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**Author**

SAHNI, Rohini (SHANKAR, V. Kalyan)

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**Abstract**

The scope of this paper spans from macro-level national and inter-state comparisons to more micro-level intra-state scrutiny of systemic fault-lines shaping the contours of girls' education in India. Post independence, national level indicators have been suggestive of greater gender parity. Yet, there is more to inclusiveness of girls in Indian higher education than increasing absolute numbers or improving gender ratios. Rising female participation has coincided with a massive 'systemic expansion' of delivery systems and therefore, would have to be a function of this expanded availability. As a corollary, systemic skews and limitations, both qualitative and quantitative, are bound to influence how girls get incorporated into the system. This would matter not just in terms of how many access it, but also what courses do they access and where. In the course of this paper, we scan through several geographic layers of delivery systems to surface how critical systemic traits are shaping access to higher education in India, and how girls remain particularly vulnerable to them. It reveals how the progress achieved so far has spawned its own hierarchies, which do not get reflected

**12.8.2024**

adequately in the national level indicators. As we scale down to states, the first set of skews begins to surface in the form of inter-state disparities of access and uneven faculty-wise distributions. Moving to the next level of geographic dis-aggregation, further skews are revealed based on availability of medium of instruction; as also the guidelines of gender based affirmative action meant for improving girls' participation that ironically end up creating their own distortions. Through a study of these multi-layered hurdles, this paper brings forth the systemic side of impediments that have remained less explored in comparison with the cultural-attitudinal biases that have plagued girls' participation to higher education in India. (HRK / Abstract übernommen) Sahni, Rohini, E-Mail:

rohinisahni2000@yahoo.com