

Chapter-II

Access, Equity and Affordability in Higher Education

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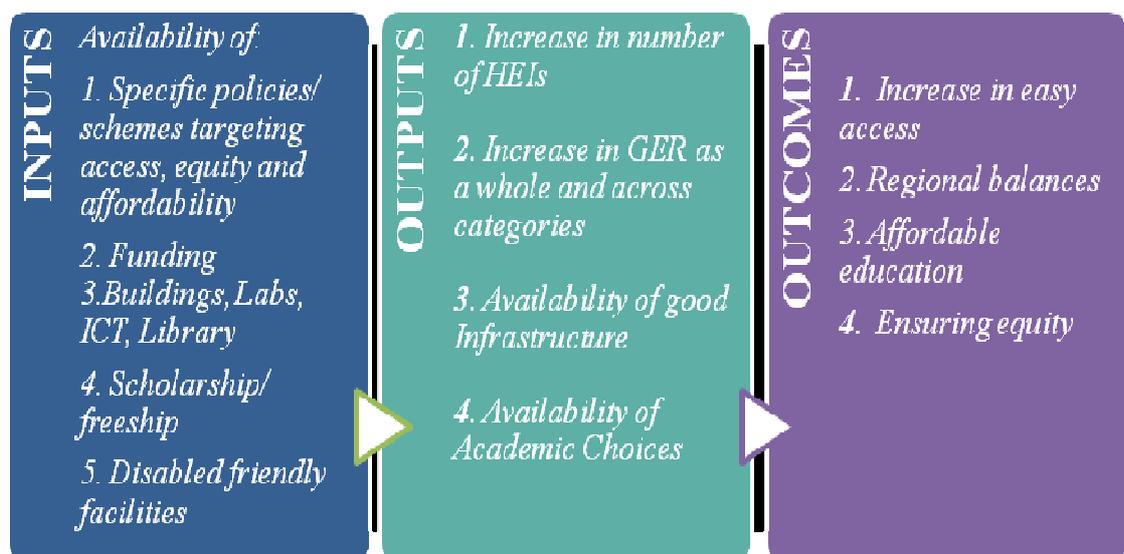
Access to and equity in higher education have been widely regarded as the basic and key responsibilities of any government. Creating a high-quality higher education system which is easily accessible to all sections of society is thus one of the main higher education outcomes that a government seeks to achieve. Access to higher education has been defined as availability of sufficient number of institutions across the serviced region to adequately fulfil the demand from that region. Equity means equal opportunity to all sections of the society to participate in higher education.

In order to assess the performance of HEIs and GoP towards achieving the goal of creating a high-quality higher education system which is easily accessible to all sections of society, the following audit objective was framed.

Audit objective 1: Whether State Government/Institutions ensured accessibility, equity and affordability in Higher education?

Easy access to Higher Education in Punjab was looked at with regard to number of HEIs, regional accessibility, availability of academic choices and GER.

The equity, access and affordability related outcomes and their relationship with the contributing factors can be understood from the representation below:



A number of crucial steps such as specific policies and schemes targeted towards easy access, broad based equity and affordability have to be taken by the government as well as the HEIs concerned to ensure achievement of these outcomes. Moreover, scholarships/freeships and disabled friendly facilities

must be ensured especially for the benefit of socio-economically backward and the disadvantaged sections of the society. This would lead towards a planned and equitable increase in the number of HEIs across the concerned region and encourage higher enrolments thus increasing GER across different regions and social categories.

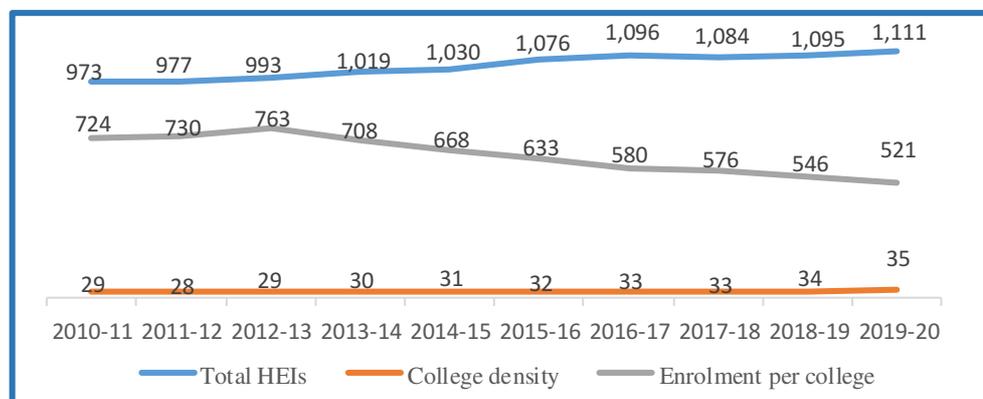
2.1 Easy access to Higher Education

12th FYP stated that focus should be given towards achieving higher access through better utilisation of the existing infrastructure, upgradation of the infrastructure and creation of new institutions primarily to meet the objective of regional equity. Moreover, GoI's output outcomes frameworks¹ and GoP's Budgets² over the last few years have also laid emphasis on increasing access to higher education through establishment of new HEIs. In this section easy access to higher education in Punjab with regard to number of HEIs, regional accessibility, availability of academic choices and GER as a whole as well as across categories is being discussed.

2.1.1 Number of HEIs in Punjab

According to AISHE Reports prepared by MHRD, the number of all types of HEIs³, college density and average enrolment per college in Punjab during 2011-2020 is shown in *Chart 2.1* below:

Chart 2.1: Availability of HEIs in Punjab



It can be seen that number of HEIs⁴ increased by 14.18 *per cent* from 973 to 1,111, college density increased by 20.69 *per cent* from 29 to 35 colleges per lakh population and average enrolment decreased by 28 *per cent* during 2010-11 to 2019-20.

¹ Under Grant No 58 of GoI's output outcomes framework 2017-18 onwards.

² Grants are being provided under budget head 4202 for construction of college buildings.

³ State public universities, state private universities, deemed universities, institutes of national importance, Government colleges, private colleges, etc.

⁴ Universities increased by 88.24 *per cent* and colleges increased by 12.86 *per cent*.

2.1.1.1 Non-Construction of colleges as per geographical mapping

Para 21.207 of 12th FYP stressed the use of geographical mapping to identify habitations and settlements lacking HEIs. Accordingly, Government of India approved 15 colleges to be established in Educationally Backward Districts⁵ under 12th FYP and two model degree colleges⁶ under RUSA. Further, in Cabinet meeting (March 2017) of GoP, it was decided that at least one Government College would be established in each sub-division. It was observed that out of 89 sub-divisions, 33 sub-divisions did not have any Government/constituent college. It includes ten sub-divisions⁷ where no college⁸ was available. Besides, GoP approved (July 2017 to July 2019) 27 new degree colleges to be established in 27 sub-divisions as given in **Table 2.1:**

Table 2.1: Status of availability of colleges in the sub-divisions

No. of sub divisions where government or constituent college was not available	No. of sub divisions (out of Col 1) where Government/ constituent/ aided college was not available	No. of sub divisions (out of Col 1) covered while approving 27 colleges	No. of sub divisions (out of Col 2) covered while approving 27 colleges
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
33	10	17	3

Source: Departmental data

From the above table it was evident that:

- Out of 33 sub-divisions, only 17 sub-divisions were covered to establish the Government colleges under the approved project of 27 colleges.
- Out of 10 sub-divisions where there was no college, only three sub-divisions were covered indicating lack of geographical mapping for establishment of colleges.
- It was also noticed that out of 27 approved colleges, the Department started construction of only 12 colleges during May 2018 to February 2020 which were to be completed between July 2019 and November 2020 at a cost of ₹ 141.81 crore. However, construction of all the colleges was incomplete with the physical progress ranging between 1 and 85 *per cent* after incurring expenditure of ₹ 71.04 crore as of May 2021 against released amount of ₹ 81.45 crore.

⁵ (i) Amritsar; (ii) Bathinda; (iii) Fatehgarh Sahib; (iv) Gurdaspur; (v) Kapurthala; (vi) Moga; (vii) Mukatsar; (viii) Nawanshahar; (ix) Patiala; (x) Faridkot; (xi) Ferozepur; (xii) Mansa; (xiii) Sangrur; (xiv) Pathankot; and (xv) Fazilka.

⁶ (i) Ferozepur; and (ii) Pathankot.

⁷ (i) Majitha (Amritsar); (ii) Bassi Pathana (Fatehgarh Sahib); (iii) Khamano (Fatehgarh Sahib); (iv) Dera Baba Nanak (Gurdaspur); (v) Kalanaur (Gurdaspur); (vi) Shahkot (Jalandhar); (vii) Ahmedgarh (Sangrur); (viii) Lehragaga (Sangrur); (ix) Bhawani Garh (Sangrur); and (x) Dirba (Sangrur).

⁸ Government, Constituent or Private aided colleges.

The Department stated (August 2021) that it was not practically possible to open new colleges in each sub division and apart from geographical mapping many other factors were considered to finalise the location of the colleges viz. population, existing aided/ private colleges and other political reasons etc. Regarding delay in construction of colleges, the Department stated that due to covid the construction work was held up and could not be completed. Reply was not acceptable as the department did not comply with the decision of Cabinet Meeting (March 2017) while approving the project of establishing of new colleges and also did not adhere to the scheduled date of completion of 10 colleges which was between July 2019 and March 2020 i.e. before the Covid.

Thus, the Department failed to establish the Government/constituent/aided colleges in all the sub-divisions coupled with non-achieving the objective of establishing the colleges as the scheduled date of completion of approved colleges was not adhered to.

2.1.2 Regional Accessibility

Physical/geographical aspects of a region impact the ease of access to higher education and achieving regional accessibility implies providing adequate access to prospective students in all the regions of the State, irrespective of geographical and other limitations.

2.1.2.1 Accessibility in urban and rural areas

Para 6.1.3 of 12th FYP read with mission statement of RUSA states that the aim should be correcting the regional imbalances by setting up institutions in unserved and underserved areas.

Audit analysed urban/rural area wise distribution of general degree government colleges vis-à-vis projected population of age group of 18-23 years which is given in **Table 2.2**:

Table 2.2: Urban/rural area wise distribution of Government colleges

Year	Number of general degree government colleges			Projected Population (age group 18-23 years, as per census 2011)		
	Total colleges	Colleges in urban area	Colleges in rural area	Urban area	Rural area	Total
2015-16	43	29 (67.44)	14 (32.56)	12,17,352	20,30,651	32,48,003
2016-17	43	29 (67.44)	14 (32.56)	12,01,357	20,03,972	32,05,329
2017-18	44	29 (65.91)	15 (34.09)	11,85,428	19,77,400	31,62,828
2018-19	46	30 (65.22)	16 (34.78)	11,69,590	19,50,982	31,20,572
2019-20	46	30 (65.22)	16 (34.78)	11,53,853	19,24,729	30,78,582

Source: Departmental data, AISHE data and rural/urban ratio as per Census 2011

Note: Figures in parenthesis indicate percentage.

It can be seen from the above table that:

- though the number of Government colleges increased marginally from 43 to 46 during 2015-2020, the urban/rural area wise distribution of these colleges (*Appendix 2.1*) was not in accordance with proportion of population residing in these areas. During 2015-2020, only 32.56 per cent to 34.78 per cent government colleges were available in rural areas for providing higher education to 62.52 per cent population of age group 18-23 years.

Audit further observed that:

- in 11 test checked colleges located in district headquarters, 48 per cent students were from rural areas (*Appendix 2.2*).
- out of 46 government colleges (Urban: 30 and Rural: 16) 18 colleges were running with single stream, eight colleges were running with two streams either Arts and Science or Arts and Commerce whereas 20 colleges were running with all three general streams (*Appendix 2.3*). Out of 18 government colleges with single stream, 13 colleges were in rural areas and were running with Arts stream only, thereby restricting accessibility to other academic choice to the rural students.

The Department while admitting (August 2021) the facts, assured that steps would be taken to start new streams and courses in demand (i.e. BCA, BBA, B.Com. Hons.) in rural colleges.

Thus, the objective to correct regional and disciplinary imbalances in distribution of HEIs (12th FYP) could not be fully met in the State and discrepancies between rural and urban areas and between sub-divisions remained. Further, the State had also not made sufficient efforts to assess the regional requirement for HEIs to ensure easy and affordable access to all.

2.1.2.2 Accessibility in different geographical areas

The status of accessibility to higher education in Punjab across three geographical regions⁹ during 2015-16 to 2019-20 is given in *Table 2.3*:

⁹ (i) Majha : 4 districts (Amritsar, Gurdaspur, Pathankot and Taran Taran);
(ii) Doaba : 4 districts (Hoshiarpur, Kapurthala, Jalandhar and Nawanshahar);
and (iii) Malwa: 14 districts (Ludhiana, Ropar, Patiala, Sangrur, Bathinda, Mansa, Ferozepur, Fazilka, Faridkot, Sri Muktsar Sahib, Moga, Barnala, Fatehgarh Sahib, SAS Nagar).

Table 2.3: Region wise availability of colleges

Geographical area (No of districts)	Number of Government General Degree colleges		Number of private General Degree colleges		Number of total colleges		Projected population in 2019-20 in lakh
	2015-16	2019-20	2015-16	2019-20	2015-16	2019-20	
Majha (04)	05 (11.63)	05 (10.87)	39 (13)	40 (13)	44 (13)	45 (12.47)	6,57,893 (21.37)
Malwa (14)	30 (69.77)	32 (69.56)	194 (64)	204 (65)	224 (65)	236 (65.37)	18,56,077 (60.29)
Doaba (04)	08 (18.60)	09 (19.57)	69 (23)	71 (22)	77 (22)	80 (22.16)	5,64,612 (18.34)
Total	43	46	302	315	345	361	30,78,582

Source: Departmental data and AISHE data

Regional population for 2019-20 has been calculated on proportionate basis as per Census 2011.

Note: Figures in parenthesis indicate percentage.

It can be seen from the above table that:

- there was a marginal increase of five *per cent* in the numbers of HEIs during 2015-2020.
- the percentage of general degree colleges decreased marginally (from 13 to 12.47 *per cent*) in Majha region, while it increased marginally (from 65 to 65.37 *per cent*) in Malwa region and Doaba region (from 22 to 22.16 *per cent*).
- Further, during 2019-20, population of age group 18-23 years was 21.37 *per cent* (6.57 lakh) in Majha region and 18.34 *per cent* (5.65 lakh) in Doaba region (both region have four districts), but number of colleges in Majha and Doaba regions was 12.47 *per cent* and 22.16 *per cent* respectively. This indicates that region wise distribution of general degree colleges in the State was not proportionate.

2.1.2.3 Accessibility to different Academic Choices

Para 2.2.2 (e) of 12th FYP provides that accessibility to different academic choices of the discipline by the students is a crucial aspect of access to quality education. It also requires promoting equity in all disciplines of general education. It further states that the aim should be at correcting the disciplinary imbalances in the distribution of institutions.

The availability of seats in Arts, Science and Commerce streams in selected colleges along with enrollment of students therein during 2015-2020 is given in **Table 2.4:**

Table 2.4: Position of availability of streams in 38 selected colleges during 2015-2020

Year	Total selected colleges	Arts In 36 colleges (94.73 per cent)			Science In 21 colleges (55.26 per cent)			Commerce In 27 colleges (71.05 per cent)		
		Seats available	Enrolment	Percentage	Seats available	Enrolment	Percentage	Seats available	Enrolment	Percentage
2015-16	38	40,051	35,345	88.25	10,594	8,338	78.70	8,190	6,569	80.21
2016-17	38	39,336	32,072	81.53	10,272	8,263	80.44	8,362	7,518	89.91
2017-18	38	38,739	28,209	72.82	10,511	7,756	73.79	8,578	7,627	88.91
2018-19	38	39,017	27,410	70.25	11,259	7,101	63.07	8,932	7,599	85.08
2019-20	38	39,290	27,360	69.64	11,147	6,565	58.89	9,265	7,582	81.83

Source : Departmental data

From the above table it was evident that:

- Though the enrollment of students in science stream decreased by 21 per cent in 2019-20 in comparison to 2015-16 availability of seats increased by five per cent. In the arts stream, enrollment and availability of seats showed a decline of 22.6 per cent and 1.90 per cent respectively while in respect of Commerce stream enrollment as well as availability of seats increased by 15.42 per cent and 13.12 per cent respectively.
- Out of 38 selected colleges, Science stream was available only in 55 per cent colleges whereas Commerce stream was available in 71 per cent colleges and the Art stream was available in 95 per cent colleges (*Appendix 2.4*).

The detail of streams (Arts, Science and Commerce) available in general degree Government colleges in the State during 2015-2020 is given in *Table 2.5*:

Table 2.5: Position of streams availability in government colleges in the State

Year	Government colleges	Arts stream		Science stream		Commerce stream	
		colleges	Percentage	colleges	Percentage	Colleges	percentage
2015-16	43	41	95	24	56	24	56
2016-17	43	41	95	24	56	24	56
2017-18	44	42	95	24	55	25	57
2018-19	46	44	96	24	52	26	57
2019-20	46	44	96	24	52	26	57
Average	44	42	95	24	54	25	57

Source: Departmental data

It was evident from the above table that:

- during 2015-2020, proportionate availability of colleges having Art and Commerce streams increased marginally while number of colleges having science stream was constant.

Audit further observed that:

- Arts, Science and Commerce stream was available in 95, 54 and 57 per cent of government colleges, respectively, whereas in 22 selected Government colleges, it was 95, 55 and 73 per cent, respectively, during 2015-2020 (*Appendix 2.4*).
- the Science stream was not available in three Government colleges established during 2015-2020. Further, the Department was not maintaining stream-wise data in respect of private colleges.

The Department stated (November 2020) that no special survey was undertaken and the courses were started in consultation with the respective affiliating university. The reply was not acceptable as the affiliation of government colleges could be obtained after fulfillment of affiliation criteria mentioned in UGC (Affiliation of colleges by Universities) Regulations, 2009 after self-assessment made by the college which applied for affiliation.

Thus, the failure of the State to provide academic choices proportionately across all the streams seems to have impacted the stream specific enrolment trends during 2015-2020, highlighting the lack of academic choices available to prospective students.

2.2 Gross Enrolment Ratio

MHRD, GoI aimed to expand the Higher Education sector in all its modes of delivery to increase the GER in Higher Education from 15 per cent in 2011-12 to 21 per cent by 2016-17 and further to 30 per cent by 2020. Further, as per Strategic Plan prepared by GoP for achievement of SDG, the GER of 30.5 per cent was to be achieved during 2019-20. Audit assessed the efforts of the Department in respect of GER which were as under:

2.2.1 Gross Enrolment Ratio¹⁰ ranking of the State

The National ranking of Punjab was at 14th position in terms of number of colleges¹¹ and at 10th position in terms of college density in 2019-20. However, the GER of Punjab compared to National GER for the period 2015-16 to 2019-20 is given in *Table 2.6*:

Table 2.6: Details showing comparison of GER of Punjab with National GER

Particulars	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
GER of India	24.5	25.2	25.8	26.3	27.10
GER of Punjab	27	28.6	30.3	29.5	28.20

Source: AISHE reports

¹⁰ GER is the ratio of enrolment in higher education to the population in the eligible age group (18-23 years).

¹¹ As per AISHE Report 2019-20, there were 1,079 various types of colleges in Punjab.

It can be seen from the above table that:

- The GER of Punjab exhibited an increasing trend during 2015-2018 but it stood at 28.20 *per cent* in 2020 against the envisaged SDG target of 30.5 *per cent*. Though, GER of Punjab had consistently been higher than National GER during 2015-2020, ranking of the state in terms of GER fell to 18th place in 2019-20 from 15th rank in 2015-16.
- It was also noticed that in PU, Patiala, the campus enrolment of students decreased from 15,194 to 13,098 in 2019-20 in comparison to 2015-16 whereas in two universities the campus enrolment increased (GNDU, Amritsar - from 9,878 to 11,085 and RGNUL, Patiala - from 700 to 942) in 2019-20 in comparison to 2015-16.
- Out of 38 selected colleges, in 30 colleges, there was decrease in enrolment of the students ranging from 1.64 to 65.58 *per cent* in 2019-20 in comparison to 2015-16 (*Appendix 2.5*).

The Department stated (August 2021) that closing of engineering colleges during last 2-3 years and student migration (last year about 1.50 lakh students immigrated especially from Doaba and Majha regions) had resulted in decline in GER. However, the Department assured to take remedial steps to improve the GER.

2.2.2 GER of disadvantaged groups

As per provision *ibid*, the Department was required to prepare a plan to provide facilities, i.e. training, special coaching etc., to the disadvantaged groups for increasing enrolment. The Department had not made any plan for disadvantaged groups during 2015-2018. A strategic plan was prepared for the period 2019-2023 for achieving the SDG wherein it was envisaged to achieve a GER (SC category) of 22.1 up to 2020 against 21.1 as achieved in 2019. The HEIs were also required to implement the SC reservation policy. The GER of the Nation and the State in respect of SC students and gender parity index for the period 2015-16 to 2019-20 are given in *Table 2.7*:

Table 2.7: National and Punjab GER of SC and overall and gender parity

Year	National GER – SC			Punjab GER - SC			Gender parity index			
	Both	Male	Female	Both	Male	Female	National		Punjab	
							All	SC	All	SC
2015-16	19.9	20.8	19.0	18.0	17.7	18.4	0.92	0.91	1.10	1.04
2016-17	21.1	21.8	20.2	20.4	19.4	21.7	0.94	0.93	1.13	1.12
2017-18	21.8	22.2	21.4	21.4	19.4	23.8	0.97	0.96	1.22	1.22
2018-19	23.0	22.7	23.3	21.1	17.8	25.2	1.00	1.02	1.35	1.42
2019-20	23.4	22.8	24.1	18.8	15.8	22.4	1.01	1.05	1.28	1.42

Source: AISHE reports

For the period 2015-2020, it was evident from above table that:

- The GER of SC category in Punjab increased during 2015-2018, but it decreased from 21.1 in 2018-19 to 18.8 in 2019-20 which was far below the target fixed to achieve the SDG.
- The GER of female (SC category) in Punjab increased during 2015-2019, however, decreased from 25.2 in 2018-19 to 22.4 in 2019-20. The GER of male (SC category) increased during 2015-2018 and decreased during 2018-2020.
- Gender parity index of all categories of Punjab increased and was more than the All India average during 2015-2020. Gender parity index of SC category increased from 1.04 to 1.42 during 2015-2020.

Audit further analysed the data of enrolled SC students in selected HEIs and observed that:

- The percentage of enrolment of SC students against reserved seats was found to be short ranging between 36.36 and 46.94 *per cent* & 53.20 and 62.00 *per cent* in GNDU, Amritsar and PU, Patiala, respectively, during 2015-2020. The RGNUL, Patiala had given admission to the SC students as per required quota.
- Out of 38 test checked colleges, in 20 colleges, enrolment of SC students was between 6.50 and 99 *per cent* less than the available seats during 2015-2020 (*Appendix 2.5 A*).

The Department while admitting the facts stated (August 2021) that the State Government was very serious to increase the GER of disadvantaged group. GNDU, Amritsar stated (August 2021) that no eligible candidate from reserved categories was denied admission, however, more efforts would be made in this regard. The responses of the Department showed that planned efforts¹² for enhancing GER across disadvantaged category were not made by the Department as well as by HEIs to achieve the targeted SDG.

Good practice: The GER of Punjab has consistently been higher than National GER during 2015-2020. Higher gender parity index of Punjab with reference to National index and increasing trend in overall gender parity index of Punjab, and of SC category may be due to State Government's interventions to waive off tuition fee for girls.

¹² Special classes, training, etc.

2.3 Equity

The content of Central level as well as State level policy documents suggest that achieving equity in access to higher education is a universally accepted objective of any higher education system. Equity needs to be ensured across all sections of the society irrespective of gender, caste, socio-economic status and other vulnerabilities.

Paragraph 21.239 and 21.240 of 12th FYP envisage that a targeted approach focusing on Scheduled Caste (SC) dominated regions should be adopted and concerted efforts should be made to increase the enrolment of students from disadvantaged communities by strengthening the current remedial teaching programmes with teaching/coaching modules, preparatory training and special coaching for entrance examinations. This aspect was evaluated in audit and findings were as under:

2.3.1 Non-implementation of scheme for Economically Weaker Sections

In accordance with One Hundred and Third Amendment Act, 2019 of Constitution of India, MHRD issued (January 2019) instructions regarding implementation of reservation for Economically Weaker Sections (EWS) from the academic year 2019-20.

Audit observed that the Higher Education Department and the selected universities provided no reservation to EWS which was in contravention of instructions *ibid*.

The Department (August 2021) stated that the case would be pursued with the Department of Social Justice, Empowerment and Minorities (DSJE&M), Punjab to issue such policy.

2.3.2 Institutional mechanisms to assist disadvantaged groups

Report on 'Inclusive and Qualitative Expansion in Higher Education' issued under 12th FYP, emphasises on monitoring of performance with respect to improving equity at the institutional level. Eleventh FYP had initiated establishment of SC/ST Cell for students belonging to SC and ST categories and 12th FYP¹³ envisaged constitution of Community Education Development Cell (CEDC) for monitoring the intake of students, performance, capacity building efforts etc., of students of all deprived social groups including minorities mandatorily in all recognized institutions. Further, as per UGC norms, apex planning and regulatory institutions have emphasised the importance of setting up of CEDC etc. to monitor the intake of students,

¹³ As per Report on 'Inclusive and Qualitative Expansion in Higher Education' issued under 12th FYP.

performance, capacity building efforts, improve the infrastructure and basic facilities so as to help disadvantaged groups.

Audit observed that two¹⁴ out of three test checked universities constituted CEDC except GNDU, Amritsar. No CEDC was constituted in 36¹⁵ test checked colleges.

The Department replied (August 2021) that specific instructions would be issued to establish quality assurance cells to interact and help the students from disadvantaged group to sort out their grievances/issues. The GNDU, Amritsar stated (September 2021) that the process regarding creation of CEDC had been initiated.

Thus, due to non-constitution of CEDC in one University and all selected colleges, awareness as envisaged in the guidelines could not be provided to the students of disadvantaged section. Lack of these CEDC, single point monitoring of the intake, performance, etc., of disadvantaged group students could not be carried out.

- **Student survey result:** In response to student satisfaction survey's question, "How satisfied are you with the performance of CEDC/SC cell?" 17.60 per cent students in selected universities and 15.04 per cent students in the selected colleges expressed dissatisfaction/partial satisfaction.

2.3.3 Gender equity promotional programmes and gender sensitive facilities

Para 7.1 of NAAC Manual evaluates the performance of an institution on promotion of gender equity and sensitivity as a key indicator of 'Institutional Values' and grants maximum score to the institutions conducting 10 and more such programmes during last five years.

Audit observed during the analysis of records of selected universities and 38¹⁶ selected colleges that:

- In PU, Patiala, GNDU Amritsar and RGNUL, Patiala, 37, 10 and 11 programmes related to promotion of gender equity and sensitivity were conducted, respectively, during 2015-2020. In these programmes 3,613, 113 and 1,920 students had participated in PU, Patiala, GNDU Amritsar and RGNUL, Patiala respectively. Thus, on an average 97, 11 and 175 students per programme participated in PU, Patiala, GNDU Amritsar and RGNUL, Patiala respectively.

¹⁴ (i) Punjabi University, Patiala; and (ii) RGNUL, Patiala.

¹⁵ Two colleges (Govt. College (Girls), Jamalpur, Ludhiana and Govt. College, Jadla, SBS Nagar) were newly opened.

¹⁶ Four colleges did not qualify the criteria of five years as these were newly opened.

- Out of 38 selected colleges, in 28 colleges, gender equity promotional programmes¹⁷ were organised which ranged between 1 and 96 and student participation ranged between 15 and 9,545 during 2015-2020 (*Appendix 2.6*).

- **Evaluation through the indicators (Sr. No. 9 of appendix 1.1 & 1.4)**

All the selected universities were eligible for award of maximum marks (four) as per NAAC benchmark. Out of 28 colleges, eight colleges were eligible for award of maximum NAAC marks (four), whereas three, eleven and six colleges were eligible for award of three, two and one marks respectively. Remaining ten colleges did not organise any such programmes and hence were not eligible for award of any score/marks (*Appendix 2.6*).

The colleges where shortfall was noticed responded that efforts would be made to conduct more programmes. The colleges where no programme was conducted stated that the main reasons were non maintenance of records, deficiency of funds, non-availability of regular Principal etc.

The Department stated (August 2021) that facilities¹⁸ to women were being provided by some colleges. RUSA replied (September 2021) that various girl student specific equity initiatives were undertaken in government colleges under the scheme 'Equity Initiative' of RUSA.

It is a matter of concern that many of HEIs did not conduct adequate gender equity promotional awareness programs. The State should take effective steps like issue of suitable instructions, strengthening grievance redressal system and provision of funds for conducting gender equity programs, etc. to enhance performance of the HEIs with respect to this criterion.

2.4 Affordability

Affordability is an important enabler for equitable and easy access to higher education. Regulated fee structure in government and private colleges, attractive student loan schemes and ample opportunities for availing scholarships/free-ships are some of the factors that contribute towards making higher education affordable. The 12th FYP (Vol.III) highlights that key challenge is to find a path to achieve the divergent goals for the growth of higher education in India. Combining access with affordability and ensuring high-quality Under Graduate (UG) and Post Graduate (PG) education are vital for realising the potential of the country's 'demographic dividend'. Scrutiny

¹⁷ Beti Bachao-Beti Padhao, Self-defence skill programme, Anaemia and malnutrition programme, Workshop on sexual Assaults, Precious daughter Programme and Workshop of fashion designing.

¹⁸ Construction of washrooms, common rooms, installation of incinerators, etc.

of information and replies received from GoP as well as test checked HEIs revealed the following:

2.4.1 Uniformity in fee structure

As per UGC (Affiliation of Colleges by University) Regulations, 2009, fees to be charged from each student should be approved by the affiliating university.

Audit analysed the records of selected 38 colleges and found that the fees were charged by the colleges as per UGC norms and approved by university concerned. Further, it was also observed that 22 government colleges charged annual fees ranging between ₹ 3,062 and ₹ 25,011 for UG and PG courses while ten test checked aided colleges charged annual fees ranging from ₹ 11,000 to ₹ 30,250, six test checked unaided colleges charged annual fees ranging from ₹ 12,040 to ₹ 55,550 and fees charged for self-finance courses in government colleges was ranging from ₹ 7,143 to ₹ 46,514 during 2019-20 (*Appendix 2.7*). Thus, there was no uniformity in fee structure of the Government and private (aided/ unaided) colleges.

The Department stated (August 2021) that fee was higher in private colleges than Government colleges and assured to establish the colleges in all the sub-divisions.

The reply is not acceptable as the Universities did not take steps to review the fee structure for all categories. Further, as pointed out in Paragraph No. 2.1.1.1 there were 33 sub-divisions in the State where only non-government colleges exist and students in these sub-divisions would perforce be dependent on these institutes, with a higher fee structure for their educational needs, adversely impacting the goal of equity in access to affordable education.

2.4.2 Extra financial burden

The DPI (Colleges) (December 2005) instructed all the Principals of the government colleges to establish Higher Education Institute Society (HEIS) in their colleges for implementation of education in Information and Communication Technology (ICT).

It was observed that HEIS was established in 15 colleges out of 22 test checked government colleges. Further, out of these 15 colleges in 10 colleges, 16 self-finance general courses¹⁹ were running under HEIS which were not related to ICT. These colleges were charging ₹ 7,143 to ₹ 46,514 annual fees for these courses under self-finance scheme whereas the annual fee of general courses ranged between ₹ 3,062 and ₹ 25,011 (*Appendix 2.7*). This would

¹⁹ (i) M.Sc. (Physics); (ii) M.Sc. (Chemistry); (iii) M.Com; (iv) M.Sc. (Botany); (v) M.A. History; (vi) B.Sc. (Agriculture); (vii) B.Com. (Hons); (viii) M.Sc. (Mathematics); (ix) MA (Sociology); (x) B.Sc (Home science); (xi) B.Com (xii) B.Sc. (Physics); (xiii) MA (Punjabi); (xiv) MA (Psychology); (xv) MA (Public Administration); and (xvi) B.Sc. (Economics).

have resulted in extra-financial burden on the students opting for these courses under self-finance scheme.

The Department admitted (August 2021) that on demand some general courses were started in some colleges under HEIS, however, the Department did not allow such courses since 2017. Further, it was assured to take necessary action to bring the general courses (non ICT) running under HEIS, under regular general courses. Reply was not acceptable as the courses should have been started after assessing the affordability of fees by comparing with the available fee structure in the State for the same courses.

2.4.3 Scholarship

Scholarship/freeship²⁰ schemes, as a facilitative mechanism, have been widely used by governments not only to encourage meritorious students but also to enhance equity in access to higher education. Report on 'Inclusive and Qualitative Expansion in Higher Education' issued under 12th FYP advised that for enhancing participation of SC/ST/Minorities, scholarships and fellowships for students of SC/ST/OBC/Minorities may be enhanced at all levels.

2.4.3.1 At State level

Two scholarship schemes were operational in the State. The State level position of number of students benefited under these schemes during 2015-2020 is given in *Table 2.8*:

Table 2.8: State level position of scholarships provided in higher education

Name of scheme	Name of department	No of beneficiaries	Amount of scholarship (₹ in crore)
State Merit Scholarship Scheme	Department of Higher Education	632	0.07
Post Matric Scholarship Scheme for SC/OBC	DSJE&M, Punjab	3,36,624	702.43*
	Total	3,37,256	702.50

Source: Departmental data

*Claims for tuition fees processed by Higher Education Department for 2015-16 to 2018-19.

Tuition fees was not charged for girl students studying in government colleges in Punjab during 2015-2020.

2.4.3.2 At institutional level

Government of Punjab, DSJE&M issued (July 2016) a clarification regarding Post Matric Scholarship Scheme for Scheduled Castes that Government Educational Institutions shall not collect any fee at the time of admission and will claim the same from DSJE&M.

²⁰ Scholarship means a sum of money or other aid granted to a student, because of merit, need, etc., to pursue his or her studies. Free ship means total education fee is paid by the sponsoring or aiding authority for the period they have approved.

(i) Selected universities

During 2015-2020, 5,044 students and 13,125 students of GNDU, Amritsar and PU, Patiala under the scheme received ₹ 30.05 crore and ₹ 35.85 crore, respectively. However, reimbursement of ₹ 17.74 crore and ₹ 24.73 crore was yet to be received by GNDU, Amritsar and PU, Patiala, respectively, from DSJE&M, Punjab.

The issue had also been highlighted in CAG's Audit Report on Social, General and Economic Sectors (NPSUs) for the year ended 31 March 2015 - Government of Punjab in the PA on "Working of GNDU". The PAC had desired (June 2020) that the GNDU should make efforts to get the funds released from the department concerned.

The PU, Patiala stated (December 2020) that correspondence was made with the DSJE&M to release the amount from time to time. The GNDU, Amritsar replied (June 2021) that the University was corresponding with Punjab Government for release of the funds.

(ii) Selected colleges

Similarly, in 38 selected colleges 49,803 students (2015-2020) benefitted under the scheme for which ₹ 58.79 crore was claimed by the respective colleges. Out of this, ₹ 17.01 crore was released by the Government (2015-2020). Reimbursement of ₹ 41.78 crore (2015-2020) of the scheme was not yet released to these colleges by DSJE&M (***Appendix 2.8***).

Further, two²¹ selected aided colleges charged fees of ₹ 156.35 lakh from 843 SC students as per instructions of GoP²² in anticipation of the reimbursement of the fee from the GoP. The colleges received ₹ 67.89 lakh out of which ₹ 36.85 lakh was disbursed to the students concerned, however, ₹ 31.04 lakh received by these colleges was not yet disbursed to the concerned students (***Appendix 2.9***).

The Department admitted the facts and stated (August 2021) that the matter was under consideration of the Government for a suitable action to reimburse the amount for the period 2017-2020 to the respective HEI/students.

Thus, non-reimbursement of fees by the Government was extra burden on the HEIs which could have been utilized for other developmental activities of Institutions i.e. ICT, creation of infrastructure etc. Similarly, charging of fees from SC students and non-disbursing the released amount to the beneficiaries

²¹ (i) Gujranwala Guru Nanak Khalsa College, Ludhiana; and (ii) Govind National College, Narangwal (Ludhiana).

²² GoP letter no. 3/94/2016-SAI/1493 dated 22.07.2016.

discourage needy students and also affect the affordability in access to higher education.

2.5 Infrastructure

Building capacity and improvement of infrastructure may attract and facilitate the retention of students from rural and backward areas as well as differently-abled and marginalised social groups. This aspect was assessed during audit and the findings are as follows:

2.5.1 Availability of buildings

Buildings, classrooms, laboratories, hostel and equipment are crucial elements of learning environment in universities and colleges. Audit evaluated availability of such infrastructure on the basis of norms²³ fixed by UGC for affiliated colleges in UGC (Affiliation of Colleges by University) Regulations, 2009. Further, NAAC prescribes that Institution should have disabled-friendly, barrier free environment viz. built environment with ramps/lifts for easy access to classrooms, disabled-friendly washrooms, etc. the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 also laid emphasis on such facilities. The UGC also provides that each institution should have a well stocked and comprehensive, automated digitised Central Library, appropriate hostel facilities etc. Further, as per NAAC guidelines on quality indicators in library, the library should have an approved policy on annual increase of budget.

Audit observed that sufficient administrative, academic buildings, laboratories were available in the selected HEIs. However, audit observed some shortcomings during scrutiny of records and physical verification of infrastructure which were as under:

- PU, Patiala
 - The library was available as per UGC norms. Funds amounting to ₹ 64 lakh and ₹ 225 lakh were allocated during 2015-2020 for purchase of books and journals. Out of total allocation of ₹ 289 lakh, only ₹ 73.41 lakh (₹ 13.80 lakh: books and ₹ 59.61 lakh: journals) was spent which resulted in non-fulfillment of demands of 1,873 books and deprivation of intended benefits to the students.
 - Further, there were 15 hostels with the average capacity of 5,058 students against which 5,698 students were residing in these hostel

²³ Lecture/seminar rooms with a minimum 15 square feet (sq. ft) per student, library and laboratories with 20 sq. ft per student, library with 1000 number of books, fully equipped laboratory etc.

during 2015-2020. It indicated that hostels were overcrowded by 12.63 per cent.

- GNDU, Amritsar
 - The library was functioning properly, however, it was neither automated nor fully equipped with Integrated Library Management System and Radio Frequency Identification (RFID).
 - There were seven hostels with the average capacity of 3,871 students against which 4,574 students applied but due to less capacity, the hostel facility to 703 students (18.16 per cent of students) on an average could not be provided during 2015-2020.
 - Facilities to differently-abled students in view of NAAC norms such as tactile guiding path, railing, ramp, barrier free accessibility in washrooms etc. were yet to be provided by all the selected universities.

The GNDU, Amritsar admitted the facts and assured (August 2021) that RFID would be made operational and two more hostels of 200 beds each would be constructed under sports scheme. PU, Patiala also admitted the facts and assured (August 2021) that one hostel would be constructed and arrangements would be made outside the campus till the construction of hostel.

2.5.2 Unfruitful expenditure on construction of hostel

Under UGC's Special Scheme (2006), Government College for Girls, Ludhiana proposed (2007) for construction of women's hostel with 35 rooms for 63 students for ₹ 76.94 lakh against which UGC allocated ₹ 75 lakh (March 2008). Audit observed that hostel was lying incomplete for last 12 years even after spending an amount of ₹ 67.50 lakh. The construction work was held-up for want of additional funds due to increase in cost of material as well as labour. Thus, due to non-completion of new hostel, during 2015-2020, average 238 students were using existing hostel against its capacity of 109 students, which resulted in overcrowding of hostel by 129 students on an average.



The college stated (January 2021) that a portion of RUSA grant would be put to use and matter would be taken up again with the UGC. The reply of the college was not in order as non-completion of hostel resulted in unfruitful expenditure of ₹ 67.50 lakh besides depriving hostel facility to the students.

2.5.3 Injudicious expenditure on installation of server

The Department approved (May 2016) the project 'Setting up of smart classrooms and virtual class rooms' for installation of 150 smart class rooms and 47 virtual class rooms in 47 Government colleges (May 2016) initially to

be funded from Parent Teacher Association (PTA) and self-finance courses funded by respective colleges. Later the Department approved (March 2017) use of preparatory grant of RUSA for installation of the server and to operationalise the virtual class rooms in the colleges.

Audit observed that expenditure of ₹ 85.10 lakh was incurred (February 2017) to purchase the server for installation at Government College, Mohali and shifted (May 2017) to SCD Government College, Ludhiana due to lack of space. Since purchase (February 2017), the server could not be utilised for the intended purposes and was lying uninstalled. The reason for non-utilisation of the server was not on record.



Thus, the expenditure incurred amounting to ₹ 85.10 lakh was rendered injudicious as neither the Server nor the smart classrooms could be made operational in the colleges.

During Exit Conference (August 2021), the Department admitted the facts but did not furnish any reply.

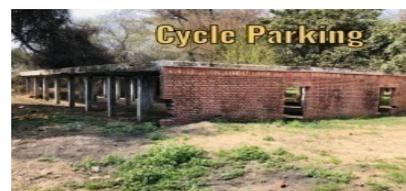
2.5.4 Outcomes of physical inspection

Physical inspection of the colleges with reference to availability of infrastructure revealed the following:

- All 38 test checked colleges had sufficient administrative and academic buildings including sufficient library facilities and furniture. However, none of them was found to be equipped with facilities like tactile path, separate washroom, barrier-free accessibility in washrooms, ramps for upper floors, railing, wheel chair etc. for the specially abled students as provided in the Rights of Persons with Disability Act, 2016.
- None of 38 test checked colleges, installed the RFID system to secure the books of library and the library records such as accession and issuance registers for books and visitors registers were not fully computerised and were being maintained manually.
- There was nil expenditure in two²⁴ colleges on procurement of books during 2015-2020.

²⁴ (i) Government College, Dhudike, District Moga; and (ii) MBG Pojewal, District SBS Nagar.

- In GGN Khalsa College, Ludhiana, classrooms/ departments/ computer labs/ seminar rooms/ library were situated at first floor without any ramp facility for disabled persons.
- There was no sitting arrangement in the library of Government College, Muktsar.
- In Maharaj Bhuriwale Garibdass Government College, Pojewal the sports ground was not maintained.
- NCC building, cycle/ scooter stand despite being declared unsafe was not dismantled, in Government College, Muktsar. Rain water harvesting system was not found installed.
- There was seepage on laboratory walls in SCD College, Ludhiana.
- The existing Vermi Compost Unit was not functional in SCD College, Ludhiana.



During Exit Conference (August 2021), the Department admitted the facts and assured to take corrective measure.

- **Student survey result:** In response to student satisfaction survey's question, "How satisfied are you with the various library facilities?" students ranging between 3.74 and 10.96 per cent in respect of selected universities and ranging between 5.29 and 14.75 per cent in respect of selected colleges expressed their dissatisfaction/partial satisfaction.
- Further, in response to student satisfaction survey's question, "How satisfied are you with the various hostel facilities?" students ranging between 16.18 and 22.26 per cent in respect of selected universities and ranging between 21.16 and 24.80 per cent in respect of selected colleges expressed their dissatisfaction/partial satisfaction.

2.5.5 Funding for infrastructure

Universities receive funds from Central Government, State Government and other agencies for creation of infrastructure. The position of budget allocation for infrastructure and expenditure excluding salary in three test checked universities during 2015-2020 is given in **Table 2.9**.

Table 2.9: Budget allocation on infrastructure and total expenditure excluding salary

(₹ in crore)

Name of university	Year	Expenditure excluding salary (1)	Budget allocation for infrastructure (2)	Expenditure on infrastructure (3)	Percentage of expenditure on infrastructure (4=3/1x100)
Punjabi University, Patiala	2015-16	65.67	6.88 (10.48)	4.31	7
	2016-17	63.93	2.25 (3.99)	1.03	2
	2017-18	73.90	0.92 (1.24)	0.37	1
	2018-19	52.24	0.77 (1.47)	0.27	1
	2019-20	41.48	1.13 (2.72)	0.93	2
	Average percentage				
GNDU, Amritsar	2015-16	108.92	19.18 (17.60)	15.45	14
	2016-17	100.87	36.89 (36.57)	18.65	18
	2017-18	75.88	26.29 (34.64)	3.23	4
	2018-19	88.47	25.95 (29.33)	13.32	15
	2019-20	101.45	30.96 (30.51)	14.4	14
	Average percentage				
RGNUL, Patiala	2015-16	17.34	49.55 (285.75)	12.03	69
	2016-17	17.05	44.94 (263.57)	10.77	63
	2017-18	11.36	38.70 (340.66)	5.44	48
	2018-19	19.34	27.00 (139.60)	11.91	62
	2019-20	12.38	32.30 (260.90)	6.99	56
	Average percentage				

Source: Information provided by concerned universities

It can be seen that during 2015-2020 average percentage of expenditure incurred on infrastructure with respect to total expenditure excluding salary in PU, Patiala, GNDU, Amritsar and RGNUL, Patiala was 2.60 per cent, 13 per cent and 59.60 per cent respectively.

(i) **Performance evaluation based on indicators:** NAAC benchmark for the indicator (4.1.4), *Average percentage of expenditure, excluding salary for infrastructure augmentation during 2015-2020* (Details of indicator are given at Sl. Nos. 26 of *Appendix-1.1 & 1.4*), awarded maximum score to institutions where on average 20 per cent and above budget allocation excluding salary was for infrastructure augmentation during last five years. Thus, as per NAAC benchmark RGNUL, Patiala was eligible for scoring maximum marks (four) and GNDU, Amritsar was eligible for scoring only two marks whereas PU, Patiala was not eligible for award of any marks.

2.6 Conclusions

➤ Government of Punjab has no policy regarding opening of colleges as per geographical mapping, as a result, seven sub-divisions were still devoid of any college. Besides, construction of 12 colleges out of

27 planned colleges was not completed by the scheduled date due to lack of funds.

- The distribution of general degree colleges both regionally as well as among rural and urban areas of the state was uneven.
- Though GER of Punjab was consistently higher than National GER but it was less than the target set by GoP in respect of Sustainable Development Goal during 2019-20. Further, the GER of SC category improved during 2015-2018 but it fell down during 2018-2020.
- Ten colleges ran 16 general courses under self-finance mode with a fee structure ranging between ₹ 7,143 and ₹ 46,514 which was much higher than the fee of these general courses in normal mode resulting in extra financial burden on the students opting for these courses.
- In PU, Patiala, 15 hostels were overcrowded with 12.63 *per cent* whereas in GNDU, Amritsar, the hostel facility could not be provided to 18.16 *per cent* students during 2015-2020 due to non-availability of adequate space.
- The selected HEIs have not yet provided facilities to differently abled students in view of NAAC norms such as tactile guiding path, railing, lifts, ramp, etc. in consonance with the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 and UGC Regulations 2009.

2.7 Recommendations

- (i) *In order to correct the regional imbalances in distribution of HEIs and to adhere to GoP policy decision (March 2017) to open at least one Government college in each sub-division, the State Government should prioritise opening of new colleges in the sub-divisions where there is no Government/constituent/aided college. Further, to promote equity in all disciplines of general education, the State Government may ensure establishment/strengthening of new/existing HEIs with multiple streams (Arts, Commerce, Science, etc.).*
- (ii) *The State Government may undertake planned efforts to enhance GER across all categories especially of the disadvantaged/EWS/SC, as envisaged under 12th FYP, by setting up of Community Education Development Cell and undertaking preparatory training/ special coaching for the disadvantaged section.*
- (iii) *The Universities should ensure availability of hostels with adequate capacity to avoid overcrowding/deprivation and availability of basic infrastructure in affiliated colleges as well as in universities for the persons with disabilities, in accordance with the provisions of Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016.*