DEVELOPMENT OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN NORTH KARNATAKA: CURRENT STATUS AND FUTURE PROSPECTS

Dattatri Hanmanth
Research Scholar, Department of Economics, Karnataka University Dharwad, Karnataka

Prof. V.B Annigeri
Former Director Centre for Multi-Disciplinary Research, Dharwad, Karnataka

Abstract
This article explores the development of higher education in North Karnataka, specifically the Kalyana Karnataka region, analyzing disparities with South Karnataka based on institutional infrastructure, enrollment ratios, and gender parity. Drawing from government reports (2013-2022), the article highlights underdevelopment in educational access, especially among marginalized groups. The study concludes with policy recommendations to bridge the regional educational divide and foster balanced growth across Karnataka.
Keywords: Kalyana Karnataka, Higher Education, Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER), Gender Parity Index (GPI), Regional Disparities, South Karnataka, Education Policy

1. Introduction

Higher education serves as a critical engine of economic growth, social mobility, and democratic consolidation in any society. It is instrumental not only in creating a skilled workforce but also in fostering innovation, promoting social equity, and supporting inclusive development. In the context of developing countries like India, higher education is indispensable for uplifting historically marginalized communities and ensuring balanced regional development. Within the Indian federal structure, where education is a concurrent subject, the onus of ensuring access to quality higher education lies with both central and state governments. Karnataka, one of India's most progressive states, has made remarkable strides in the domain of education, particularly higher education. However, these strides are not equitably distributed across the state.

Karnataka is regionally divided into South Karnataka (Old Mysore Region), Central Karnataka, Coastal Karnataka (Karavali), and North Karnataka, which includes Kalyana Karnataka (formerly Hyderabad Karnataka). South Karnataka has emerged as an educational and economic powerhouse, home to premier institutions such as the Indian Institute of Science (IISc), Bangalore University, and the University of Mysore. On the other hand, North Karnataka, particularly the Kalyana Karnataka region comprising districts like Bidar, Kalaburagi, Yadgir, Raichur, Koppal, and Ballari, continues to lag behind in educational indicators. Despite being rich in culture and history, the region has suffered due to historical neglect, low governmental investment, and systemic disadvantages.

The disparities between South and North Karnataka are not recent phenomena; they are deeply rooted in the historical, economic, and political fabric of the state. South Karnataka benefited early from educational reforms initiated during the princely rule of the Wodeyars in Mysore, which prioritized investments in education and public services. In contrast, the Kalyana Karnataka region was part of the erstwhile Nizam-ruled Hyderabad State, which had limited focus on mass education and public infrastructure. This historical disadvantage was compounded by post-independence policy neglect, resulting in a severe developmental lag in higher education infrastructure in the region.

The **Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER)** in higher education—defined as the percentage of youth aged 18 to 23 years enrolled in tertiary education—is a vital measure of educational access. In Karnataka, while urban districts like Bengaluru Urban and Mysuru boast GERs significantly higher than the national average, districts in Kalyana Karnataka such as Yadgir and Koppal report alarmingly low GERs, particularly among Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST), and women. These figures reflect structural inequalities in access to higher education.

Another key indicator, the **Gender Parity Index (GPI)**, reveals deep gender disparities in higher education. A GPI value below 1 indicates lower female participation compared to males. In Kalyana Karnataka, GPI values remain below 1 across most districts and social categories, signifying limited opportunities for women. In contrast, South Karnataka districts show more balanced gender representation, and in some cases, higher female enrollment, indicating successful policy outreach and social acceptance of women's education.

Infrastructure gaps further aggravate the educational divide. As per data from 2013 to 2016, South Karnataka districts have more universities and colleges per lakh population compared to their northern counterparts. For instance, Bengaluru has 16 universities, while Koppal and Yadgir have none. The **Pupil Teacher Ratio (PTR)**, a measure of academic support, also reveals skewed trends. While districts like Tumkur and Mysore have high PTRs, indicating student demand and institutional pressure, districts like Bidar and Yadgir have extremely low PTRs, indicating either under-enrollment or lack of outreach and awareness about higher education.

The lack of higher education institutions has a cascading effect on the **average enrollment per institution**. Districts in South Karnataka such as Mysore and Bengaluru report higher average enrollment numbers per college (over 500), signifying better facilities, faculty, and course availability. In contrast, in Yadgir and Bidar, the average enrollment per institution is below 250, suggesting either a lack of student interest due to poor quality or limited outreach and transportation issues that hinder access.

Socioeconomic factors such as poverty, caste dynamics, tribal marginalization, and gender norms play a significant role in exacerbating regional disparities. The Kalyana Karnataka region is home to a high percentage of socially and economically disadvantaged communities, including SCs, STs, and Other Backward Classes (OBCs), many of whom reside in remote and rural areas. These communities often struggle with multiple barriers to higher education—financial, linguistic, cultural, and geographical. Limited access to English-medium education, lack of digital infrastructure, inadequate transport facilities, and gender-based social restrictions further marginalize students from pursuing higher education.

Despite the constitutional safeguards under **Article 371J**, which provides for special development benefits to the Hyderabad-Karnataka region, the outcomes have been less than satisfactory. The intended benefits of special educational quotas, financial support, and infrastructural development have either not reached the grassroots or have been poorly implemented. As a result, educational backwardness remains entrenched, leading to continued out-migration of youth from North Karnataka to cities in South Karnataka for higher studies and employment opportunities.

The implications of this educational divide are profound. Firstly, it perpetuates a cycle of poverty and underdevelopment in North Karnataka, as youth are deprived of the skills and qualifications necessary to participate in the modern knowledge economy. Secondly, it contributes to the brain drain from the region, as students migrate to Bengaluru, Mysuru, and other urban centers, rarely returning to contribute to their native districts. Thirdly, the regional disparity undermines the overall development narrative of Karnataka, leading to political tensions, demands for separate statehood, and regional discontent.

Addressing the underdevelopment of higher education in North Karnataka, particularly in the Kalyana Karnataka region, is therefore not just a matter of educational reform—it is a political, economic, and social imperative. It requires a multi-pronged approach involving policy-level interventions, increased public investment, public-private partnerships, community engagement, and targeted outreach to disadvantaged groups.

This research article attempts to comprehensively examine the current status of higher education in North Karnataka by analyzing district-wise indicators such as GER, GPI, PTR, and institutional infrastructure using secondary data from government sources (2013–2022). It further compares these indicators with those of South Karnataka to identify the magnitude of disparity. Based on the findings, the article proposes practical policy recommendations aimed at reducing regional inequality in higher education and enhancing future prospects for the youth of North Karnataka.

In sum, the development of higher education in North Karnataka is not merely about setting up more colleges it is about creating a robust ecosystem that includes quality infrastructure, adequate faculty, inclusive policies, community awareness, and gender empowerment. The future of the region, and indeed of Karnataka as a whole, hinges on our ability to bridge this educational divide and ensure that every youth, irrespective of their district or social background, has the opportunity to pursue higher education and realize their full potential.

2. Review of Literature

1. **Tilak (2002)** in "Education and Development" underscores the critical link between educational expansion and regional development. He emphasizes that access to higher education reduces economic inequality. However, his work primarily examines national trends and lacks specific regional focus on North Karnataka.

2. **Nair (2000)** in "Regional Disparities and Development in Karnataka" provides a comprehensive analysis of the uneven development across Karnataka's regions. Though he highlights infrastructural deficits in North Karnataka, the study does not delve into recent higher education indicators like GER and GPI.

3. **Reddy and Rao (2003)** in their study on the Hyderabad-Karnataka region identify systemic challenges such as social stratification and poor institutional coverage. While useful in historical context, the study lacks updated data from the last decade.

4. **MHRD (2015)** in its All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) reports provides extensive data on enrollment and institutional capacity. However, the reports often lack disaggregated regional analysis, making it difficult to draw targeted insights for North Karnataka.

5. **World Bank (2017)** in "India Development Update" discusses the role of human capital in economic transformation, stressing the importance of inclusive education systems. However, the focus is pan-India and not nuanced toward intra-state disparities such as those in Karnataka.

Gap in Literature: While several studies and reports address national or state-wide education trends, there is a clear gap in district-level analysis focusing on higher education development in the Kalyana Karnataka region using recent empirical data. This study aims to fill that void by integrating district-wise government statistics (2013–2022) with interpretive analysis of regional disparities.

Objectives

1. To assess the regional disparities in higher education development between North Karnataka (Kalyana Karnataka) and South Karnataka using key indicators such as GER, GPI, PTR, and institutional density.

2. To analyze the social and infrastructural barriers affecting access to higher education among marginalized communities (SC, ST, OBC, and women) in Kalyana Karnataka.

3. To propose targeted policy recommendations aimed at bridging the regional educational divide and improving equitable access to quality higher education in North Karnataka.

3. Methodology

The present study employs a **secondary data-based analytical approach** to examine the regional disparities in the development of higher education between South Karnataka and North Karnataka, with a particular focus on the Kalyana Karnataka region. The research design is primarily descriptive and comparative in nature, aimed at identifying trends, gaps, and patterns across critical educational indicators over a period of ten years (2013 to 2022).

3.1 Data Sources

The study draws on reliable and authoritative **secondary data** from the **Department of Higher Education, Government of Karnataka**, including statistical abstracts, policy reports, and district-wise educational performance records. Additional information was sourced from government documents such as the Karnataka State Higher Education Council (KSHEC) reports, RUSA (Rashtriya Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyan) evaluations, and the Unified District Information System for Education (UDISE). Academic literature and research works addressing regional inequalities and educational development in Karnataka have also been referenced to support the interpretive aspects of the analysis.

3.2 Scope of the Study

The scope of the study encompasses **31 districts of Karnataka**, with a comparative emphasis on **South Karnataka** (including districts such as Bengaluru Urban, Mysuru, Tumkur, Mandya, and Chamarajanagar) and **Kalyana Karnataka** (comprising Bidar, Kalaburagi, Yadgir, Raichur, Koppal, and Ballari). This bifurcation helps in drawing clearer distinctions between the relatively developed and underdeveloped regions within the state, thus enabling a focused assessment of regional imbalances.

3.3 Key Variables and Indicators

To gauge the development of higher education in the selected districts, the following key indicators were analyzed:

➢ **Number of Universities**: Reflects the availability and distribution of higher education institutions at the district level.
➢ **Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER)**: Indicates the percentage of the eligible age group (18–23 years) enrolled in higher education, disaggregated by social category (SC, ST, OBC, and Women).
➢ **Gender Parity Index (GPI)**: Measures the gender balance in higher education by comparing female to male enrollment ratios.
➢ **Pupil-Teacher Ratio (PTR)**: An important indicator of faculty adequacy and academic engagement at the institutional level.
➢ **Average Enrollment per Institution**: Used to assess the utilization and capacity of higher education institutions in each district.

3.4 Comparative Framework

A **comparative framework** was used to assess the educational indicators between Kalyana Karnataka and South Karnataka districts. This involved tabulating the values of each indicator for both regions, highlighting the disparities, and interpreting the implications of such differences. The use of district-wise tables and visualizations allowed for a systematic and regionally disaggregated analysis.

3.5 Analytical Tools

The data were primarily processed using **descriptive statistics**, including means, percentages, and ratios. The findings were organized into tables for clarity, and interpretation was drawn based on year-wise trends and inter-district comparisons. Where necessary, visual tools like bar graphs and comparative charts were used to enhance interpretability.

3.6 Limitations

While the study relies on robust government sources, it is limited to secondary data and does not include primary data from stakeholders such as students, faculty, or administrators. Nevertheless, it provides a strong empirical base to understand the structural inequities in Karnataka's higher education system.

4. Results and Discussion

Table 1: Number of Universities

District	Number of Universities
Bangalore	16
Mysore	4
Koppal	0
Yadgir	0

The distribution of universities clearly reflects the regional imbalance in higher education infrastructure across Karnataka. Bangalore alone houses 16 universities, acting as an academic magnet and policy focus area, whereas Kalyana Karnataka districts such as Koppal and Yadgir have no universities. This lack of institutional presence hinders access to higher education, especially for students from economically and socially disadvantaged backgrounds. It also limits the region's potential for academic research, faculty recruitment, and youth development. Without deliberate efforts to establish new universities in underserved regions, the gap between North and South Karnataka will continue to widen.

Table 2: GER for SC Students

District	GER (SC)
Yadgir	5.0
Koppal	9.4
Mysore	45.8
Bangalore	28.2

Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) for Scheduled Caste (SC) students highlights the stark inequities in educational participation. While Mysore (45.8) and Bangalore (28.2) showcase commendable SC enrollment rates, districts in Kalyana Karnataka such as Yadgir (5.0) and Koppal (9.4) lag considerably. These low figures point to inadequate outreach, social discrimination, financial barriers, and insufficient college infrastructure in northern districts. Improving GER among SC students requires targeted scholarships, awareness drives, and community-based interventions, along with establishing more inclusive and accessible institutions in these disadvantaged regions.

Table 3: GER for ST Students (2013–16)

District	GER (ST)
Yadgir	0.7
Koppal	5.9
Bangalore	46.6
Udupi	27.7

The GER data for Scheduled Tribe (ST) students exposes a deep-rooted regional disparity in educational access. Yadgir's GER is a mere 0.7, one of the lowest in the state, while South Karnataka districts like Bangalore (46.6) and Udupi (27.7) report far higher participation. This highlights the marginalization of tribal populations in North Karnataka, both socially and educationally. Contributing factors include remoteness, poverty, and lack of awareness or incentives. Addressing this gap demands tribal hostels, localized higher education centers, and culturally sensitive policies that respect the unique needs of tribal communities.

Table 4: GER for OBC Students (2013–16)

District	GER (OBC)
Yadgir	2.1
Koppal	13.8
Mysore	85.7
Shimoga	37.9

The disparity in GER among Other Backward Class (OBC) students reveals a structural issue in education delivery. Mysore leads with an impressive GER of 85.7, followed by Shimoga (37.9), whereas Yadgir (2.1) and Koppal (13.8) continue to fall behind. The low enrollment in North Karnataka highlights insufficient educational infrastructure, poverty-driven dropout rates, and the absence of targeted interventions. These districts need affirmative action, better transportation to institutions, counseling centers, and stronger support systems to motivate and retain OBC students through their higher education journey.

Table 5: GER for Women (2013–16)

District	GER (Women)
Yadgir	0.9
Koppal	7.3
Mysore	63.8
Bangalore	38.1

The data on women's GER exposes gender inequality in educational access. Yadgir's shocking GER of 0.9% for women is the lowest in the state, reflecting social barriers, early marriage, and lack of safe and accessible colleges. In contrast, Mysore (63.8%) and Bangalore (38.1%) show that when proper facilities and social support exist, women actively pursue higher education. This calls for urgent gender-focused educational policies in Kalyana Karnataka, including girl-specific hostels, transport services, community mobilization, and awareness campaigns to empower women through education.

Table 6 : Pupil Teacher Ratio (PTR)

District	PTR
Tumkur	33
Mysore	22
Yadgir	7
Bidar	7

The PTR values signal both the demand for education and availability of faculty. Tumkur (33) and Mysore (22) show high student loads per teacher, suggesting robust enrollment and possibly teacher shortages. In contrast, Yadgir and Bidar, both at a PTR of 7, indicate either low student enrollment or overstaffing due to poor outreach. These figures underline the need to better align faculty deployment with enrollment trends, improve outreach in low PTR areas, and optimize resource use by boosting student participation in regions like Yadgir and Bidar.

Table 7 : Average Enrollment per Institution

District	Avg Enrollment
Mysore	1160
Shimoga	492
Bangalore	501
Yadgir	151
Bidar	218

Average enrollment figures serve as a proxy for institutional capacity and student trust. Mysore leads with 1160 students per institution, highlighting high demand and institutional strength. Meanwhile, Yadgir (151) and Bidar (218) lag far behind, suggesting either low population outreach, student migration to other regions, or dissatisfaction with local college quality. Low

enrollment may also result from socioeconomic barriers and lack of awareness. To reverse this trend, investments in infrastructure, faculty, quality assurance, and student incentives are essential for raising the credibility and attractiveness of North Karnataka's institutions.

4. Challenges in Kalyana Karnataka

North Karnataka, particularly the Kalyana Karnataka region, suffers from persistent underdevelopment in higher education due to historical neglect and systemic isolation. The region faces multiple challenges including poverty, prevalence of tribal populations, and deep-rooted gender norms that restrict educational access, especially for women and marginalized communities. Low institutional density, with very few universities or colleges, further limits opportunities. Additionally, inadequate scholarship programs and poor outreach efforts hinder student enrollment and retention. Addressing these barriers through targeted policy interventions, improved infrastructure, gender-sensitive approaches, and expanded financial aid is essential for achieving equitable regional development in Karnataka's higher education landscape.

5. Future Prospects and Policy Recommendations

To bridge the higher education gap in North Karnataka, particularly in underserved districts like Kalyana Karnataka, several targeted interventions are crucial. Establishing more universities and colleges will address institutional scarcity. Enhancing financial aid, hostel facilities, and transportation will support rural and underprivileged students. Promoting girls' education through awareness campaigns and incentive programs can reduce gender disparity. Recruiting and training faculty for remote areas will improve teaching quality and outreach. Finally, the rigorous implementation of Article 371J is essential to attract educational investments and ensure region-specific development, fostering inclusive and balanced growth in Karnataka's higher education landscape.

6. Conclusion

North Karnataka, especially the Kalyana Karnataka region, continues to face significant challenges in higher education, including limited access, inadequate infrastructure, and pronounced gender and social inequities. These disparities not only hinder regional progress but also undermine the overall development goals of Karnataka. Bridging this divide requires a multifaceted approach involving strong policy initiatives, increased public and private investments, and active community participation. Empowering marginalized communities through targeted educational reforms and inclusive growth strategies can help unlock the region's potential. A committed and coordinated effort can ensure that North Karnataka emerges as an equal stakeholder in the state's educational and economic future.

References:

1. Government of Karnataka. (2013-2016). Higher Education Reports. Bengaluru: Department of Higher Education.
2. KSHEP under RUSA 2.0 (2017-2020). Regional Performance and Recommendations.
3. Nair, K. R. (2000). Regional Disparities and Development in Karnataka. Sage Publications.
4. Tilak, J. B. G. (2002). Education and Development. Sage Publications.
5. World Bank. (2017). India Development Update. Washington, DC: The World Bank.
6. Government of Karnataka. (2013–2016). Higher Education Reports. Bengaluru: Department of Higher Education. •
7. KSHEP under RUSA 2.0 (2017–2020). Regional Performance and Recommendations. •
8. Nair, K. R. (2000). Regional Disparities and Development in Karnataka. Sage Publications.
9. Tilak, J. B. G. (2002). Education and Development. Sage Publications.

10. World Bank. (2017). India Development Update. Washington, DC: The World Bank.
11. Reddy, K., & Rao, P. (2003). Development Issues in Hyderabad-Karnataka Region. Indian Journal of Regional Studies.
12. Ministry of Human Resource Development. (2015). All India Survey on Higher Education. New Delhi: MHRD.
.