



A Comparative Study of the Immediate Effect of NEP 2020 on Undergraduate Enrolment in Karnataka and Madhya Pradesh

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Abstract: *The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 has been implemented in the states of Karnataka and Madhya Pradesh from the academic year 2021-2022, the National Education Policy or the NEP 2020 aims at bringing quality, equity, and flexibility to higher education in India. This study discusses the influence of NEP 2020 on undergraduate enrolment and on gross enrolment ratio (GER) in both the states, with immediate effect. Karnataka would expect a tremendous increase in undergraduate enrolment because of the policy promoting multidisciplinary education, technology-oriented interdisciplinary courses, and a strong supporting digital infrastructure; in contrast, an improvement in GER would be witnessed by Madhya Pradesh, as the new establishments distance and interdisciplinary courses would provide greater access particularly to rural and less served populace. It would benefit both states by gender-responsive and socially inclusive education that will expand access to undergraduate programs. In spite of the spaces in infrastructure and digital accessibility, the general vision of enhancing the inclusion and adaptability of higher education systems would improve enrolment rates. This research will present an early understanding of how enrolment trends are shaped over one year of available data and have implications for how the policy's initial significant effects are realized. It is also expected that NEP will open up even greater job opportunities in the future when its implementation progresses.*

Key Words: *NEP 2020, gross enrolment ratio (GER), undergraduate enrolment, interdisciplinary, job market.*

1. INTRODUCTION:

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, on the one hand, signals a paradigm shift in higher education in India, tending to inclusivity, flexibility, and skill-based learning; on the other hand, the key reforms include a four-year undergraduate program, multiple entry-exit options, and credits-transfer provisions for courses, keeping in mind the need for digital education and blended-learning models. Among the early states to implement NEP 2020, Karnataka and Madhya Pradesh present complementary contrasts. Karnataka has embraced NEP reforms, thereby enhancing enrolment in interdisciplinary and skill-based courses, with its digital infrastructure and urban-dwelling institutions; conversely, Madhya Pradesh, with an essentially rural population, is weighed against gaps in infrastructure that compound problems of digital access and faculty preparedness, hindering flow into policy. This study, therefore, examines how the NEP impacts admission to undergraduate courses in both states while emphasizing problems like the digital divide, financial constraints, and infrastructural gaps. While Karnataka prospers due to good technological support, Madhya Pradesh finds it hard to overcome barriers such as limited internet penetration and availability of resources. Besides these hurdles, there are avenues for improvement in the NEP through focused investments, mentoring of faculty, and capacity building for digital learning. The contrast of the two states is a good prism to gain insights into the implementation of NEP among the diverse socio-economic backgrounds and thus initiate equitable higher education reform across the country.



2. OBJECTIVES:

Our objective is to analyse the change of undergraduate Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in Karnataka and Madhya Pradesh following NEP 2020, to assess divergence in student choices on account of new provisions stemming from the introduction of four-year UG programs and multiple entry-exit options, to investigate the role of higher education digital infrastructure in affecting enrolment trends and to identify challenges and unintended consequences emanating from the actualization of NEP 2020.

If the research objectives are met, an in-depth analysis shall be presented on the effect of NEP 2020 on higher education enrolment trends, student preferences, and policy effectiveness in Karnataka and Madhya Pradesh.

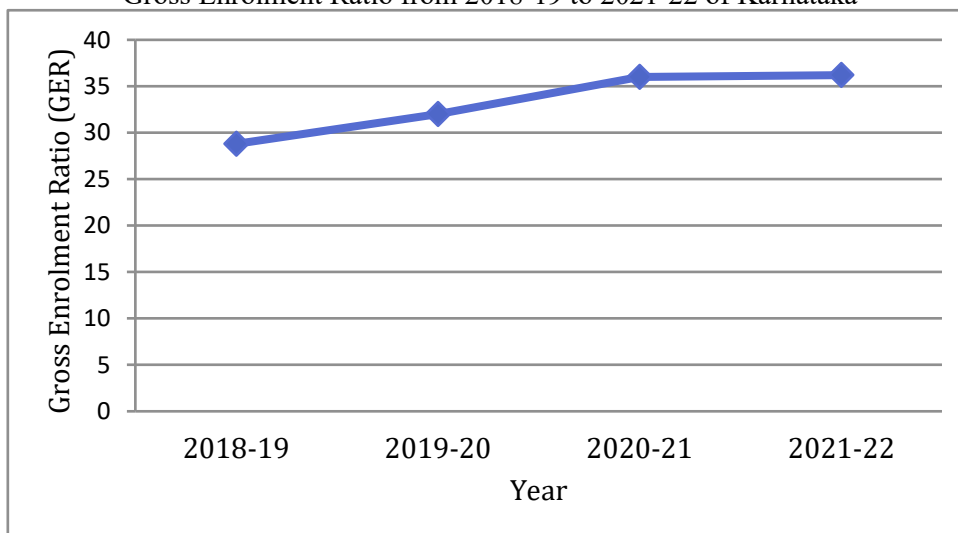
3. GROSS ENROLMENT RATIO (GER) ANALYSIS:

The Gross Enrolment Ratio serves as an indicator for participation in higher education. It is computed as

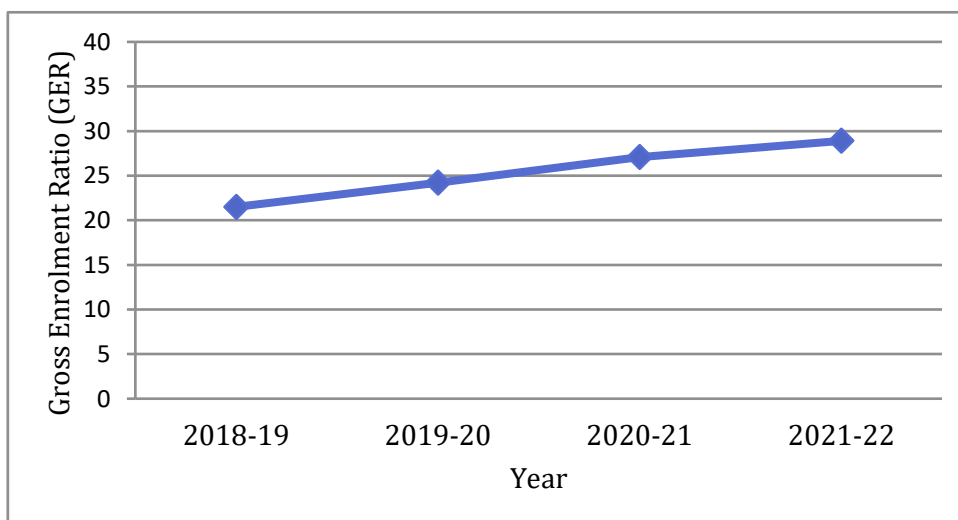
$$GER = \frac{\text{Number of enrolments in higher education}}{\text{Total Population in the age group of 18 to 23}} \times 100$$

There has been a significant improvement in the GER ranking of both states after implementation of NEP.

Gross Enrolment Ratio from 2018-19 to 2021-22 of Karnataka



Gross Enrolment Ratio from 2018-19 to 2021-22 of Madhya Pradesh.

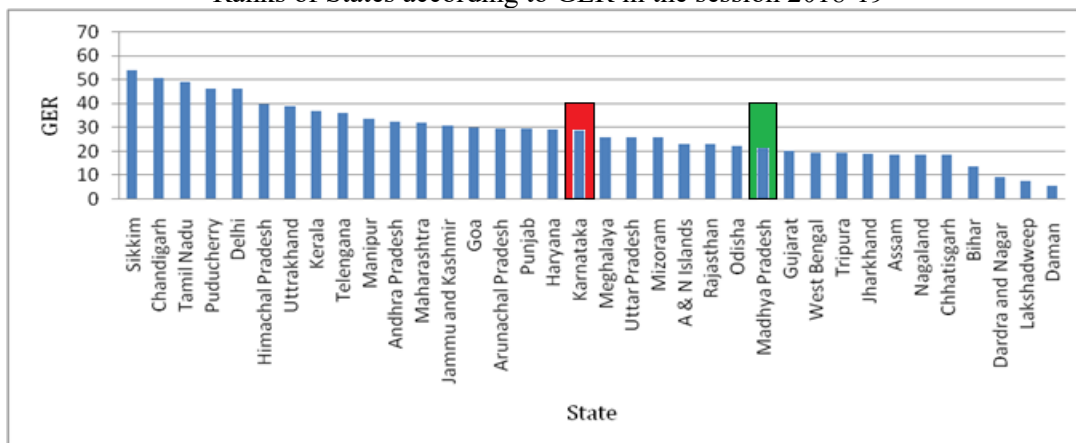


(Refer to Figure 1: GER of Karnataka and Madhya Pradesh through the years)

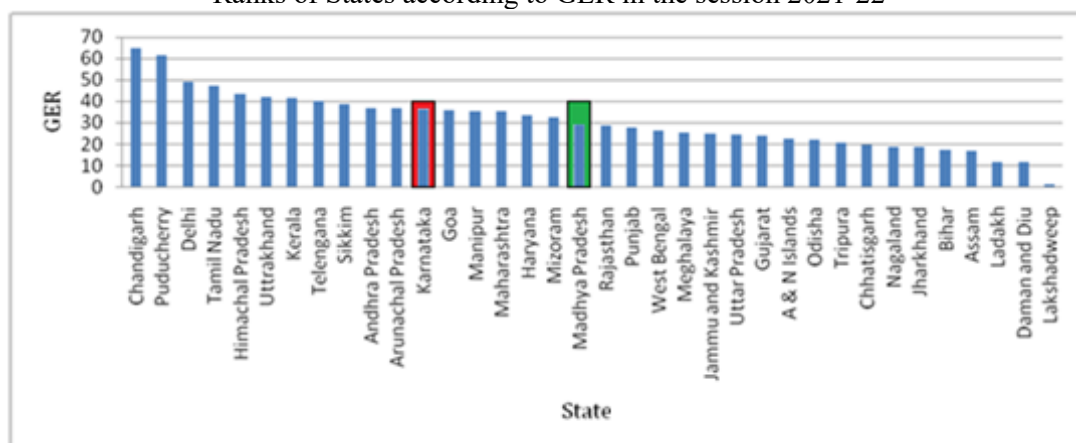


Even if we look at the overall ranks among all the states, there also an improvement visible in both the states as well. Karnataka ranks eleventh from the fifteenth position in GER and Madhya Pradesh has Improved its GER ranking from twenty-ninth to eighteenth.

Ranks of States according to GER in the session 2018-19



Ranks of States according to GER in the session 2021-22



(Refer to Figure 2: Ranks of states according to GER specifically Karnataka and Madhya Pradesh)

Even after these reforms, there has been a fall in the GER growth rate in both states, with the female GER growth showing a sharp decline.

Decline in GER Growth Rate after NEP 2020

While GER rankings improved, the growth rate of GER for both males and females declined. Some of the factors attributable to this trend are the following:

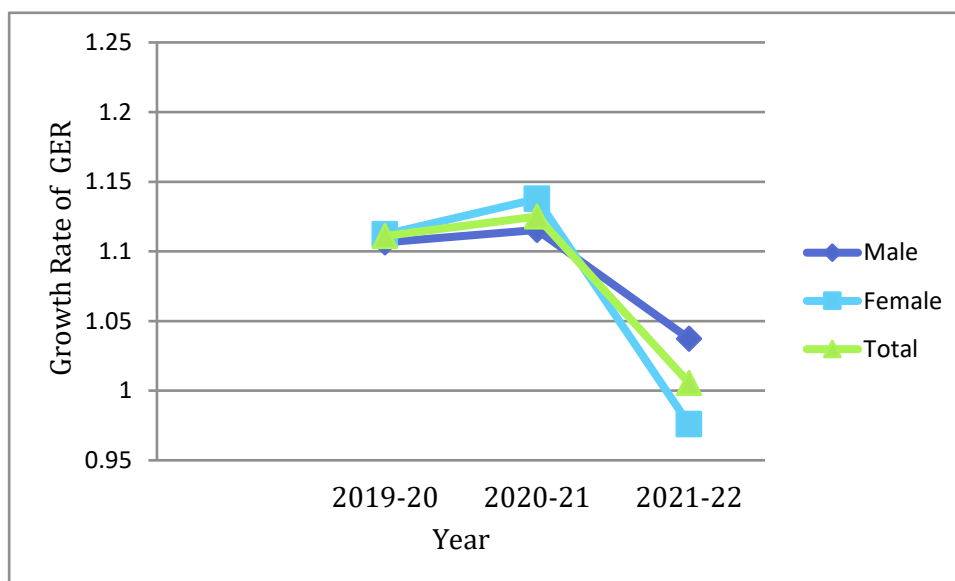
Infrastructure and digital access: While Karnataka has very good ICT infrastructure, Madhya Pradesh still has many connectivity problems in rural areas.

Financial: Higher education remains prohibitively expensive, although NEP 2020 has given some flexibility on costs.

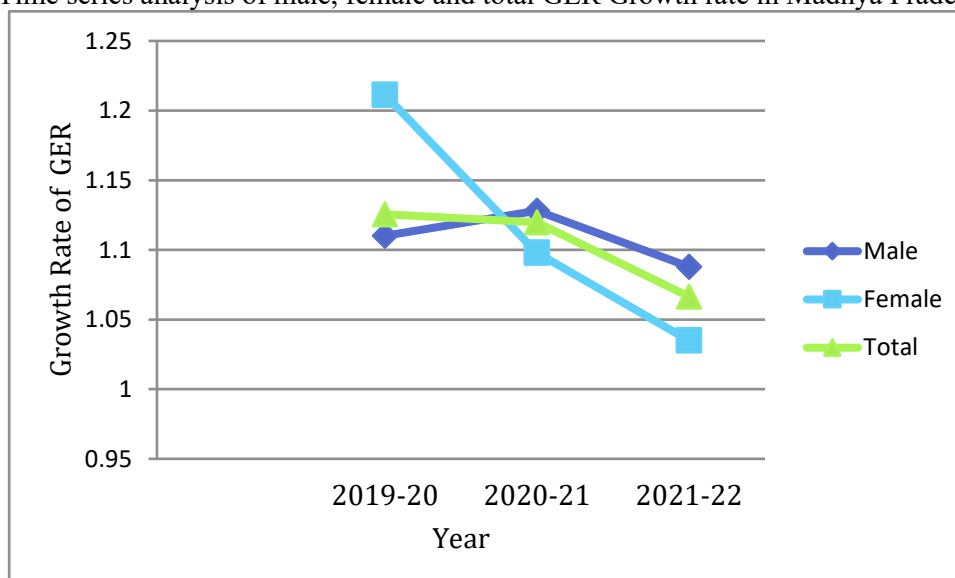
COVID-19 Anomaly: The pandemic created massive enrolment patterns, creating much-induced uncertainty in higher education.

The decline in the growth rate of GER, particularly for females, emphasizes the need for specific targeted policies to ensure inclusive growth.

Time series analysis of male, female and total GER Growth rate in Karnataka



Time series analysis of male, female and total GER Growth rate in Madhya Pradesh



(Refer to Figure 3: GER Growth Rate of Karnataka and Madhya Pradesh through the years)

The Paradox: GER Rank vs. Growth Rate

While GER rank improvement is not easy to fuel with GER growth, the data juxtaposing GER rank with GER growth indicates:

- Relative performance of Karnataka and Madhya Pradesh regarding other states are not at the stage of full NEP 2020 implementation.
- Post policy finalization high enrolment spikes followed by slow tapering.
- Transition of students during higher education due to the disruption caused by COVID-19.

The 'Blank Year' of 2024-25

This was the shift of NEP 2020 from four-year UG to postgraduate programs for:

- Brief temporary outpatient reductions.



- Not much competition in the job market for backlog students.
- Depletion damage to funds and faculty due to inadequate student migration to most postgraduate programs.

This unintended impact requires careful planning for such transitional periods in future policy changes. Despite these improvements, both states witnessed a decline in GER growth rate, with female GER growth showing a more significant drop.

4. FINDINGS:

The study points to several significant trends and challenges that were noted for Karnataka and Madhya Pradesh in the aftermath of the implementation of NEP 2020.

Improved Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) Rankings

The GER rankings in both states have improved significantly post-implementation, indicating a greater joining in higher education by the population. Contrarily, growth in GER has been inhomogeneous among certain demographical distributions.

Decline in Growth Rates of GER, More Prevalent for Female Students

Despite improved rankings, the GER growth rate has declined, especially for female students. This indicates that barriers specific to gender—socio-economic hindrances, inequalities in access to digital facilities, and socio-cultural factors—continue to affect enrolment trends.

Postgraduate Enrolments are Disrupted Due to Four-Year UG Program Transition

With the launch of the four-year undergraduate degree program, some transitional hurdles are being faced that have affected postgraduate enrolment in academic year 2024-25. In terms of adjusting to curriculum changes, institutions have gone along an adaption route. But this transition leaves temporary disruption along the higher education pathway.

Digital Infrastructure as a Prerequisite for Success

NEP 2020's smooth success hinges on digital infrastructure availability and access. Karnataka's urban and IT-savvy ecosystem made for seamless digital adoption; Madhya Pradesh is encumbered by poor rural connectivity, little digital literacy, and ineffective e-learning resources.

The NEP 2020 has started to show signs of promise in enhancing accessibility to higher education, yet a number of bottlenecks hinder equitable and sustainable growth. Following are some policy-level recommendations to enhance implementation-compliance.

Strengthening Digital Infrastructure in Rural Areas

Given the goal of allowing students from the remotest and most deprived areas to benefit from online learning opportunities, the areas that need investment include broadband connectivity, digital classrooms, and discounted technology.

- Gender-inclusive Measures for Improving Female GER Growth
- Targeted actions should be taken in light of the dwindling female GER growth:
- Gender-responsive financial assistance programs.
- Scholarships and incentives for female students.
- Raising awareness about encouraging STEM
- Professional course enrolment for women.

Strategic Administration of Higher Education Transition

This requires the need for improved transition management among UG and PG institutions to limit disruptions during



the rollout of a four-year UG program. Programs offering bridging and transitional support systems will better enable students to maneuver this structural transition.

Future Research and Nationwide Impact Assessment

A nationwide research study may be conducted to analyze impacts such that states with diverse educational landscapes are covered, thus ensuring long-term effects under NEP 2020.

The recommendations will ensure that NEP 2020 is able to achieve the transformation of higher education, thus making it inclusive, accessible, and future-ready for India.

5. CONCLUSION:

A nationwide research study may be conducted to analyze impacts such that states with diverse educational landscapes are covered, thus ensuring long-term effects under NEP 2020. Longitudinal studies will provide data-driven introductions to enrolment trends, academic performance, and socioeconomic benefits of the policy.

The recommendations will ensure that NEP 2020 is able to achieve the transformation of higher education, thus making it inclusive, accessible, and future-ready for India.

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