explain why a child has never been sent to a school in rural areas. Survey data confirmed that the cost of sending a child to school is far from negligible. The most costly items are clothing, followed by textbooks and stationery (PROBE 1998).

A study conducted by NCAER in 1994 found that the expenditure per household on educating children aged 6–14 years in rural India was estimated to be Rs 680 per household or Rs 378 per pupil per year. The study further found that only about 75 girls for every 100 boys go to private schools. The expenditure on girls is much lower, especially in private schooling, whereas parents do not think twice about spending large sums of money on educating boys. There is an increasing dependence on private schooling in recent years that has affected female education more than the male. However the patterns of expenditure in rural and urban areas are different. In rural areas, the expenses are high on uniforms, books and stationery, whereas in urban areas, expenditures are highest on tuition fees and private coaching fees (NSSO 1998).
UNESCO Report (2008) gave some grim statistics for India and placed the country close to the bottom in the list of nations in terms of eradicating illiteracy. The 2008 Education for All Global Monitoring Report, which provided projections for 127 countries in terms of the goal to achieve universal literacy by 2015, put India among the 15 countries with low Education for All (EFA) Development Index (UNESCO 2008).

The pace of progress in literacy rates, as revealed by decennial censuses, is very slow in India. Between 1961 and 1991, a span of thirty years, literacy rate has gone up by a mere 23.9 percentage points, from 28.3 in 1961 to 52.2 in 1991. From 1991 to 2001 with literacy rate of 65.38%, there was only 13.17% of increase in literacy rate and in 2011 this increase is only 8.66% (Census of India). However the literacy scenario in India is characterized by wide inequalities among different sections of the population.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights issued by the United Nations (1948) declares literacy as a basic human right. In India, however, 50% of women cannot read or write. Prevailing prejudices, low enrolment of girl child in the schools, engagements of girl children in domestic work and high drop out rate among them are major obstacles in the path of making all Indian women educated. No less disturbing is the rural-urban disparity in literacy rates. PROBE survey shows that even amongst the deprived sections of the society, the willingness to send their children to school is as high as 98% for boys and 89% for girls. India seems to be getting caught in a circle, where un-affordability of private schools leaves no option but that of government schools where poor quality of education prevails. The gap between the rural and urban areas and that between female and their male counterparts is quite substantial (PROBE 1998).

While the male literacy rate in urban areas is about 86.42 percent, rural female literacy rate is just 46.58 percent (2001 census). From the very beginning the role of female is confined to domestic work and looking after children. The tradition of settling at husband’s place after marriage, does not offer enough incentives to parents for spending on girls’ education. A boy’s education is far more important as it enhances the chances of his being
employed. Another factor is the prevalent trend of early marriage in rural areas. In most villages, girls' education, rather than being seen as an incentive is seen as a liability since it is believed that it is difficult to find a groom for an educated girl. Several other factors also work in this direction. Very often, the parents who are willing to educate their daughters are discouraged by the absence of school within the surrounding area and it is not considered safe to send girls to another village to study.

However, this is not true for most of the villages now. But even in villages where there are schools, the standard of infrastructure is abysmally low, be it management of classes, student-teacher ratio, availability of text books, or even furniture, these schools lack in every sense. This discourages the parents to get their children enrolled in these schools. There are incidences of under qualified staff being employed in educational institutions. The meager salaries that are offered by the government do not provide enough incentive to attract the talent to these schools for employment. The case is even grimmer among girls of lower caste, where the literacy rate is found to be only 19 percent (2001 census). This shows that the age old discrimination based on caste is still prevalent. It shows that in spite of numerous schemes being launched by the government, the downtrodden classes still face social stigma and there is a lot to be done for the upliftment of these sections. Hence low literacy, under nutrition, and gender discrimination are all interrelated.

National Knowledge Commission recommended that in order to ensure greater enrolment and retention of girl students, strong measures need to be undertaken. The Commission observed that the high drop out rate of girls especially from Class V onwards is a matter of great concern. One major reason is the sheer lack of secondary schools nearby, as parents are reluctant to send girls to travel long distances to school. However, social conditioning and other constraints also play a role. Some policies recommended by the Knowledge Commission include:

- Special incentives for girls in secondary education where these are required, in addition to free textbooks and uniforms, such as bicycles.
Girls-only schools especially in particular areas.

- An enhanced scholarship scheme especially for girls, with particular emphasis on girls from socially deprived groups.

- Separate and functional toilets for girls in all schools, with access to water (National Knowledge Commission: 56).

On September 8, 2009 (International Literacy Day), the Prime Minister of India, Dr. Manmohan Singh launched "Saakshar Bharat" with a goal to educate 70 million people by 2012, out of which 60 million will be women. The long-term goal is to take national literacy to 80 percent by 2017 and reduce the gender gap in literacy to 10 percent. Dr. Singh believes that female literacy is "absolutely necessary to empower the Indian woman in her every day struggle in dealing with multiple deprivations on the basis of class, caste and gender." His commitment was to make all women literate in the next five years, with a particular focus on women from Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, minorities and other disadvantaged groups (The Tribune September 10, 2009). But in reality much needs to be done to reduce disparities between men and women as well as between urban and rural areas. While there has been some catching up in literacy rates for both males and females between rural and urban areas, the differences continue to be unacceptably large, especially for females. Only 46 per cent of females in rural areas are literate as compared to nearly 73 per cent females in urban areas in 2001. For males, the gap was lower at around 15 percentage points with 71.1 per cent of males in the rural areas and 86.4 per cent in the urban areas being literate in 2001. While participation of girls in education has seen an increase over time at all levels of education, it continues to lag behind that of boys (The Tribune February 26, 2010).

India has been trying to reform its higher education system for more than a half-century but the results in terms of systemic change have been minimal. The universities have expanded dramatically to meet the demands of an increasingly powerful middle class but resources have not been adequate to ensure the maintenance of standards. In India political and bureaucratic
environment act as impediments in the growth of quality education resulting in deteriorating standards, occasional unrest and inadequate resources.

Presently, India has 20 central universities, 215 state universities, 100 deemed universities, 5 institutions established and functioning under the State Act, and 13 institutes which are of national importance. Other institutions include 16000 colleges, including 1800 exclusively women's colleges, functioning under these universities and institutions. The emphasis in the tertiary level of education lies on science and technology. Indian educational institutions by 2004 consisted of a large number of technology institutes. In 2006, about 1200 engineering colleges awarded degrees in India and approximately 380000 students were admitted in them. Distance learning is also an important feature of the Indian higher education system (http://www.ugc.org).

The present approach towards higher education in India is governed by the “National Policy on Education” of 1986 and Program of Action of 1992. The 1986 policy and Action Plan of 1992 were based on the two landmark reports namely, the “University Education Commission” of 1948-49 (popularly known as Radhakrishnan Commission), and the “Education Commission” of 1964-66, (popularly known as Kothari Commission Report). These reports laid down the basic framework for the National policy concerning higher education in India. The University Education Report had set goals for development of higher education in the country. Radhakrishnan Commission on University Education highlighted that the most important and urgent reform needed in education is to transform it, to endeavor to relate it to the life, needs and aspirations of the people and thereby to make it the powerful instrument of social, economic and cultural transformation, necessary for the realization of the national goals. For this purpose, education should be developed as to increase productivity to achieve social and national integration, to accelerate the process of modernization and cultivate social, moral and spiritual values (1948-49).
The National Policy of 1986 on higher education translated this vision of Radhakrishnan and Kothari Commission in five goals for achieving higher education which include

- Greater Access
- Equal access (or equity)
- Quality and excellence
- Relevance
- Promotion of social values

Census of India of 2001 holds the national literacy to be around 65.38%. This figure has gone up to 74.04% in 2011. The statistics hold that the rate of increase of literacy is more in rural areas than in urban areas. In 2001, female literacy was 53.67% whereas the male literacy was 75.26%. In 2011, female literacy rate is 65.46% and male literacy is 82.14% (Census of India). The Prime Minister of India showed his deep concern about the dismal state of higher education when he said (2007) that our university system is, in many parts, in a state of despair... In almost half the districts in the country, higher education enrolments are abysmally low, almost two-third of our universities and 90 per cent of our colleges are rated as below average on quality parameters... I am concerned that in many states university appointments, including that of vice-chancellors, have been politicized and have become subject to caste and communal considerations, there are complaints of favouritism and corruption. Today poverty, provincialism, nepotism, discrimination, unemployment and communal prejudices are raising their ugly heads and hindering higher education (http://www.tribuneindia.com)

Since independence, higher education in India has undergone a remarkable transformation from an elite system nurtured by colonial roots, to a mass system attempting to meet the demands of a vibrant democracy. Even at the time of independence, it was known that all was not well with the Indian university system and successive commissions and committees appointed to examine the situation highlighted the shortcomings and suggested remedies also (Statistical Abstract: 2004-05), yet corresponding qualitative development has not been seen in Indian higher education sector. To deal with all such
issues different steps have been taken by Indian Government. The National Knowledge Commission (2005) is one of them, which was constituted by the Prime Minister to deal with the matters relating to institutions of production, use and dissemination of knowledge. The Commission stressed that providing access to knowledge is the most fundamental way of increasing the opportunities for individuals and groups. Therefore, it is essential to revitalize and expand the reach of knowledge in society and ensure access of higher education for all, so that no student is denied the opportunity to participate in higher education due to financial constraints. In this regard educational institutions should be given instructions not to take into account any financial factor while deciding whether or not to admit a student. It recommended that there must be a well-funded and extensive National Scholarship Scheme targeting economically underprivileged students and students from groups that are historically and socially disadvantaged (National Knowledge Commission Report: 65).

The big question now is whose responsibility it is to maintain the quality of education - policy makers, administration, universities, and teachers or is it a joint responsibility of all stakeholders carrying a definite commitment to improve the system. During the Eleventh Five Year Plan (2007-12), a Working Group on Higher Education was set up under the Department of Secondary & Higher Education, Ministry of Human Resource Development to deal with all such issues. The present system of higher education does not serve the purpose for which it had been constituted. In general, education itself has become so profitable a business that quality is lost in the increase of quantity of professional institutions with quota system and politicization adding fuel to the fire of spoiling system.

**Higher Education in Punjab: Issues and Challenges**

The state of Punjab occupies an extremely important place in India. In the last century its geographical boundaries shifted twice. During the time of partition of India in 1947, it was the worst effected state and then in the recent years, it experienced a long span of militancy which spread over almost a decade. In spite of these disturbances Punjab has maintained its position as
the most prosperous state of the Indian Union. The agricultural economy of Punjab experienced the technology-induced green revolution resulting in a large-scale development in its agricultural sector. According to the Census of India 2001, Punjab has the highest per capita income and whereas 36% of Indian population is living below poverty line, this percentage is only 11.8% for Punjab. Its production of wheat is the highest among the wheat producing states of India (Census of India 2001). Not only the agricultural sector, its industrial sector too is developing at a very fast pace. This is an indication that Punjab is a very progressive state economically.

When we look at the social indicators, the picture is totally opposite. Sex ratio in Punjab is steadily declining. The sex ratio in the state was 876 in 2001. It has shown an improvement of 17 points (893) in 2011 and in the age group of 0-6 yrs this was only 798 in 2001 and now in 2011, it is 846 (Census of India, 2001, Provisional Population Statistics 2011). In spite of being a rich and prosperous State, its educational sector suffers from gross neglect. Only 69.95% of its population was literate in 2001, as compared to states like Kerala (90.92%) and Mizoram (88.49%). Factors like drug abuse, under­employment, lack of relevant education opportunities, glorification of sex and violence in media have been found to be some of the stumbling blocks for rural youth of Punjab (Dhillon, 2009).

Though, there is an increase in literacy rate from 69.95% in 2001 to 76.68% in 2011, yet the education scenario as a whole in Punjab is quite dismal. Thousands of schools lack teachers, classrooms, furniture or even drinking water. The rural population is gradually migrating to the cities seeking better educational opportunities and personality development of their wards. As infrastructure in villages for the education of students remains inadequate, the urban and rural divide continues to increase day by day. The universities in Punjab cater mainly to the well groomed students from urban areas. While improper education facilities in villages make the students from villages lag behind. When every university admits on the basis of merit or entrance tests, it is the rural students who suffer the greatest setback. The Punjabi university however has pioneered a positive move by establishing rural campus at "guru ki khasi" where admission is only reserved for rural students along with
financial aid. The State government at present is spending millions on "sarv
siksha abhiyan" for educating children up to primary level; however it is not
serious about higher studies for rural students. In the recent years, there has
been a mushrooming of private schools in villages offering good quality
education, but as all parents are not in a position to afford the huge fees of
private schools, most of the students are deprived of a chance to acquire
basic educational skills and quality education at school level in the villages.
The government has to take steps to ensure the enlistment of rural students in
private schools to boost the education level of rural youth. At the same time
financial aid should be provided to hard working students who are incapable
of financing their education. The best thing is to establish more rural
campuses on the pattern of Punjabi Varsity's rural campus, so that the rural
students have access to good quality of education. As availability of
transportation can also help to make educational facilities accessible to all,
villages should be provided with a good transport system by the State
authorities, keeping in mind the timings of colleges and campuses.
Implementation of these steps can bridge the urban/rural divide.

The Government of Punjab is encouraging the participation of private
sector for providing good quality education by giving a package of incentives
in the form of land at cheaper rates along with other facilities. Under the Free
and Compulsory Education Scheme, all children in the age group of 6 -
14 are to be provided primary education. In order to achieve the goal of
integration of primary education, efforts are being made to increase retention
of children in schools and increase the enrolment by opening new primary
schools, providing infrastructure in the existing primary schools and
decentralizing planning, irrespective of any social bias.

India lives in villages and Government is trying to provide educational
facilities to villages, every child has now access to a school. Around 95 per
cent of our rural population has access to primary school within one kilometer
of their habitation. This is a significant achievement. But the big questions are:
does the socio-economic condition of children allow them to go to those
schools? How many drop out within a year or two? And what is the quality of
education available at these schools? Quality of education is mostly teacher
dependent. This premise calls for appointment of sufficient number of teachers in rural areas and concentration on their development.

The growth and expansion of education in Punjab has been quite tardy. The state is far behind the target set for the universalisation of elementary education. Education at all levels is besieged with multiple problems. Primarily Punjab has yet to overcome the problem of non-enrolment, irregular attendance and high drop out rate, particularly in rural areas. Single-teacher schools, two-teacher schools, schools without headmasters, without buildings, drinking water, toilets, libraries, laboratories, playgrounds or proper electricity connections are in abundant majority. Not just that in rural areas, science and commerce education at the intermediate level has completely collapsed and learning achievement in general has remained extremely low.

These startling revelations have been made by a study conducted by the Centre for Research in Economic Change, Punjabi University, Patiala (2000). The study says that the educational system is not well-integrated and lacks coherence. Multiple schooling with different affiliations has played havoc with the system. Influential sections of society have withdrawn their wards from government schools, both in rural and urban areas. The gap between different school systems has increased to such an extent that government schools have come to be recognized as the schools of the “have not”. The education system has become an instrument of social stratification rather than that of cohesiveness. The upgrading of government schools due to political considerations without providing matching facilities has disturbed the educational equilibrium. The sanctity of teacher-pupil ratio is not upheld. The urban schools are overstaffed as against the acute shortage of teachers in rural areas. The study says public spending on education needs to be stepped up in a time-bound manner. It must be brought at least to the suggested norm of 6 per cent of the state income. The implication is that educational spending in the state should be at least doubled (Prabhakar 2000).

Another study by Gill in this field has also given a similar explanation that the education sector in Punjab is not in a position to keep pace with the
rate of growth of economy. Consequently it has lost its capacity to solve problems and as such society is facing neglect and callousness at the hands of policy-makers. It seems that those handling the affairs of education at the highest level have lost their grip over the ground reality and the desire to uplift the society through human resource development. The process of withdrawal of state funding in education has created crisis in education. Colleges have met this situation by partly keeping certain number of teaching posts as vacant and compromising with educational standards (Gill 2002).

In rural areas of Punjab about 70 per cent of the farmers are burdened with debt and poverty, though the state at the national level is considered one of the most prosperous and developed one. In a widening gap between rural and urban Punjab, the share of rural people is woefully low at the university level. The rural-urban divide is so pronounced in the state on the higher education front that it deserves immediate corrective measures. A study conducted during the academic session (2005-06) by Punjabi University in this regard has revealed that there were only 4.07 per cent students from the rural areas in various universities of Punjab (Ghuman 2006). Throwing light on all aspects related to rural students at the higher education level, the study by Ghuman and others claimed that there had been widespread exclusion of rural students in Punjab from higher education, particularly professional education, in the past two decades. The collapse of school education in rural Punjab, admission through entrance tests, costly education in private schools, the gap in rural-urban amenities and awareness, the information gap and the lack of guidance and coaching may be cited as some of the possible reasons. There are significant disparities in enrolment ratio between rural and urban areas, urban area being four times higher as compared than rural area. The access to higher education is also low for girls as compared to boys. It has been recommended by the study that the state must allocate at least 6 per cent of its income to education, out of which a bigger share must be allocated for higher educational institutions in the rural areas. Other recommendations include a special incentive for rural students in higher education, strengthening of the existing government and aided schools, handing over the administration and control of government schools to universities in their
respective jurisdiction and the regular recruitment of teachers to fill vacant posts (The Tribune December 17, 2007).

At present seven universities serve Punjab. In quantitative terms, the increase in the number of institutions of higher education in Punjab is spread equally across universities imparting Arts/Sciences/Commerce, Technical and Professional education. The facilities they provide, however, appear to be inadequate to meet the present requirement, especially for the population of rural areas, as these are all located in urban areas.

Punjab has fared well in reducing the gap between male and female literacy, which decreased from 15.62 per cent in 1991 to 11.71 per cent in 2001 and then 10.14 per cent in 2011. Male literacy rate increased from 65.66 per cent in 1991 to 75.26 per cent in 2001 and then 81.48 percent in 2011 and female literacy rate from 50.4 per cent in 1991 to 63.55 per cent in 2001 and then 71.34 percent in 2011. Female literacy rate has increased by 13.15 per cent points in 2001 and 7.79% in 2011, while male literacy increased by 9.97 in 2001 and only 6.22% in 2011. According to the 2001 Census, rural literacy rate is 65.16 per cent and urban 79.13 per cent signifying that the gap is not very wide. There has been a reduction in the rural urban literacy gap, from 19.31 per cent points in 1991 to 13.97 per cent points in 2001. In spite of these positive trends, there are still 94.35 lakh (including 0-6 population) illiterates in the State (Census of India, 2001). It is also a matter of great concern that in spite of having improved its literacy rate as per the latest census reports, the rank of Punjab at the national level has gone down from the 12th position in 1971 to the 16th in 2001, when compared to other states and Union Territories in India. The dropout rate in Punjab is 28 per cent at the middle level and 42.03 per cent at the high school level. Thus, only 29.90 per cent school-going children complete high school education. Further the dropout rates are higher among girls compared to boys (Census of Punjab 2001). There are many reasons for this e.g. one-teacher or two-teacher primary schools, schools without buildings or even the basic facilities like toilet and clean drinking water and therefore incapable of retaining the students.
enrolled. Under such circumstances parents gravitate towards cities where good quality education along with proper infrastructure is readily available, but here again there are some hurdles as the cost of education is sometimes unaffordable for parents.

Data show that Punjab’s performance on education sector calls for attention, particularly in terms of highly differential access to higher education between rural and urban areas as well as between the two genders. The gap between urban and rural literacy is 13.97% and gap between male and female literacy is 12.08%. Although there is paucity of data on higher education in Punjab with special reference to rural-urban and male-female gap in literacy rate, yet the figures in the 2001 census sufficiently reveal two forms of disparity in the attainment of education. The sad part of the story is that the share of education in public (government) spending is falling. Between 1990-91 and 1997-98 at constant prices of 1980-81, the overall educational expenditure of the State has grown at an annual rate of 1.43 per cent against 3.63 per cent growth rate of net state domestic product and 6.17 per cent growth rate of the state budgetary expenditure.

The process of withdrawal of State funding in education has created a two-fold crisis in education. One, it has created a financial crisis for public-funded institutions such as colleges, universities and schools, which keep certain number of teaching posts vacant, so that they do not have to compromise with educational standards by recruiting under qualified staff. Secondly, some of the institutions have opened self-financing and profitable courses charging very high fees. This situation has been exploited by certain private institutions in information technology, engineering and medical courses making a mockery of the whole situation. Quality control mechanism has collapsed and students are charged exorbitant fees for education that is lacking in quality.

As higher educational institutions in the country in general and Punjab in particular have grown in number and size, the problems and prospects too have correspondingly increased. Its relevance to development, especially to
the socio-economic needs of the society has increasingly become an issue of debate. Comparing the situation of higher education in other states with the all-India level, its development in Punjab is seen to be relatively superior. But here again, there are problems, such as imbalanced and unplanned institutional growth, lack of infrastructural facilities, excessive and discriminatory system of admissions, financial constraints, non placement of degree holders, irrelevant course content and the gap between general and professional courses. Hence, there is an urgent need for modifications, adaptations, orientations and innovations.

Annual Status of Education Report 2006 (Rural), states that practically every village in Punjab has a primary school, a middle school within 2 kms, a high school within 2.5 kms, and a senior secondary school within 7 kms, thus exceeding the norms set by the Government of India. Of the nearly 40 lakh school children, 80 per cent attend government schools, but 78 per cent of these drop out by the time they reach senior secondary level and one-half of them who appear in the matriculation examination, as regular students, fail to pass. This is a colossal waste of educational effort on any count. The fast growing popularity of private English medium schools, more so in rural areas, puts a question mark on the quality of education provided by government schools.

Review of Literature

Research is primarily an attempt to fill the gaps in knowledge in a specific area. Identifying such gaps is not easy for a researcher. One has to depend on the personal insights of some experienced experts in the absence of any institutionalized assistance in that respect. The topics for new research for dissertations and theses must be related to previous research, although it ought to concentrate more on new facts and new interpretations. For this reason an intimate acquaintance with the subject, knowledge of the latest situation and the review of literature on that particular subject is very important.
On reviewing the literature on higher education in India, particularly the State of Punjab, the following themes can be delineated:

- **The pertinence of higher education in the development of a nation and society has been emphasized persistently by a large number of scholars as well as policy makers.**

  It has been noted by researchers that the interest in higher education has greatly increased all over the world during the last 50 years. For the developing countries, higher education is the most important means of scientific, technological and industrial progress and removal of poverty. It can enhance self-reliance of a nation in the emerging scenario of globalized interdependence by providing competent manpower required for accelerating the pace of development. Dissemination of learning, incessant search for new knowledge, increasing efforts to plumb the meaning of life, provisions for professional education to satisfy the occupational needs of the society, continuing education, international understandings are the vital functions of higher education (Usmani 1997, UNESCO 1998, Jain 1989 and Mehta 2004).

  It has been noted that higher education provides people with an opportunity to reflect on the critical, social, economic, cultural, moral and spiritual issues facing humanity. It contributes to national development through dissemination of specialized knowledge and skills (NPE 1986). International organizations have also given paramount importance to higher education for economic and social development. These organizations have emphasized that institutions of higher education have the main responsibility of equipping individuals with the advanced knowledge and skills required for positions of responsibility in government, business and the professions. Its objective is not only to promote equality and justice but also to provide the right kind of work ethos, professional expertise and leadership in all walks of life. So higher education investments are extremely important for economic growth (World Development Report 1994 and UNESCO 1998).

- **The second point of emphasis primarily emerging out of the literature relates to the relative growth of higher education in quantity at the cost of qualitative development of this sector.**
Many scholars have pointed out that the institutions of higher education are in general engaged in the conduct of research in various disciplines; however the system itself is becoming a subject of study. It has been argued that India has been trying to reform its higher education system for more than a half century, but the results in terms of systematic change have been minimal. Universities suffer from deteriorating standards, occasional unrest and inadequate resources. International organizations and different committees on education in India have stressed on the need for qualitative development in the field of education. Our objective in higher education is not only to promote equality and justice but also to provide the right kind of work ethos, professional expertise and leadership in all walks of life (Altbach 1997, Benal 1988 and UNESCO 1998). Although there is a considerable quantitative growth in the number of institutions, yet the qualitative improvement is not yet seen. National Policy on Education (1986) has noted the need for the quality education in India, which provides people with an opportunity to reflect on the critical, social, economic, cultural, moral and spiritual issues facing humanity.

- Third category of studies based on primary as well as secondary data highlight the huge disparities existing in higher education i.e.

  a) Rural-urban disparity
  b) Gender disparity

World Development Report has also pointed out inequalities in higher education. It explains that education is of great intrinsic importance in assessing inequalities of opportunity. It is also an important determinant of individual’s income, health and capacity to interact and communicate with others. Inequality in education thus contributes to inequality in other important dimensions of well-being (World Development Report 2006).

Relevant literature indicates that India is the third largest higher educational system and has the third largest pool of skilled person power in the world (Usmani 1997), despite the fact that only 7.2% of the youth in the age group of 17-23yrs have access to higher education. Steering Committee
(2001) for the Tenth Five Year Plan has reported that the issues of access and equity are central to the university/higher education system. The university system provides access to only 5.75% of the estimated population. Considering the critical role of higher education in the socio-economic development, a minimum of 10% of the relevant group (17-23 years) needs to be enrolled in higher education by the end of Tenth Plan period. In Dakar Framework there was a special emphasis on the elimination of disparities in higher education. Two goals for the Dakar Framework for Action to be achieved were universal primary education and elimination of gender disparity in primary and secondary education (UNESCO 2000).

National Policy on Education too emphasized upon the need to pay attention to improve the condition of education in the rural areas. It reported that the rural areas with poor infrastructure and social services can not get the benefit of trained and educated youth, unless rural-urban disparities are reduced and determined measures undertaken to promote diversification and dispersal of employment opportunities. Policy on education has suggested that regional imbalances in the provision of educational facilities should be corrected and good educational facilities should be provided in rural and other backward areas (Government of India 1968 and 1986).

The literature on higher education specially reveals multiple disparities in education, the most important being those between the rural and urban societies apart from the two genders. On the basis of research evidence it has been found that the majorities of the students going in for higher education belong to upper castes, urban areas and have convent/public or private school background. Rural areas have been touched only marginally by higher education of quality. Many scholars have reported that in the field of education, people of rural areas especially girls are the disadvantaged sectors, because their education is not considered beneficial for the parental family (Jayaram 1979, Vaidyanathan 2001 and UGC report 1998-99).

Indian families prefer to invest in their son’s education, since returns of this investment remain within the family. The education of women suffers from the social and cultural attitudes towards female sex resulting in increasing
According to researchers, other factors responsible for the low level of female literacy are problem of access, lack of motivation, inappropriate reading material, child marriages, gendered domestic chores, high level of poverty, lack of encouragement, inadequate school facilities, less number of female teachers etc. (Ramachandran 1983).

In spite of these disparities some reports have shown a positive trend in the education of women. UGC (1998-99) has reported that there has been a phenomenal growth in the number of women students enrolled in higher education. Women enrolment was 10% of the total enrolment on the eve of independence and it rose to 35% in 1998-99. Scholars have suggested that it is the high time that women’s education at all levels – primary, secondary and higher, be taken up as a priority issue. It is the only means by which a woman can be empowered to create a society, where she will be assessed on personal merit without discrimination on grounds of gender and class (Misra and Aggarwal 1997).

- There are some studies highlighting impediments to higher education in India as well as in Punjab in view of the growing social evils particularly concerning the rural youth.

There are studies to prove that most of the higher education institutions are in urban areas. Rural population primarily engages in agricultural activities due to inaccessibility of higher educational facilities. They face financial problems, infra-structural problems apart from numerous social and cultural barriers in achieving higher education.

It has been pointed out that since hiring labour for agricultural activities proves uneconomical for families with small land holdings, children in poor families are compelled to involve themselves in a variety of economic activities for their families. Drop-out children by and large belong to agricultural families, where fathers own land and employ cultivators or cultivate their own land or work on others’ farm as agricultural labourers,
Occupation of the father is thus found to be closely associated with child’s literacy status. It has been observed that fathers working as agricultural labourers have the largest percentage of illiterate children while the percentage was lower in the case where fathers are employed in services. Children of families with small/marginal land holdings face the greatest problem, as their children are often withdrawn to work on land (Reddy and Shiva 1992 and Pandey and Talwar 1980).

Issues confronting Punjab

Punjab has proved itself as a prosperous state on the basis of different economic indicators but its social indicators tell an altogether different story. The State is still struggling with many problems as drug abuse, female foeticide, unemployment and dowry, which are hindering its progress. Studies indicate that Punjab is far behind the target of universalization of Elementary Education (Prabhakar 2000). Education at all levels is besieged with multiple problems. The state has not succeeded in overcoming the problem of low level of enrolment; irregular attendance and high drop out rate, particularly in rural areas.

The low percentage of rural youth going in for higher education appears to have a direct link with some of the social problems faced by the society in Punjab. Surveys have confirmed that Punjab has a high incidence of drug abuse in the age group of 16 to 35 yrs (Sandhu 2007). The problem is more acute in rural areas, where unemployment is rampant. In the absence of educated youth in the rural areas, social evils like dowry have multiplied in significance particularly in villages (Gupta 2001).

The review of literature brings to light certain observations, underlining disparities in higher education on the basis of class and caste but in the Indian context with special reference to the State of Punjab, systematic studies on this aspect have yet to be conducted.
Studies show that though Punjab is a prosperous state economically, yet its social indicators do not substantiate it. Punjab is ignoring its 50% of female population, indicated by the declining sex ratio and a huge gap between male-female literacy. As higher education is an indicator of social, economic, religious and mental development of a person, Punjab is lagging behind in all the fields except the economic. The reasons for rural-urban and male-female disparities in education are many. Punjab is basically an agricultural and patriarchal state. Parents expect from their young boys to take the responsibility of their agricultural work, as they themselves grow old. The experience of the rural parents says that when their children become highly qualified, they are not interested in agricultural work and due to competition in the job market, they are not able to get good jobs too. So they fail on both the fronts. For the lower level of literacy among girls, similar views are given. In traditional society of Punjab, the ultimate objective of the parents of a girl is to marry her off in a good family. It is not common among the rural people to send their girls for higher education due to many cultural impediments. Still we do not have enough studies on Punjab to examine the slow growth of higher education of girls in comparison to boys. In view of the poor performance of Punjab in terms of gender equity as depicted in the recent reports (Human Development Report: Punjab 2004), it is but natural that the reinforcement of social practices such as dowry are bound to affect higher education among girls in an adverse manner. Systematic studies are required to examine the attitude and perceptions of young boys and girls particularly in rural Punjab towards the problems of drug addiction, dowry etc., since they have an extremely important role in confronting these issues, which are destroying important vitals of a healthy society of Punjab. A pertinent question arising in present day Punjab is that despite a mushrooming of institutions of higher education in the state, significantly enhancing the educational infrastructure in rural areas, what impedes our young rural boys and girls from excelling in higher education?

**Issues Emerging from Review of Literature**

The review of literature indicates a number of issues which are still untouched, especially the problems of rural youth going in for higher
education. Another question, which still needs to be answered, is, when we have more than 70% population in villages, why are almost all the higher educational institutions located in cities? At present when a large number of colleges have been opened up around rural areas in Punjab, it still remains to be explored if the situation has improved in Punjab and what are the factors that hinder the rural youth from taking advantage of higher education? Importantly, while girls contribute almost half of the world population, why are they lagging behind in the field of education?

Existing literature generated through empirical investigations in the area of higher education in India in general and Punjab in particular, thus brings out the following major issues:

A) Poor quality of higher education in terms of skill formation and employability among the youth;

B) Inequalities in terms of access to higher education on the basis of rural-urban population, gender, caste and class;

C) Impediments to higher education resulting into a higher rate of drop out at higher education level; especially among children of farming community, more among girls; thus leading to a poor development of human resource in the rural areas.

These issues confronting higher education are extremely pertinent in the state of Punjab in view of the recent statistics indicating its deteriorating performance on socio-economic indices. The rural youth of Punjab being out of the catchment area of higher education has increasingly being pulled towards intoxication of all kinds, posing a grave challenge to policy makers and educationists. The case of Punjab is worth examining since the state has been a torchbearer in India on the path of economic and social development till a few years ago. Systematic studies into these issues would go a long way in saving the state of Punjab from sinking into a state of disaster.
Rationale of the Study

Many researchers have pointed out the problems of higher education system in India, such as the uneven growth of higher education institutions, lack of quality education, lack of coordination between different administrative bodies working for the system, financial crunch, infrastructural problems etc. Very few studies, however have dealt with the problems of rural youth going in for higher education. India is an agriculture-based country, where more than 70% of the population is living in rural areas. Since education is an indicator of social and economic progress, how can the country even think about its development, ignoring the educational needs of the majority of its population? As most of the colleges and almost all the universities are located in the cities, rural people have a limited access to these facilities. They face grave economic, socio cultural and infrastructural problems, while going in for higher education.

As far as the school education in rural areas is concerned, it is accessible to all, at least in theory. Under Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, now one school is available within a radius of one kilometer in every village. That, the schools in these villages lack proper infrastructure, finances, good teachers, good buildings and even a good environment, is another story altogether. At the school level, numerous studies are available, which deal with such problems, but in the area of higher education, which is very important basis for the development of any country, not much data are available, especially with reference to the problems faced by the rural community. Whatever data are available, are generally of a quantitative nature showing the number of universities, colleges, teachers, students etc., while the qualitative aspect has been totally ignored.

Objectives of the Proposed Study

In the light of above discussion, the present study has addressed the following research objectives:

1. To examine the characteristics of rural youth going in for higher
education in Punjab in terms of socio-economic status, family background, academic achievements etc;

2. To look into the major problems faced by the rural youth in Punjab in getting higher education, at home, at the institution and in society in general; and the coping mechanisms used by them;

3. To examine the role of higher education in determining the career aspirations of rural youth in Punjab;

4. To look into the perceptions of rural youth, in higher education about the social issues confronting the state of Punjab, viz. drug addiction, dowry, casteism, gender relations etc;

5. To identify the special problems faced by rural girls in reaching a level of higher education and then sustaining it;

6. To examine as to how the 'others' consisting of parents, teachers and villagers in general, view the utility of higher education, for boys and girls.

**Area of Study and Sampling**

Scanty literature is available in the field of higher education and very few studies are there to guide us about the problems confronted by youth in rural areas of Punjab particularly in agrarian patriarchal culture. Therefore the present study has been designed to examine the above issues.

The area of the research consisted of degree colleges located in the city of Batala in Gurdaspur district. Since the present study was to focus primarily upon the rural youth, the city of Batala has been purposely selected for the following reasons;

1. Batala has a distinction of being the most populous town in District Gurdaspur. Its population exceeds that of Gurdaspur city.

2. Batala city has 6 degree colleges, out of which 5 are co-educational and one is exclusively a girls’ college.
3. Batala has one premier degree college called Baring Union Christian College, which has enjoyed a very respectable reputation in the area attracting students from all sections and areas, for the last many decades.

4. The city is surrounded by large number of villages, and colleges of Batala are catering mainly to the rural students from these surrounding village area.

5. Guru Nanak Dev University is located at a distance of 45 km from Batala City. Many of the students after completing their graduation from the city go in for higher studies in this University.

This study is restricted to degree colleges only, primarily to focus upon the rural youth, since it has been observed that professional colleges even if located in rural areas, have a sizeable proportion of urban students. Secondly the purpose here is to maintain the homogeneity of population in terms of type of higher education.

The study was conducted by obtaining a sampling frame consisting of all the students coming from rural areas enrolled in T.D.C Part II and Part III, since by this level, students are mature enough to identify their career aspirations. Data were collected from two colleges: Baring Union Christian College, Batala and R.R. Bawa D.A.V College Batala. All the three streams were included i.e. Arts, Commerce and Science. By using stratified sampling method, boys and girls among students were classified and by using random sampling method, a sample of 180 students was selected of which 90 are boys and 90 girls, 90 boys along with 30 girls were selected from Baring Union Christian College, which is co-educational, and 60 girls were selected from R.R. Bawa DAV College, which is exclusively for girls. This was done in order to find out whether there is any difference between the problems of girl students studying in co-educational college and in exclusive girls’ college. With the help of an interview schedule data were collected from all these students.

While collecting data, both qualitative as well as quantitative methods of research, were used. Apart from the Interview Schedule, Focused Group
Discussions and some case studies were conducted for arriving at meaningful inferences. Secondly, since teachers are dealing directly with the problems of rural youth going in for higher education data is collected from 40 teachers including hostel wardens from both these colleges.

Since the study is focused upon rural youth in higher education, sample respondents, i.e. students, were identified on the basis of colleges they are enrolled in. However an attempt was also made to interview a sub-sample of parents. For this purpose, 3 villages to which the maximum of our respondents of the following three categories belong were identified

1. Boys in Baring Union Christian College;
2. Girls in Baring Union Christian College;
3. Girls in R R Bawa DAV College.

The researcher visited these three villages and personal interviews were conducted with both the parents of 30 students (10 in each village). Apart from this the Sarpanches and Panchayat members were also interviewed.

The data was analyzed on the basis of the objectives undertaken and the findings were drawn accordingly, by using appropriate methods for data analysis.

Chapter Scheme

1. Formulation of the Research Problem and Method of Study.
2. Rural Youth in Higher Education in Punjab: A Profile
4. Rural Youth’s Perspective on Social Issues
5. Gender and Higher Education
6. Inferences and Policy Recommendations