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Research Project

Widening Access to Higher Education in India: Institutional Approaches

Final Project Report

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Accompanying resources for the project

In addition to this report, other resources about the project are available on the project website: www.warwick.ac.uk/WAHEI. This includes various project outputs such as project reports, training materials, and presentations, as well as other information about the project and the people involved.



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Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Meaning
AAP	Access and Participation Plan
ACCA	Association of Chartered Certified Accountants
AISHE	All-India Survey of Higher Education
API	Academic Performance Indicator
BA	Bachelor of Arts
BTAD	Bodoland Territorial Autonomous District
BBA	Bachelor of Business Administration
BCA	Bachelor of Computer Applications
BPL	Below Poverty Line
BSc	Bachelor of Science
B.Tech	Bachelor of Technology
B.Voc	Bachelor of Vocation
CAS	Career Advancement Scheme
CBSE	Central Board of Secondary Education
CCTV	Closed-Circuit Television
CEE	Combined Entrance Examination
CPRHE	Centre for Policy Research in Higher Education
CSC	Common Service Centre
CUET	Common University Entrance Test
CUSAT	Cochin University of Science and Technology
CPL	Continuing Professional Learning
DEO	District Education Officers
DHE	Director of Higher Education
EWS	Economically Weaker Section
FDP	Faculty Development Programme
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FIP	Faculty Induction Programme
FM	Faculty Member
FYIMP	Five-Year Integrated Masters Programme
FYUP	Four-Year Undergraduate Programme
GCA	Government College ‘A’
GCB	Government College ‘B’
GCID	Government College In-Depth
GER	Gross Enrolment Ratio
GPI	Gender Parity Index

HE	Higher Education
HEI	Higher Education Institution
HRDC	Human Resource Development Centre
ICSE	Indian Certificate of Secondary Education
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IDP	Institutional Development Plan
IIT	Institute of Technology Delhi
IKS	Indian Knowledge Systems
IL	Institutional Leader
INR	Indian Rupee
IQAC	Internal Quality Assurance Cell
ITC	Industrial Training Centre
ITI	Industrial Training Institute
JEE	Joint Entrance Examination
KPSC	Kerala Public Service Commission
LGBTQIAP+	Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Intersex Asexual Pansexual Plus
LLB	Legum Baccalaureus (Bachelor of Law degree)
MA	Master of Arts
MBA	Master of Business Administration
MCA	Master of Computer Applications
M.Com	Master of Commerce
MHRD	Ministry of Human Resource Development
MMTTC	Malaviya Mission Teacher Training Centre
MoE	Ministry of Education
MOOC	Massive Open Online Courses
MPhil	Master of Philosophy
MPI	Multidimensional Poverty Index
MSc	Master of Science
NAAC	National Assessment and Accreditation Council
NCC	National Cadet Corps
NCT	National Capital Territory
NEP	National Education Policy
NET	National Eligibility Test
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NIEPA	National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration
NIOS	National Institute of Open Schooling
NITI Aayog	NITI stands for ‘National Institution for Transforming India’; NITI Aayog is the Government of India’s apex public policy think tank.
NSS	National Service Scheme

OBC	Other Backward Classes
ORM	Other Religious Minorities
PD	Professional Development
PhD	Doctor of Philosophy
PI	Principal Investigator
PTA	Parent-Teacher Association
PTM	Parent-Teacher Meeting
PWD	Person with Disability
RQ	Research Question
SC	Scheduled Caste
SEDG	Socio-Economically Disadvantaged Group
SET	State Eligibility Test
SLET	State Level Eligibility Test
SRT	State Research Team
ST	Scheduled Tribe
SU	State University
ToC	Theories of Change
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UBA	Unnat Bharat Abhiyaan
UGC	University Grants Commission
WAHEI	Widening Access to Higher Education in India (project)
WP	Widening Participation

About this Report

This report is the Final Project Report for the University of Warwick and National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration (NIEPA) collaborative research project, entitled 'Widening Access to Higher Education in India: Institutional Approaches' (WAHEI). The WAHEI project explored the role of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), Institutional Leaders (ILs), and Faculty Members (FMs) in enhancing informed choice for young people, as they make decisions about Higher Education (HE). The project focused, in particular, on rurally situated and rural-serving, publicly funded universities and colleges, given the role of these institutions in providing HE to socio-economically disadvantaged students. Of key importance has been enhancing the familiarity of the term 'higher education outreach' in the terminology of Indian HE, within the scope of the study, as a key term denoting the activities that HEIs can undertake to guide and inform young people and their families about their HE choices and admissions processes. WAHEI included a large-scale, multimethod empirical research study to explore existing HE outreach practices across states and regions of India, followed by the co-development, implementation, and evaluation of a professional learning module for FMs to learn about HE outreach, and final dissemination of project findings and recommendations.

Project outputs can be accessed from the WAHEI website: www.warwick.ac.uk/WAHEI . The explanation of the background and rationale for the project can be found in CPRHE-NIEPA Research Paper 20, 'The Role of Higher Education Institutions and Faculty Members in Higher Education Outreach in India':
https://cprhe.niepa.ac.in/assets/papers/CPRHE_Research_Paper_20.pdf.

The project was a four-year research project (2022-2026) funded by the Fair Chance Foundation and hosted by the University of Warwick's Doctoral Education and Academia Research Centre (DEAR). The DEAR Centre conducts specialist research on topics relating to doctoral education and the academic profession, with a focus on inequalities and inclusivity (www.warwick.ac.uk/DEAR).

The project has been led by Professor Emily F. Henderson (University of Warwick) and Dr Nidhi S. Sabharwal (NIEPA) as Co-Principal Investigators, and Professor Ann Stewart (University of Warwick) as Co-Investigator. The project has been coordinated by Matt Phillips and supported

by a number of colleagues, most substantially S. Arokia Mary, Arushi Painuly, Chandrika, Ragini Khurana, Denisse Lillo Sierra, Sejjal, Evan Zheng, Susan Deeb and Robyn Shreeve.

The project involved a significant empirical phase across HEIs located in five states of India: Assam, Chhattisgarh, Haryana, Kerala, and Maharashtra. In each state, a team of three FMs led the empirical component, including collection, analysis, and interpretation of data. Each State Research Team consisted of two FMs from a State University (SU)—one team lead and one early career FM—and an FM from a college in the same state (publicly funded or aided, rurally located where possible). The State Research Teams were supported in the process through three two-day residential workshops at NIEPA which focused on (i) instrument development and data collection, (ii) analysis processes, and (iii) presentation and peer review of draft report material. In addition, field visits and monthly online meetings were held to bring together all team members across the central and state teams during the empirical phase. Part 1 of this report showcases the synthesised findings as the culmination of the series of five State Reports for the WAHEI project (see below for links to the reports).

The project also involved an impact-oriented phase which included: a UK-based visit for the State Research Teams with the purpose of inducting team members to HE outreach activities in the UK and of co-developing a Professional Learning Module on HE outreach; the piloting of the Module with 12 faculty members from Haryana; and the evaluation of the Module pilot. The project concluded with an International Discussion Meet on the topic of HE outreach hosted by NIEPA. Part 2 of the report lays out the process and findings from the impact-oriented project phase.

The final contents of the report have been prepared and finalised by the WAHEI Research Team, with editing support from Matt Phillips and Julie Mansuy (Active4Research Ltd.). Responsibility for the contents therein remains with the report authors.

WAHEI Project Publications and Resources

The WAHEI project webpage:

www.warwick.ac.uk/WAHEI

For an in-depth rationale for the WAHEI project study, see:

Sabharwal, N. S., Henderson, E., Stewart, A., Sierra, D. L., Khurana, R., Mary, S. A., & Painuly, A. (2025). *The role of higher education institutions and faculty members in higher education outreach in India* (CPRHE Research Papers Paper 20). Centre for Policy Research in Higher Education (CPRHE), National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration (NIEPA). Available at: https://cprhe.niepa.ac.in/assets/papers/CPRHE_Research_Paper_20.pdf

The WAHEI project brief:

Sabharwal, N.S., Henderson, E. F., & Stewart, A. (2026). Towards informed higher education access and choice for prospective undergraduate students: The role of higher education institutions and faculty members as local knowledge hubs. National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration (NIEPA) & Doctoral Education and Academia Research Centre (DEAR), University of Warwick. Available at: https://www.niepa.ac.in/collab_university_of_warwick; https://wrap.warwick.ac.uk/201283/.

The Professional Learning Module for Faculty Members:

Module tutor guide:

Sabharwal, N. S., Stewart, A., Henderson, E. F., Gafoor K., A., Mahajan, D. J., Rajeshwari, Singh, L. G., Vauquline, P., Ashkarali P., Banjare, D., Borah, B., Gayan, C., Khandare, K. V., Kumar, S., Patil, V. W., Praveen G., M., Virdi, K., Chandrika, Mary, S. A., & Sejjal. (2026). Higher education outreach: What it means and why is it important (1): Module tutor guide. Doctoral Education and Academia Research Centre (DEAR), University of Warwick. Available at: https://wrap.warwick.ac.uk/id/eprint/201081/; https://www.niepa.ac.in/WAHEI_HE_outreach_module

Module manual:

Sabharwal, N. S., Stewart, A., Henderson, E. F., Gafoor K., A., Mahajan, D. J., Rajeshwari, Singh, L. G., Vauquline, P., Ashkarali P., Banjare, D., Borah, B., Gayan, C., Khandare, K. V., Kumar, S., Patil, V. W., Praveen G., M., Virdi, K., Chandrika, Mary, S. A., & Sejjal. (2026). Higher education outreach: What it means and why it is important (2): Module manual. Doctoral Education and Academia Research Centre (DEAR), University of Warwick. Available at: https://wrap.warwick.ac.uk/id/eprint/201081/; https://www.niepa.ac.in/WAHEI_HE_outreach_module

PowerPoint slides:

Sabharwal, N. S., Stewart, A., Henderson, E. F., Gafoor K., A., Mahajan, D. J., Rajeshwari, Singh, L. G., Vauquline, P., Ashkarali P., Banjare, D., Borah, B., Gayan, C., Khandare, K. V., Kumar, S., Patil, V. W., Praveen G., M., Virdi, K., Chandrika, Mary, S. A., & Sejjal. (2026). Higher education outreach: What it means and why is it important (3): Module PowerPoint. Doctoral Education and Academia Research Centre (DEAR), University of Warwick. Available at: https://wrap.warwick.ac.uk/id/eprint/201081/; https://www.niepa.ac.in/WAHEI_HE_outreach_module

This report synthesises findings from five state reports, as follows:

Assam:

Vauquline, P., Gayan, C., & Borah, B. (2026). Widening Access to Higher Education in India: Institutional Approaches (WAHEI): Assam state report. Doctoral Education and Academia Research Centre (DEAR), University of Warwick. Available at: https://wrap.warwick.ac.uk/id/eprint/195919/; https://www.niepa.ac.in/collab_university_of_warwick

Chhattisgarh

Gajpal, L. S., Kumar, S., & Banjare, D. (2026). Widening Access to Higher Education in India: Institutional Approaches (WAHEI): Chhattisgarh state report. Doctoral Education and Academia Research Centre (DEAR), University of Warwick. Available at: https://wrap.warwick.ac.uk/id/eprint/195920/; https://www.niepa.ac.in/collab_university_of_warwick

Haryana:

Rajeshwari, Virdi, K., & Mehra, G. (2026). Widening Access to Higher Education in India: Institutional Approaches (WAHEI): Haryana state report. Doctoral Education and Academia Research Centre (DEAR), University of Warwick. Available at: https://wrap.warwick.ac.uk/id/eprint/195050/; https://www.niepa.ac.in/collab_university_of_warwick

Kerala:

Gafoor, K. A., Praveen, M. G., Ashkarali, P., & Muhammed Muqthar, T. (2026). Widening Access to Higher Education in India: Institutional Approaches (WAHEI): Kerala state report. Doctoral Education and Academia Research Centre (DEAR), University of Warwick. Available at: https://wrap.warwick.ac.uk/id/eprint/196622; https://www.niepa.ac.in/collab_university_of_warwick

Maharashtra:

Mahajan, D., Khandare, K., & Patil, V. (2026). Widening Access to Higher Education in India: Institutional Approaches (WAHEI): Maharashtra state report. Doctoral Education and Academia Research Centre (DEAR), University of Warwick. Available at: https://wrap.warwick.ac.uk/id/eprint/199105/; https://www.niepa.ac.in/collab_university_of_warwick

PART I: WAHEI Synthesis of Findings

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

Higher Education (HE) in India is currently in a stage of massification with a Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) of 28.4% (MOE, 2021). The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 seeks to further democratise access to HE and increase the GER to 50% by 2035 (MHRD, 2020). Within this context, increasing numbers of learners are now aspiring to enter HE, many of whom are the first in their families to consider this. The NEP 2020 recognises that a 'lack of knowledge of higher education opportunities' and 'admission processes' (MHRD, 2020, 14.3, p. 41) are substantial barriers for young people from disadvantaged socio-economic groups who are looking to access HE.

The aim of the project upon which this report is based was to explore the role of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs)—universities and colleges—in enhancing informed choice for young people accessing HE. Informed choice means having access to reliable information that guides HE applicants about the appropriate HEI and course to select, as well as information about the processes to follow to gain admission, apply for scholarships, understand subject options and employability prospects, among others. In many countries of the world and in selected (mainly private) HEIs in India, there is an established practice of 'HE outreach': practices that HEIs engage in to inform prospective applicants about their options and about admissions processes. However, in publicly funded HEIs in India, HE outreach is not yet a formalised practice. NEP 2020 identifies the role of government colleges in particular in delivering on high quality, localised HE provision, which may include improving HE outreach practices (MHRD, 2020, 14.4.1, p. 41).

HE outreach practices include *outreach*—where HEI staff and students visit communities/schools to provide information and guidance on HE—as well as *inreach*—where prospective applicants and their families may visit an HEI and may attend a 'taster session', where they can experience the HE classroom in action. HE outreach may be conducted for the

purposes of recruitment (i.e. filling vacant seats) and/or for social justice purposes (i.e. recognising the public good mission of HEIs and ensuring that disadvantaged communities have access to reliable information when making HE choices). Crucially, HE outreach is different from community outreach, which often entails students and staff from HEIs visiting rural communities, for e.g. clean-up initiatives or sensitisation plays. Community outreach only overlaps with HE outreach if/when the community outreach includes an element of HE outreach, e.g. sharing information about admissions as part of a village visit.

The University of Warwick-National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration (NIEPA) collaborative research project entitled 'Widening Access to Higher Education in India: Institutional Perspectives' (WAHEI, www.warwick.ac.uk/WAHEI) took place from 2022-2026, and sought to map existing HE outreach practices in publicly funded, rurally located or rural-serving HEIs in five states and regions of India. The project drew on and furthered the reach and impact of the first Fair Chance Foundation project 'A Fair Chance for Education: Gendered Pathways to Educational Success in Haryana' (FCE) (2017-21, www.warwick.ac.uk/haryana). The WAHEI project took its starting point as a key finding from the first project: the vital role that Faculty Members (FMs) in rural and semi-urban HEIs can play in increasing young peoples' HE participation and improving their life chances. The project sought to understand the role of Institutional Leaders (ILs) and FMs in conducting HE outreach and to explore the prevalence of prior HE outreach experiences among those students who are already enrolled in undergraduate study. Part 1 of this report synthesises the findings from the five participating states and produces an overall picture of the project findings. Part 2 reports on the development, piloting and pilot evaluation of a Continuing Professional Learning (CPL) module for FMs on HE outreach and the findings from an International Discussion Meet. Chapter 1 proceeds by giving context on HE access and choice in India; presenting the objectives and research questions (RQs) of the study; describing the empirical study that was conducted; and providing summaries of the chapters included in this report.

1.2 Background and Rationale

As indicated, HE in India is currently in a stage of massification (see Table I.1.1 below). Affirmative action policies, including the reservation system, which allocates HE places to Socio-Economically Disadvantaged Groups (SEDGs), have contributed to reducing disparities

in access (Sabharwal & Malish, 2017; see Figure I.1.1 below). Nevertheless, some disparities remain, particularly in relation to how prospective students make choices about HE (Henderson et al., 2023). Evidence suggests that more advantaged groups tend to approach these decisions through structured and well-informed planning, whereas those with limited access to reliable information may rely on informal sources such as rumours. This can perpetuate existing social patterns, especially along gender lines. (Gautam, 2015; Wadhwa, 2018; Sahu et al., 2017; Borker, 2021). Considering that a degree is increasingly seen as essential for securing employment, ensuring equitable access to accurate information about HE pathways can be viewed as a key responsibility of the education sector (Sabharwal et al., 2025).

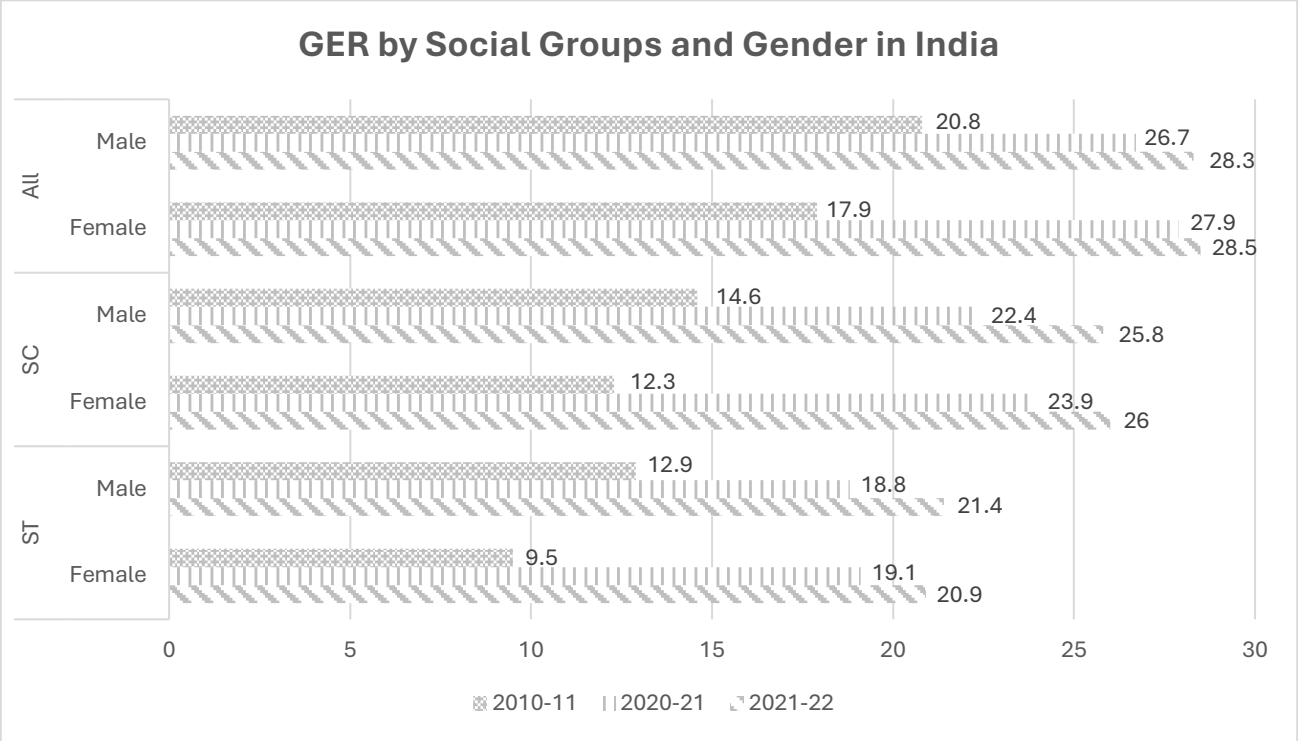
Table I.1.1: Increase of General Enrolment Rate (GER) in India

Year	GER
2000-2001	8.1
2010-2011	19.4
2020-2021	27.3
2021-2022	28.4

Source: AISHE 2021-2022

Note: the 2021-2022 data have been included as the most recent data available.

Figure I.1.1: Changes in GER by Social Groups and Gender in India Over Time



Source: AISHE 2010-2011, 2020-2021, and 2021-2022

Across many countries, HEIs actively support policies and initiatives aimed at Widening Participation (WP) amongst underrepresented groups. These initiatives often include visiting schools and communities to explain application processes and advantages of HE, as well as hosting prospective students and families on campus to familiarise them with university life. In India, however, such outreach practices are relatively recent and are frequently led by well-resourced private institutions seeking to strengthen their position in a competitive landscape. Indian education policy has long emphasised the role of HE in 'social emancipation' (MoE, 1962, p. 43) and overcoming 'caste and class hierarchy, patriarchy and other cultural prejudices' (MHRD, 2009, p. 11), but thus far, practical strategies for achieving these aims have largely focused on financial support, reservation policies, and student accommodation. However, the NEP 2020 signals a potential shift by explicitly highlighting outreach as an expected function of HEIs (MHRD, 2020, p. 41), which may elevate its importance, particularly within public institutions.

Earlier research (see Henderson et al., 2021; Sabharwal et al., 2025) indicates that there is minimal engagement between publicly funded HEIs and potential students in the nearby communities during the pre-entry stages. Despite proximity, many students have never visited

a campus or experienced what studying in HE entails. Direct interaction with FMs before enrolment is also uncommon. As a result, students often depend on family advice and informal networks when making decisions about their educational pathways (Stewart et al., 2022).

We argue that State Universities (SUs) and government colleges—particularly those serving rural and semi-urban populations—have significant potential to function as local hubs of HE knowledge. These institutions could play a pivotal role in offering guidance and advice about HE opportunities, particularly within their surrounding areas. The NEP 2020 highlights the importance of colleges delivering high quality, locally relevant HE provision, including strengthening outreach efforts (MHRD, 2020, 14.4.1, p. 41). This creates a timely opportunity to explore how such outreach can be more effectively designed and implemented. Secondly, we argue that FMs based in rural-serving SU and colleges have considerable potential to become key agents of HE outreach within their communities. With appropriate training and institutional support, they could become knowledgeable advocates—'champions for change'—helping to expand opportunities for young people from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Finally, it is important to recognise that fostering a culture of outreach aimed at equalising HE access and informed choice is vital, equitable, and grounded in social justice. For outreach efforts to be effective, they should incorporate gender-sensitive and equity-oriented approaches. As such, this project sought to understand how a gender-equitable and socially-just HE outreach culture can be developed and delivered in an equitable manner by highly motivated, trained, supported, and rewarded FMs within rural-serving State Universities (SUs) and rural and semi-urban government colleges functioning as local HE knowledge hubs.

1.3 Project Objectives and Research Questions

The project aim for the empirical phase of the WAHEI project (i.e. Part 1 of the report) was as follows:

> *To explore the potential for HEIs, their FMs and ILs in rural and semi-urban India to contribute to enhancing knowledge of HE in local disadvantaged communities, and therefore contributing to the social justice mission of public HE.*

The corresponding objective was as follows:

> *To document, via meaningful, robust, mixed methods fieldwork across five states of India, current HE outreach practices and the motivations and/or resistance of various HEI stakeholders, such as the FMs and ILs, to contribute to HE outreach in the local communities surrounding the colleges*.

Beyond the empirical phase of the project, further phases aimed to develop, test, and evaluate a Professional Learning Module on HE outreach for FMs and to host an International Discussion Meet on embedding HE outreach in the HE policy and practice landscape (see Part 2 of the report).

The RQs for the empirical phase of the project (Part 1) were as follows:

RQ1: What is the current and potential role of HEIs based in rural/semi-urban India, their FMs and ILs to engage in gender-equitable, socially-just HE outreach for students in their local communities?

The RQ is divided into four sub-questions, which are elaborated below.

RQ1a: Who is delivering HE in colleges and universities in rural and semi-urban locations? Who are the FMs and the ILs?

This question is designed to understand how FMs relate to their work and their local communities, by acquiring the following information about them:

- What are their intersecting identity characteristics? (gender, caste, class, religion, etc.)
- What has been their educational and professional trajectory to date?
- What are their motivations for being FMs?

RQ1b: What do FMs in rural and semi-urban areas currently perceive to be the role of HEIs and their role/s in facilitating access to HE and HE choice in the localities of their workplaces? What are the existing practices of HE outreach?

This question explores FMs' motivations for contributing to HE outreach in their local areas, and the obstacles that may exist to prevent this contribution, by enquiring:

- What are their perceptions of their role/s?
- What do they understand by WP, what are the forms it takes, and their views on why it matters?
- What are their current practices in terms of facilitating access to HE and HE choice (including informal practices such as guiding neighbours)?
- What are the challenges/obstacles facing HEIs and FMs in contributing to HE outreach in rural and semi-urban locations surrounding HEIs?

RQ1c: What do ILs of rural and semi-urban colleges and universities perceive to be HEIs' role, their role and their employees' role in relation to facilitating access to HE and HE choice?

This question mirrors RQ1b but focuses on those in charge of government colleges and universities in rural/semi-urban areas.

RQ1d: Who are the students receiving HE in rural/semi-urban colleges? How do they perceive the role of FMs in facilitating HE access and choice?

This question aims to understand the student perspective on the role of FMs and ILs in improving HE access and choice. Both students' own experiences and their opinions on improving HE access were explored through the following questions:

- What are the intersecting identity characteristics of students in these colleges? (Gender, caste, class, religion, etc.)
- Did FMs/s or principal/s (from the same or other HEIs) influence their decision to access HE and their HE choices? In which ways?
- How do students perceive the role of FMs and principals in facilitating HE access and choice?

The wider WAHEI project included two further RQs pertaining to the module and the International Discussion Meet, which are reported on in Part 2 of the report.

1.4 Methodology and Sources of Information

The empirical study reported in Part 1 of the report adopted a mixed-methods (using both qualitative and quantitative research methods), comparative approach involving multiple states in India and two types of HEIs: government colleges and SUs, offering undergraduate programmes of study. The study was undertaken in several selected HEIs located across five states (see further detail below). The original intention was to include a sixth state, but due to procedural reasons, the sample was reduced to five. A comparative design was important as a cross-state analysis helped in developing an understanding on an overarching view of differences and similarities across state HE systems and HEIs, as well as the interplay between these systems and policy contexts. In each of the selected states, four HEIs were selected as institutional case studies. One HEI was an SU offering undergraduate provision. Three HEIs were government colleges affiliated to the SU. One government college was researched in depth (Government College In-Depth (GCID)). The other government colleges (Government College 'A' (GCA) and Government College 'B' (GCB)) were researched to a lesser degree but provided a comparator for GCID. The participating HEIs were selected according to the following criteria:

1. Selecting only SUs including Human Resource Development Centres (HRDCs) (N=66), given the focus on the Professional Learning Module in the latter phases of the project (see Part 2 of the report).

2. Then reducing to only SUs (not designated as 'Technical') which are those including undergraduate courses and having affiliated colleges (N=43).

3. Remaining SUs were split according to the six regions (North=13, South=8, West=13, East=4, Central=4, and Northeast=1). The East region was not represented in the final study.

4. From these regions, the population size of the location of each SU was explored and classified according to the six-tier scale of locations in India.

5. Five affiliating SUs were involved in the full project process which were located in towns and cities classified as Tier II cities (https://www.mapsofindia.com/maps/india/tier-1-and-2-cities.html). These universities were also accredited and have similar National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) grades ranging from A to A+ which was deemed to be an important aspect for the latter phases of the project.

The geographic spread of the participating HEIs is given in Table I.1.2 below.

Table I.1.2: Selected States by Region of India

Region	State
Central	Chhattisgarh
North-West	Haryana
North-East	Assam
West	Maharashtra
South	Kerala

Source: Authors

The design of the study and participant groups are detailed below (see also Figure I.1.2). The study was granted ethical approval by the relevant committee at the University of Warwick.

- **ILs**
    - A **semi-structured interview (with short demographic questionnaire)** was conducted with the IL, who was the College Principal in the government colleges and, in the SUs, a person with relevant expertise and high seniority. This interview focused on the IL's biographical trajectory and their actions and perceptions in relation to HE outreach.
- **FMs**
    - **Semi-structured interviews (with short demographic questionnaire)** were conducted with FMs across the four institutions in each state. Five FMs were recruited in each institution for an initial semi-structured interview, including their biographical trajectory and actions/perceptions relating to HE outreach. FMs

were recruited with attention to ensuring a sample spanning different social groups, genders, contract type, and seniority.

- For the interview participants in the SU and GCID, a **diary-interview study** was conducted with FMs. The FMs kept a **solicited diary** over three months recording their actions and perceptions about HE outreach. At the end of the diary period there was a **post-diary interview** discussing the diaries and final reflections.

- A **census survey** was conducted with all FMs in the SU and GCID on demographics and views on HE outreach.

- Across all institutions, **administrative data** was gathered on the demographics of FMs at the HEI and on any relevant institutional policy documents.

- **Undergraduate students in their first year of study**

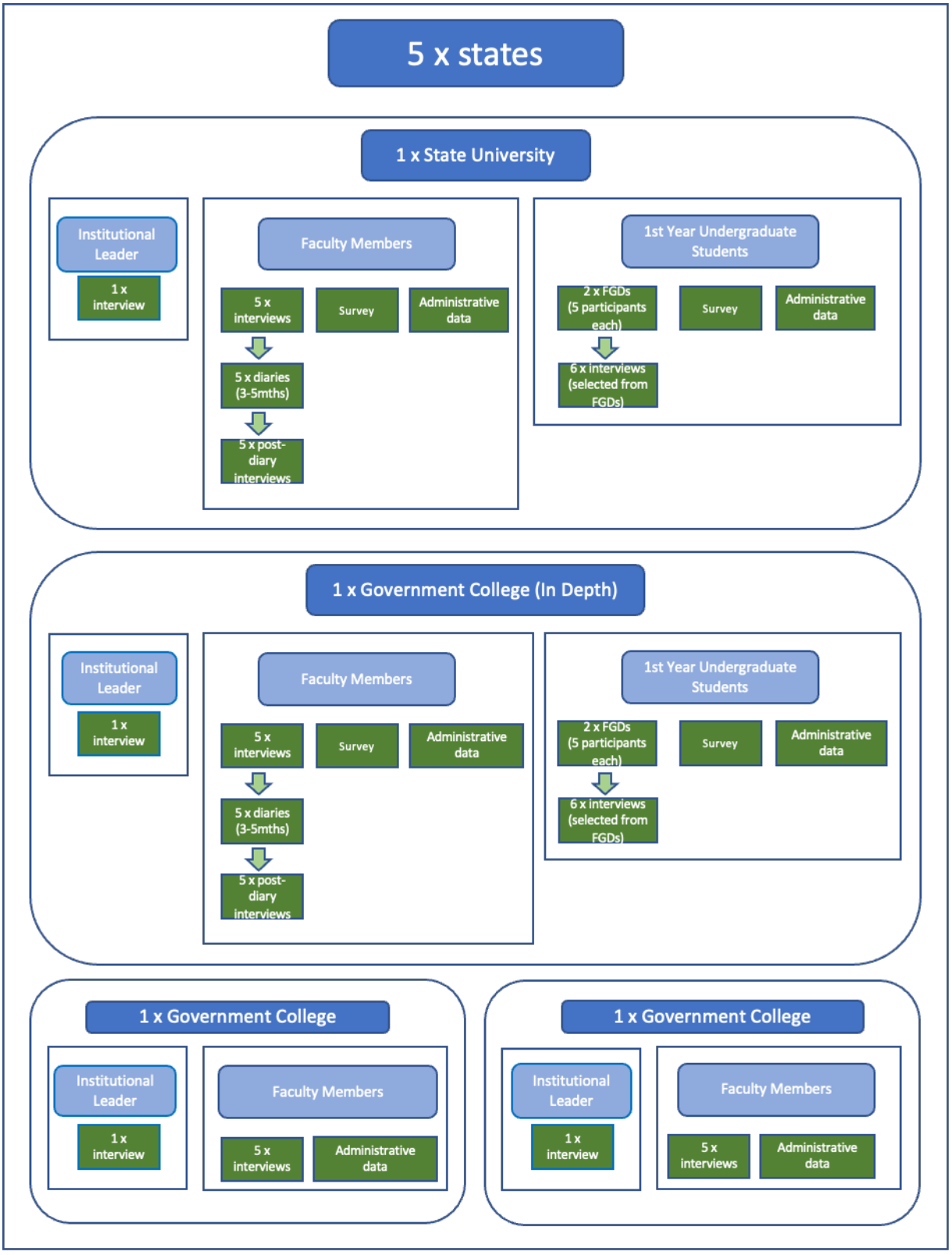
  - In the SU and GCID, two **Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) (with short demographic questionnaire)** with five undergraduates per group were conducted in each HEI. These groups were mixed gender and across disciplines. The FGDs focused on undergraduates' views on the role of HEIs/FMs in HE outreach.

  - From the FGDs, six undergraduates were recruited for **semi-structured interviews** on the undergraduates' experiences of and views on HE outreach.

  - A **survey** (either census if <500 first year undergraduates in the HEI, or c. 500 respondents if >500 first year undergraduates) was conducted of undergraduate students in the SU and GCID.

  - **Administrative data** were gathered on the demographics of undergraduates at the HEI.

Figure I.1.2 Design of the Study



The data collection exercise totals can be found in Table I.1.3 below.

Table I.1.3: Summary of Data Collected

Data collection method	SU Total	Government Colleges Total	TOTAL
IL interviews	5	15	**20**
FM interviews	26	65	**91**
FM survey	259	215	**474**
FM diary participants	26	24	**50**
FM diary entries (valid)	103	151	**254**
FM post-diary interviews	21	25	**46**
Undergraduate FGDs	8	10	**18**
Undergraduate interviews	24	30	**54**
Undergraduate survey	1123	1767	**2890**

Source: Authors

1.5 Chapter Scheme of the Report (Part 1)

Following on from this introductory chapter, **Chapter 2** offers an overview of the current status of HE in the participating states in relation to their demographic profiles, with a particular focus on the accessibility of HEIs, the enrolment levels of different social groups, existing state policies to improve access to information about HE, and the state of the academic profession. **Chapter 3** offers an overview of sampled HEIs from each state included in the study. This chapter presents FM composition and Professional Development (PD) opportunities availed by FM in each sampled HEI across five states. Following on, Chapter 3 also presents student composition at the sampled HEIs and existing institutional HE outreach activities and strategies in the HEIs. **Chapter 4** presents empirical findings based on the question 'Who are the FMs?'. The chapter covers the demographic background of FMs and ILs, residence and commute information, FMs' and ILs' educational and family backgrounds, and schooling and HE histories. The chapter also includes the role of FMs in their own HE access trajectories. The final substantive section of the chapter focuses on FMs' professional trajectories. **Chapter 5** zooms in on FMs' and ILs' HE outreach practices and perspectives. The chapter begins with a section on the extent to which the HEIs in the study are seen to facilitated access to HE, particularly for rural students. The chapter also includes perspectives on the current challenges and future opportunities related to HE outreach. **Chapter 6** presents the findings from the undergraduate

student data, including their demographic information, residence and commute information, schooling and HE histories, and the involvement of FMs in their HE access trajectories. Finally, undergraduate students' views on current challenges and future opportunities pertaining to HE outreach are covered. **Chapter 7** serves as a discussion chapter, presenting synthesised responses to the RQ and sub-questions, as well as early pointers for the later phases of the project. Lastly, **Chapter 8** presents the final conclusions and recommendations of Part 1 of the report.

Chapter 2: HE and the Academic Profession – National Picture and State-Level Comparison

2.1 Introduction

Chapter 2 introduces the five states which were included in the study. The chapter begins with an introduction to the states' contexts. The second section discusses the situation in each state with respect to achieving equitable Higher Education (HE) access. The third section summarises existing state-level initiatives to provide information about HE choices to potential students. Finally, section four offers an overview of the academic profession in each of the states, including the demographic composition of existing Faculty Members (FMs), and policies on recruiting and redeploying FMs and Institutional Leaders (ILs).

The chapter is primarily based on secondary sources such as the Government of India Census Data 2011 and the All-India Survey of Higher Education (AISHE) (MoE, 2021). AISHE was carried out by the Ministry of Education and captured data across the country for the academic period 2021-2022, focussing on information relevant to HE. The 2011 Census of India, the 15th national survey, themed 'Our Census, Our Future', was completed in two phases in 2010 and 2011. The 2011 Census of India is the most recent census at the time of writing. By drawing together these two data sources, this chapter presents a picture of the Indian HE sector in comparison to wider national demographics of relevance.

The chapter sets the scene for the in-depth exploration of ILs, FMs, undergraduates, and HE outreach in the following chapters. As was mentioned in the previous chapter, the following geographical zones of India are represented in the study: North (Haryana), West (Maharashtra), Central (Chhattisgarh), South (Kerala), and North-East (Assam) were selected for this project.

2.1.1 Introduction to the States

This section introduces relevant demographics of the case study states, alongside the national picture as a point of comparison.

According to data from the 2011 Census, the population of India was around 1.21 billion at the time of recording. Within the case study states (see Table I.2.1), Maharashtra stands out as the most populous among them, with over 112 million people, far exceeding the others. Kerala and Assam have moderately large populations of around 33 million and 31 million respectively, while Chhattisgarh and Haryana each have populations slightly above 25 million.

Table I.2.1: Population by State in 2011

State	Total
National	12,108,549,777
Assam	31,205,576
Chhattisgarh	25,545,198
Haryana	25,351,462
Kerala	33,406,061
Maharashtra	112,374,333

Source: Census (2011)

Within this overall picture, of relevance to the discussion in this report is data relating to the age group 18-23 years old, i.e. the primary age group for HE. The following data (taken from AISHE) reveals a general growth in population for this age group, with some differences across the states of study. The overall population saw a growth of 2.20% over the five-year period of 2017 and 2021. Assam saw a growth of over double, at 4.45%, whereas Chhattisgarh was generally in line with the national picture at just under 3%. Haryana saw a modest growth at 0.41%, however both Kerala and Maharashtra saw a decline of 0.88% and 1.62% respectively.

Table I.2.2: Population in the Age Group 18-23 Years

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	% Growth between 2017 and 2021
National	149,167,200	149,986,400	1,508,056,400	151,624,800	152,444,000	2.20%
Assam	3,847,600	3,890,200	3,932,800	3,975,400	4,019,000	4.45%
Chhattisgarh	3,255,200	3,279,400	3,303,600	3,327,800	3,352,000	2.97%
Haryana	3,308,600	3,309,200	3,309,800	3,310,400	3,322,000	0.41%
Kerala	3,183,000	3,176,000	3,169,000	3,162,000	3,155,000	-0.88%
Maharashtra	13,175,800	13,122,600	13,069,400	13,016,200	12,963,000	-1.62%

Source: AISHE (2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021)

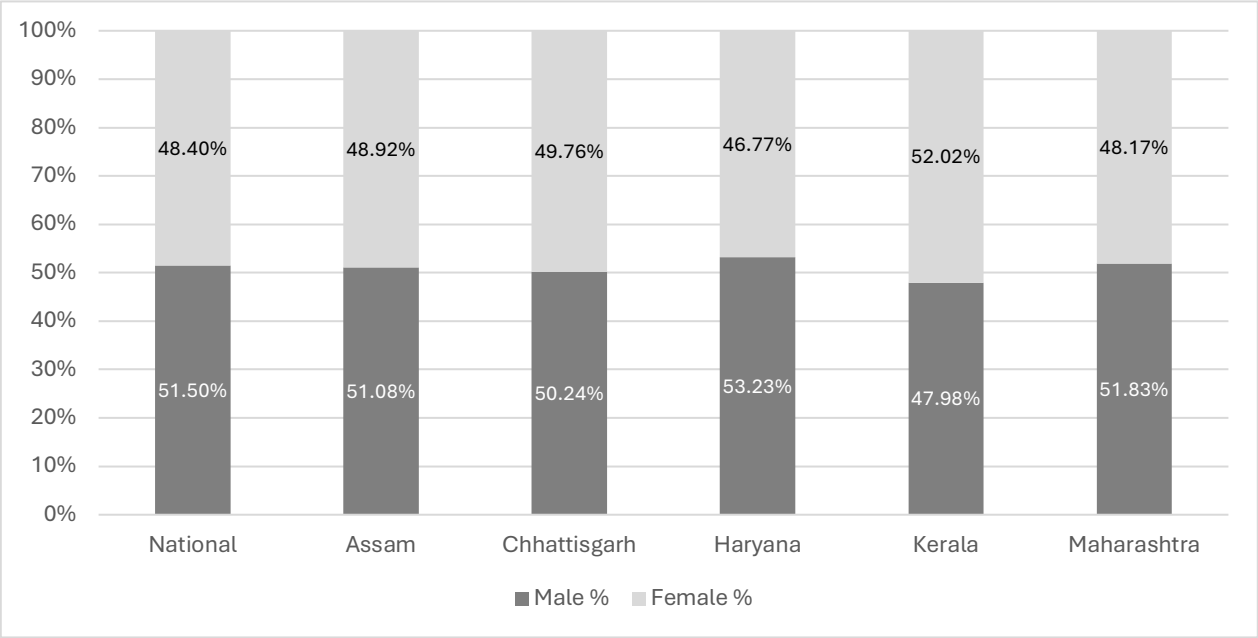
According to data from the 2011 Census, three of the states included in this project—Assam, Chhattisgarh, and Kerala—had sex ratios higher than the national ratio of 943 women per 1000 men (see Table I.2.3 and Figure I.2.1). Two states, Haryana and Maharashtra, had sex ratios lower than the national average, at 879 women per 1000 men and 929 women per 1000 men respectively. Kerala was the only state where women comprised a larger proportion of the population than men.

Table I.2.3: Gender Balance of Population in 2011

State	Male %	Female %
National	51.50%	48.40%
Assam	51.08%	48.92%
Chhattisgarh	50.24%	49.76%
Haryana	53.23%	46.77%
Kerala	47.98%	52.02%
Maharashtra	51.83%	48.17%

Source: Census (2011)

Figure I.2.1: Gender Balance of Population in 2011



Source: Census (2011)

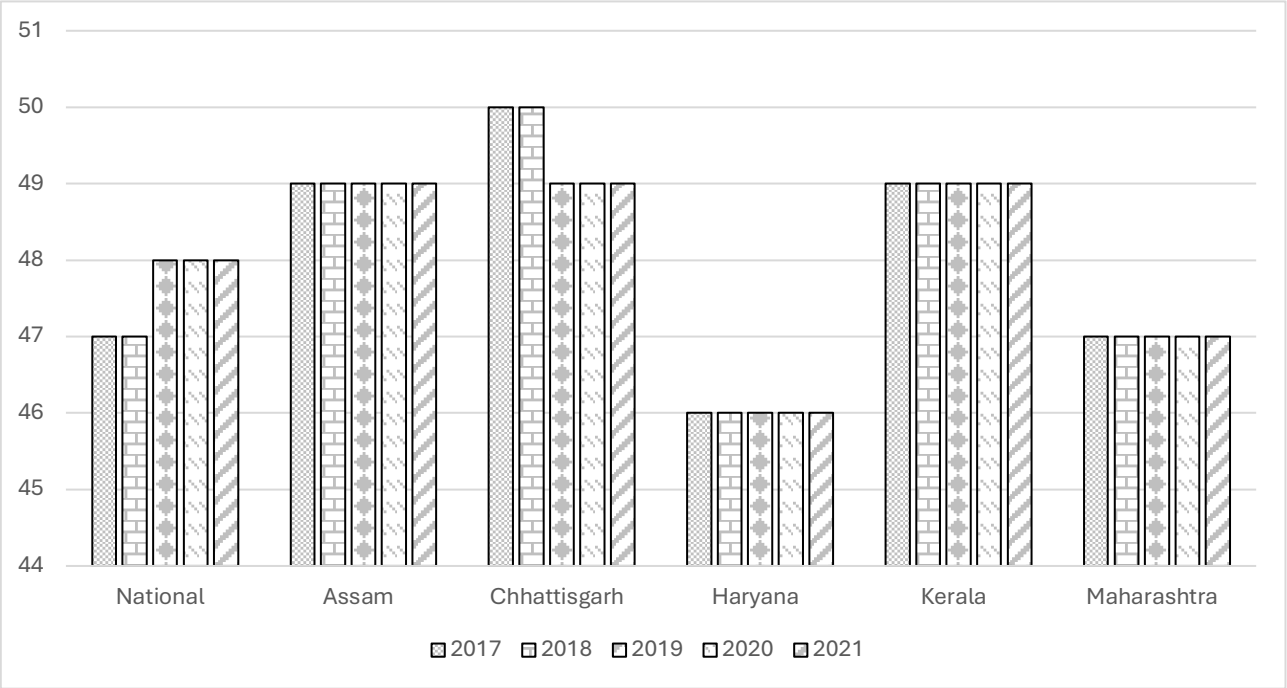
This gender im/balance was later reflected within the age group of 18-23 during the AISHE data period (see Table I.2.4 and Figure I.2.2)

Table I.2.4: Gender Balance in the Population of 18-23 Year-olds 2017-2021

Year:	2017		2018		2019		2020		2021	
Gender (%):	**Men**	**Women**	**Men**	**Women**	**Men**	**Women**	**Men**	**Women**	**Men**	**Women**
National	52.54	47.46	52.51	47.49	52.47	47.53	52.44	47.56	52.40	47.60
Assam	51.27	48.73	51.29	48.71	51.31	48.69	51.33	48.67	51.34	48.66
Chhattisgarh	50.47	49.53	50.50	49.50	50.52	49.48	50.54	49.46	50.57	49.43
Haryana	54.25	45.75	54.20	45.80	54.15	45.85	54.11	45.89	54.06	45.94
Kerala	51.05	48.95	51.15	48.85	51.26	48.74	51.37	48.63	51.47	48.53
Maharashtra	52.97	47.03	52.93	47.07	52.89	47.11	52.85	47.15	52.80	47.20

Source: AISHE (2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021)

Figure I.2.2: Percentage of the Population of 18-23 Year-old Women



Source: AISHE (2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021)

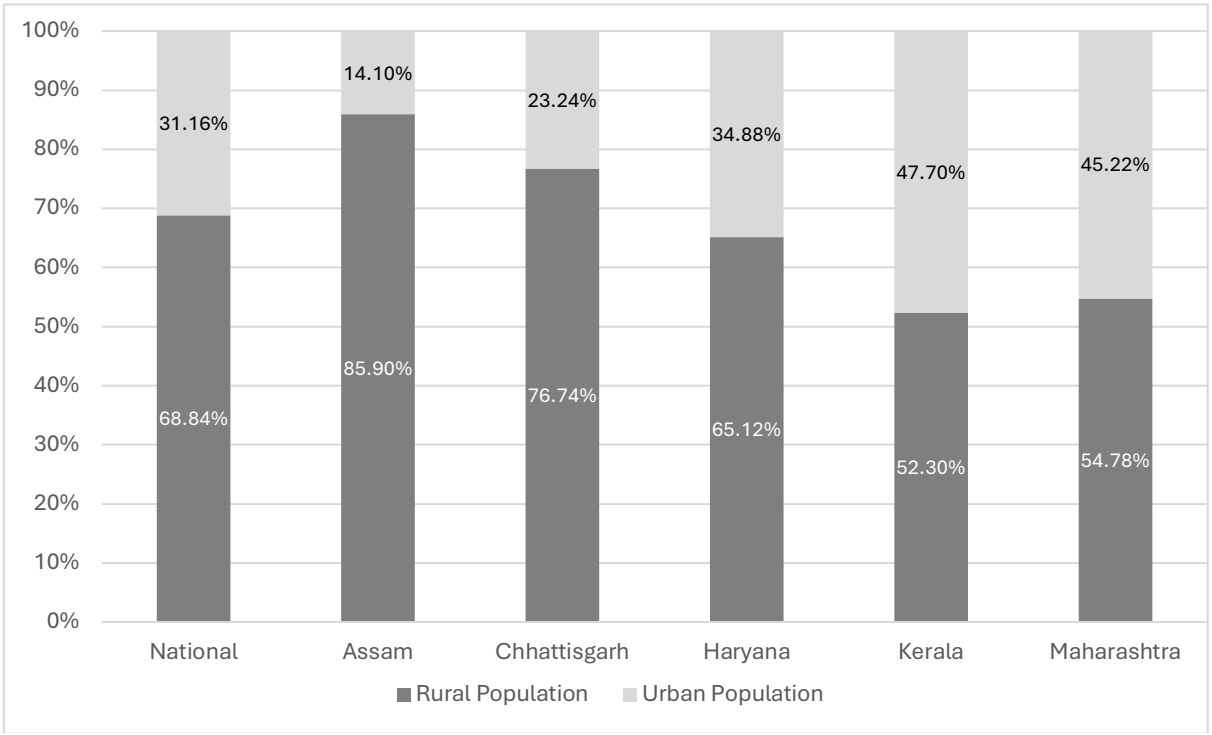
All the states represented in this study had more people living in rural than in urban areas. This aligns broadly with the national picture. The share of the rural population was the largest in Assam, followed by Chhattisgarh, Haryana, Maharashtra and Kerala (Table I.2.5 and Figure I.2.3). Assam and Chhattisgarh were the only two states where the proportion of the rural population was higher than the national average of 68.84%.

Table I.2.5: Rural-Urban Population in 2011

State	Rural Population	Urban Population
National	68.84%	31.16%
Assam	85.90%	14.10%
Chhattisgarh	76.74%	23.24%
Haryana	65.12%	34.88%
Kerala	52.30%	47.70%
Maharashtra	54.78%	45.22%

Source: Census (2011)

Figure I.2.3: Rural and Urban Population in 2011



Source: Census (2011)

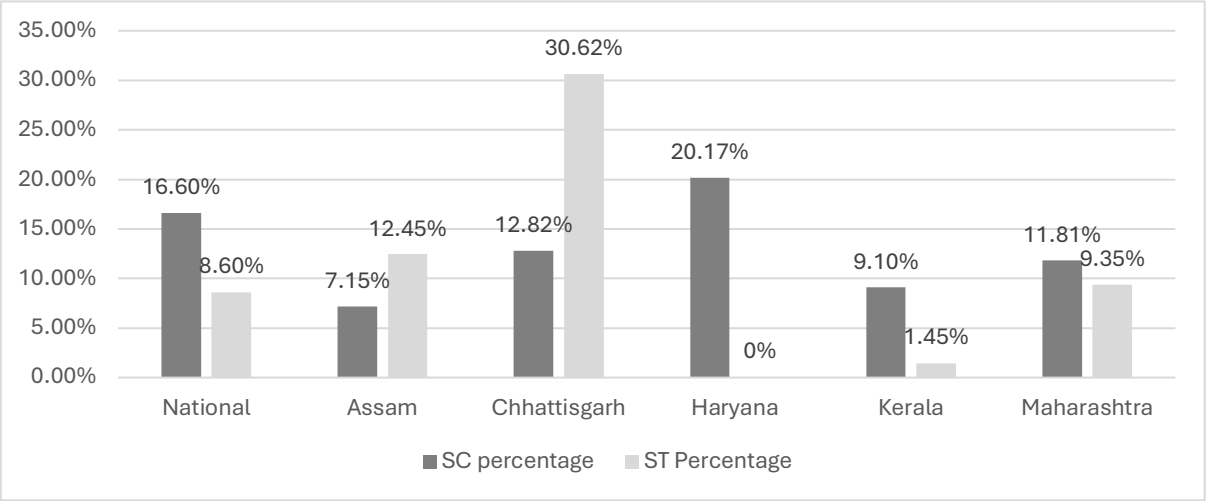
The proportion of the population comprised of Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST) shows notable variation across states compared to national averages of 16.6% and 8.6% respectively (Table I.2.6, Figure I.2.4). Haryana has the highest proportion of SC population among the listed states at just over 20%, but reports no ST population, while Chhattisgarh stands out for its very large ST share at over 30%, far exceeding the national figure. Assam and Maharashtra have more balanced distributions, with moderate SC and ST proportions, whereas Kerala records relatively low percentages for both groups.

Table I.2.6: Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in 2011

State	SC percentage	ST Percentage
National	16.60%	8.60%
Assam	7.15%	12.45%
Chhattisgarh	12.82%	30.62%
Haryana	20.17%	0%
Kerala	9.10%	1.45%
Maharashtra	11.81%	9.35%

Source: Census (2011)

Figure I.2.4: Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Nationally and in Case Study States



Source: Census (2011)

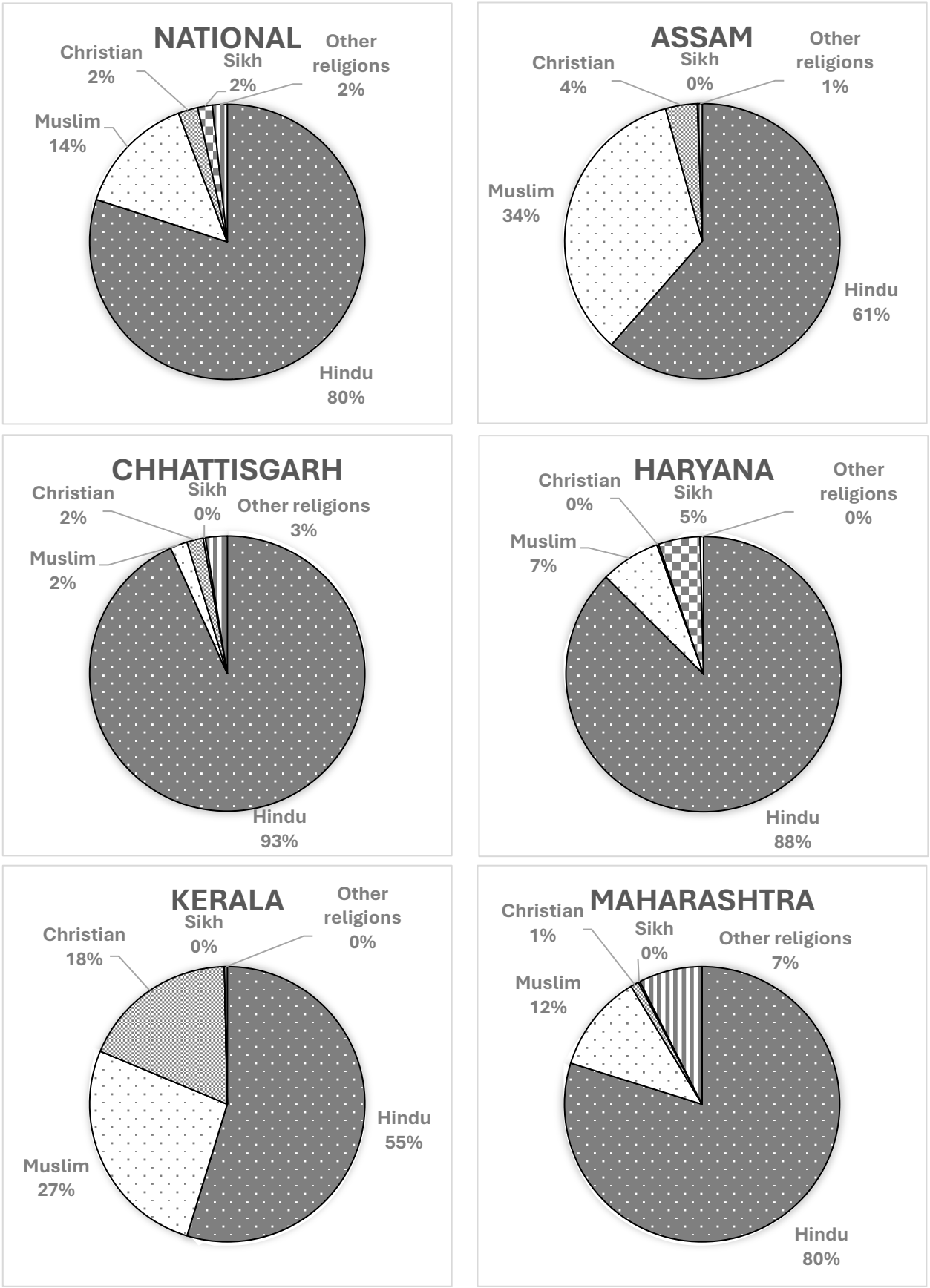
In terms of religion, nationally, Hindus form the majority at nearly 80%, followed by Muslims at just over 14%, with Christians, Sikhs, and other religions making up smaller shares (Table I.2.7, Figure I.2.5). This broad pattern is reflected in states like Chhattisgarh and Haryana, where Hindu populations dominate, though Haryana also has a notable Sikh minority. In contrast, Assam and Kerala display more religious diversity: Assam has a large Muslim population at over one-third and Kerala has a mix of Hindus, Muslims, and Christians. Maharashtra broadly mirrors the national distribution of religious diversity in its population.

Table I.2.7: Religious Composition in 2011

State	Hindu	Muslim	Christian	Sikh	Other religion
National	79.80%	14.23%	2.30%	1.72%	1.73%
Assam	61.47%	34.22%	3.74%	0.07%	0.50%
Chhattisgarh	93.25%	2.02%	1.92%	0.27%	2.54%
Haryana	87.46%	7.03%	0.20%	4.91%	0.40%
Kerala	54.73%	26.56%	18.38%	0.01%	0.32%
Maharashtra	79.83%	11.54%	0.96%	0.20%	7.47%

Source: Census (2011)

Figure I.2.5: Religious Composition of Population Nationally and in Case Study States



Source: Census (2011)

Of further relevance is consideration of the Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) of India, which considers deprivations in health, education, and living standards generally at both national and state level (see National Institution for Transforming India (NITI) Aayog, 2021). MPI considers the headcount ratio of population experiencing poverty across different areas alongside the calculated intensity of poverty to provide the MPI number.

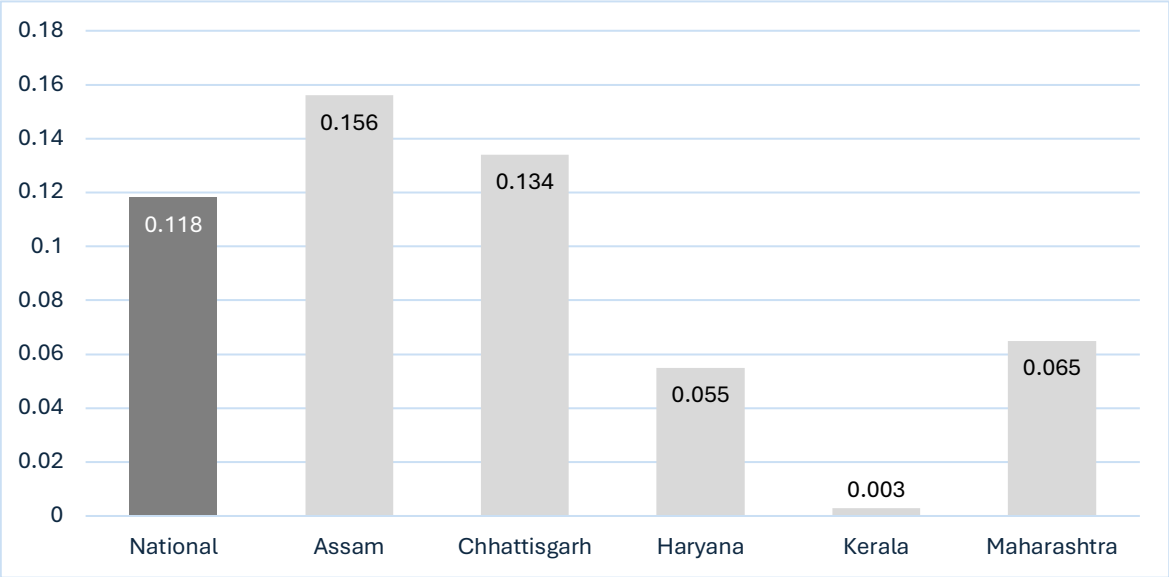
In India overall, the MPI was calculated as 0.118, based on a headcount ratio of around 25% and an intensity of around 47%. Of the represented states, Assam records the highest proportion of population living in multidimensionally poor households and highest intensity rate, bringing their MPI to 0.156. This is followed by Chhattisgarh, where headcount ratio is above the national average, but intensity is slightly lower. Kerala records lower levels of multidimensional poverty along with Haryana and Maharashtra with lower than the national average levels.

Table I.2.8: Multidimensional Poverty Rate

State	MPI	Headcount Ratio	Intensity
National	0.118	25.01%	47.13%
Assam	0.156	32.67%	47.89%
Chhattisgarh	0.134	29.91%	44.64%
Haryana	0.055	12.28%	44.40%
Kerala	0.003	0.71%	39.02%
Maharashtra	0.065	14.85%	43.78%

Source: NITI Aayog, 2021

Figure I.2.6: Multidimensional Poverty Rate



Source: NITI Aayog, 2021

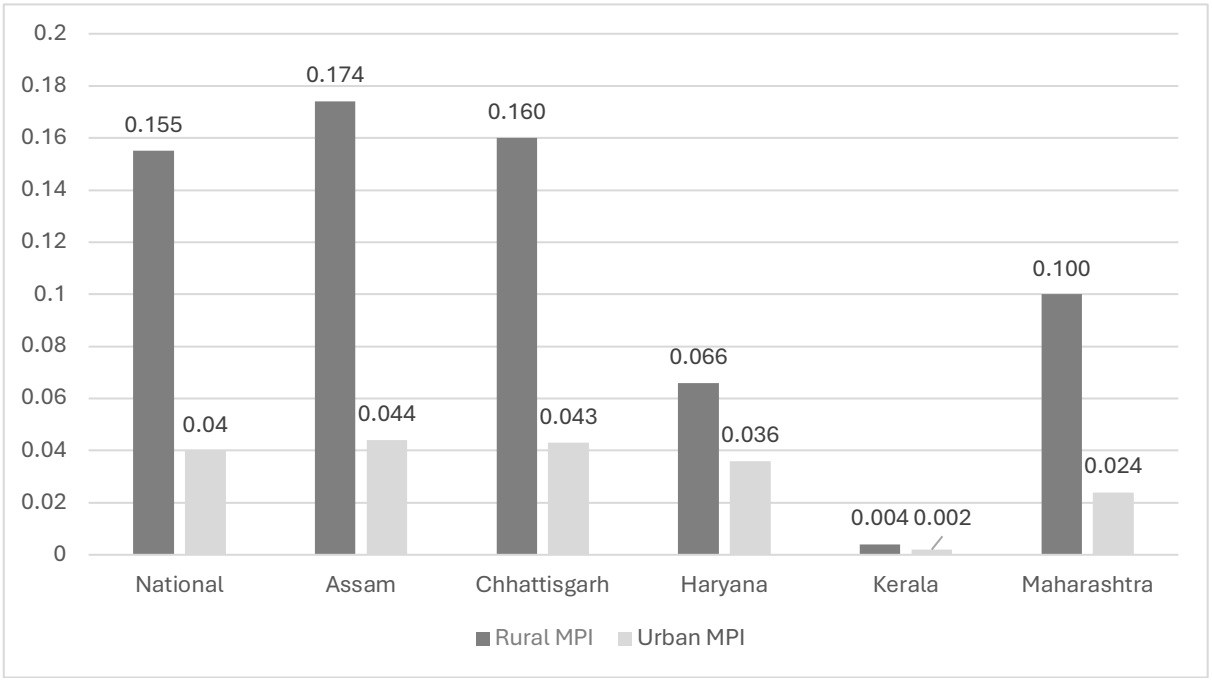
The table below compares the poverty rates between rural and urban areas within the represented states (Table I.2.9, Figure I.2.7). The proportion of the rural population living in poverty is higher in all states than the proportion of the urban population living in poverty, though the extent of the difference varies between states (Table I.2.9).

Table I.2.9: Rural and Urban MPI Nationally and in Case Study States

State	Rural MPI	Headcount Ratio	Intensity	Urban MPI	Headcount Ratio	Intensity
National	0.155	32.75%	47.38%	0.040	8.81%	45.25%
Assam	0.174	36.16%	48.07%	0.044	9.97%	43.63%
Chhattisgarh	0.160	35.73%	44.83%	0.043	10.20%	42.41%
Haryana	0.066	14.86%	44.38%	0.036	8.16%	44.48%
Kerala	0.004	0.95%	39.81%	0.002	0.43%	37.06%
Maharashtra	0.100	22.83%	43.99%	0.024	5.55%	42.76%

Source: NITI Aayog, 2021

Figure I.2.7: Rural and Urban Poverty Rates



Source: NITI Aayog, 2021

2.1.2 Summary

The data shows a considerable variation in terms of population size and demographic distribution across the selected states. Maharashtra accounts for a larger share than the other states considered. While all states broadly reflect only a slight male majority at the national level—except Kerala, which has more women than men—Haryana has a gender imbalance in favour of men. These variations highlight the diversity of demographic contexts across the states under study.

Social composition also varies widely: while SC and ST populations form significant social groups nationally, Chhattisgarh has a particularly high ST share and Haryana a high SC proportion, whereas Kerala has relatively low levels of both. Religious distribution is similarly diverse, with religious diversity seen across states under study. In terms of settlement patterns, the rural pattern of settlement is dominant, though states like Kerala and Maharashtra are far more urbanised compared to Assam and Chhattisgarh, which remain largely rural. These spatial and social differences are closely linked to living standards, as reflected in poverty rates—lower in Kerala and relatively low in Haryana and Maharashtra, but significantly higher in Assam and

Chhattisgarh. Together, these patterns underscore the diverse developmental contexts across the states included in the study.

2.2 Profile of States and the National Picture in terms of HE and Equity

This section provides an overview of the current picture of HE access and equity in the selected states. It includes information on two aspects of access and equity: (i) the availability of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in the states and (ii) enrolment figures. The following section outlines the state of the HE environment in India primarily relying on data provided in AISHE (MoE, 2021) unless otherwise stated. AISHE was carried out by the Ministry of Education and captured data across the country for the academic period 2021-2022.

2.2.1 HE Across the States and National Picture

This section outlines the HE picture nationally and with a focus on the case study states of Assam, Chhattisgarh, Haryana, Kerala, and Maharashtra.

First, the national picture according to the data is presented, including an overview of how many different institutions were recorded, types of institutions, growth in the sector, and a general picture of enrolment. This is followed by discussion focussing primarily on the case study states, although national numbers are used as points of comparison. First, the number of institutions in the states is presented, followed by the relative number and distribution of colleges in the states of study. Growth over the past five years is highlighted, demonstrating varying levels of development. Discussion then moves to consideration of the funding mechanisms and types of institution found in the states of study. Enrolment, especially undergraduate enrolment, is then presented across various forms of data, both generally and with specific references to college enrolment levels.

2.2.1.1 Number of Institutions

According to AISHE (MoE, 2021), there was a total of 1,168 Universities / University-Level Institutions, 45,473 colleges, and 12,002 Stand-alone Institutions in India. This gives a total of 58,643 HEIs across the country. Of these, 1,162 universities, 42,825 colleges, and 10,576 stand-alone institutions responded to the AISHE survey.

Over the last five years of the survey, all case study states have seen an increase in numbers of universities within their regions (Table I.2.10).

Table I.2.10: Number of Universities During Last 5 Years

State	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022	% Growth
Assam	21	22	26	28	30	42.86%
Chhattisgarh	24	28	28	32	34	41.67%
Haryana	40	48	53	56	56	40.00%
Kerala	22	23	23	23	25	13.64%
Maharashtra	54	62	65	71	74	37.04%

Source: AISHE (2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022)

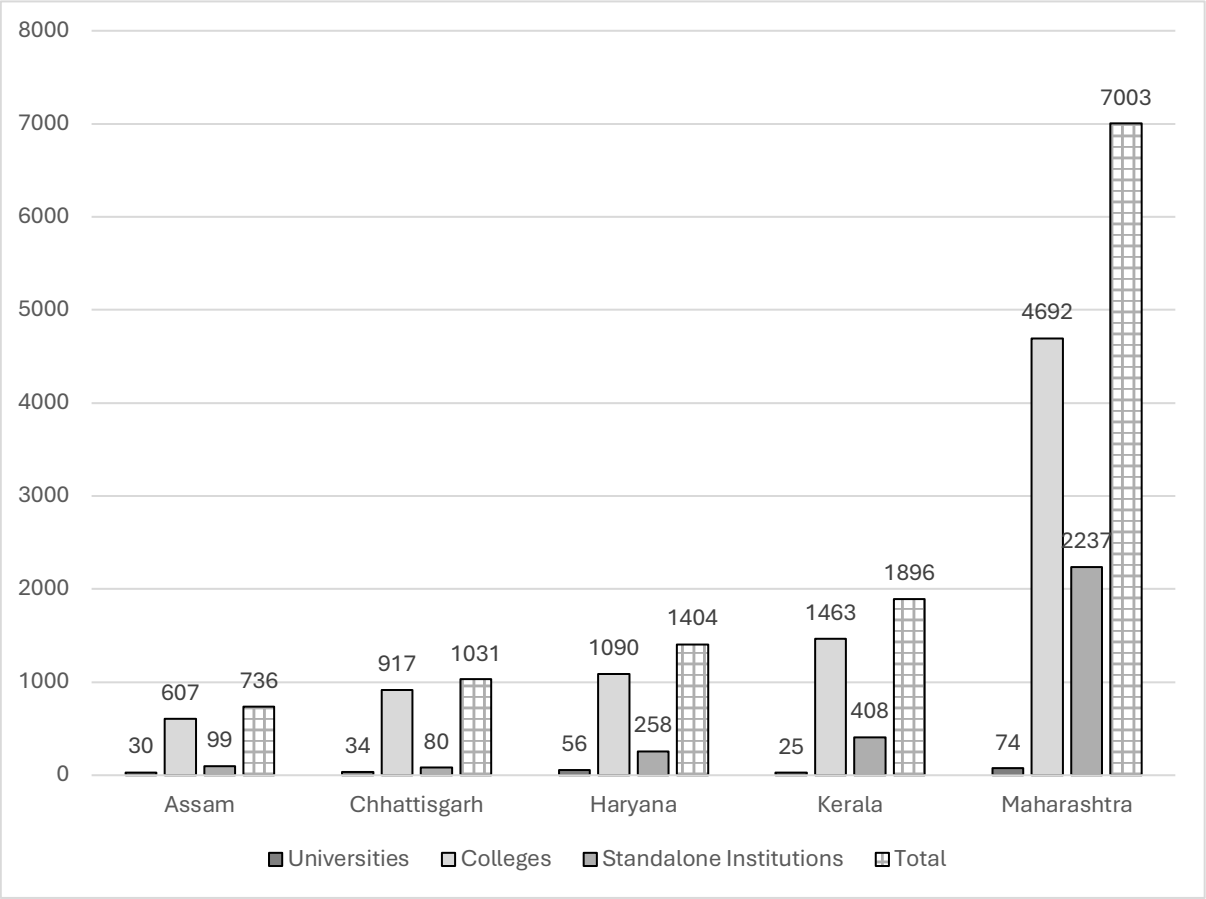
Within the 58,643 total HEIs registered with AISHE in India for 2021-2022 (Table I.2.11, Figure I.2.8), 7,003 (11.94%) were in Maharashtra, 1,896 (3.23%) in Kerala, 1,404 (2.39%) in Haryana, 1,031 (1.76%) in Chhattisgarh, and 736 (1.26%) in Assam. In line with national data, for all case study states, the majority of HEI types were colleges, followed by stand-alone institutions. The state with the highest number of HE institutions was Maharashtra, which is unsurprising, since the population of 18-23 year olds in the state, at almost 13 million, is over three times that of Assam, the state in the sample with second highest population of 18-23 year-olds (about 4 million).

Table I.2.11: Number and Types of Institutions

State	Universities	Colleges	Stand-alone Institutions	Total
National	1,168	45,473	12,002	58,643
Assam	30	607	99	736
Chhattisgarh	34	917	80	1,031
Haryana	56	1,090	258	1,404
Kerala	25	1,463	408	1,896
Maharashtra	74	4,692	2,237	7,003

Source: AISHE 2021

Figure I.2.8: Numbers of Institutions in Case Study States



Source: AISHE 2021

2.2.1.2 Density and Distribution of HE Provision

Considering the varying population sizes, it is helpful to look at the ratio of HEIs to the population to get a more accurate idea of the concentration and distribution of HEIs in the participating states.

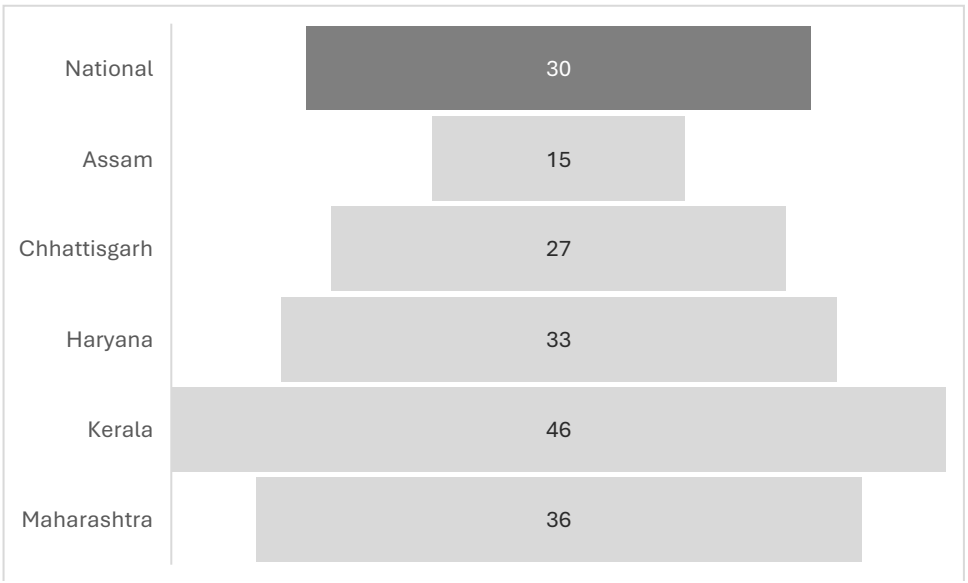
Within this picture (Table I.2.12, Figure I.2.9), two states were below the national average in terms of number of colleges for the population of 18-23 year olds, with Assam having 50% of the average number of colleges per population, and Chhattisgarh just falling below the national average. Whereas the other three states were above average, with Haryana and Maharashtra having slightly above average numbers of colleges, and Kerala having around 50% more.

Table I.2.12: Number of College per 100,000 Population (18-23 years)

State	No. College per 100,000 Population
National	30
Assam	15
Chhattisgarh	27
Haryana	33
Kerala	46
Maharashtra	36

Source: AISHE, 2021

Figure I.2.9: Number of College per 100,000 Population (18-23 years)



Source: AISHE, 2021

There has also been an increase in number of colleges per 100,000 population during the last five years. The increase in number of colleges per 100,000 population might be explained with the age progression of the population (Table I.2.13).

Table I.2.13: Colleges per 100,000 Population During Last 5 Years

State	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022	% Growth
National	28	28	30	31	30	7.14%
Assam	14	15	15	16	15	7.14%
Chhattisgarh	24	24	26	27	27	12.50%
Haryana	30	33	34	34	33	10.00%
Kerala	44	45	48	50	46	4.55%
Maharashtra	33	33	34	34	36	9.09%

Source: AISHE, 2021

Within each state, colleges were distributed across districts in varying ways (Table I.2.14, Table I.2.15, Figure I.2.10). In Assam and Chhattisgarh, the vast majority of districts had fewer than 50 colleges. In Haryana, just over 50% of districts had fewer than 50 colleges, with the remainder having between 50 and 99 colleges. In Kerala, all but one districts had between 50 and 199 colleges. Maharashtra also had the majority of districts with 50 to 199 colleges, with 3 districts having less and 7 having more, with one district having between 400 and 499 colleges.

Table I.2.14: State-wise Distribution of Colleges Across Districts (Number)

State	No. Districts with <10 Colleges	No. Districts with 10-19 Colleges	No. Districts with 20-49 Colleges	No. Districts with 50-99 Colleges	No. Districts with 100-199 Colleges	No. Districts with 200-299 Colleges	No. Districts with 300-399 Colleges	No. Districts with 400-499 Colleges	No. Districts with 500-999 Colleges	No. Districts with >1000 Colleges	Total No. Districts
National	139	97	189	142	108	29	7	2	1	1	715
Assam	7	12	11	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	31
Chhattisgarh	5	8	8	3	3	-	-	-	-	-	27
Haryana	1	1	10	10	-	-	-	-	-	-	22
Kerala	-	-	1	6	7	-	-	-	-	-	14
Maharashtra	-	-	3	12	14	5	1	1	-	-	36

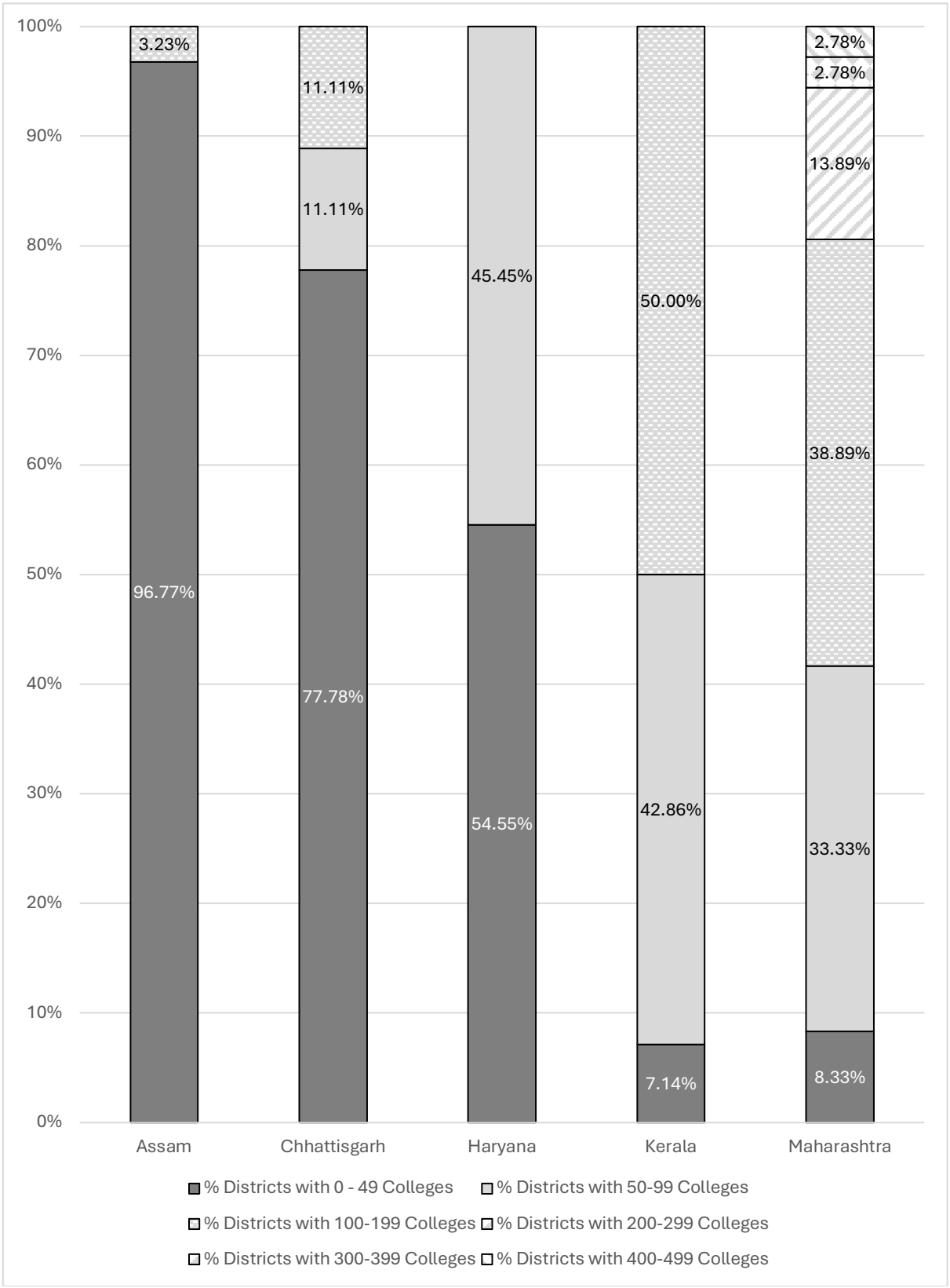
Source: AISHE, 2021

Table I.2.15: State-wise Distribution of Colleges Across Districts (Percentage)

State	% Districts with <10 Colleges	% Districts with 10-19 Colleges	% Districts with 20-49 Colleges	% Districts with 50-99 Colleges	% Districts with 100-199 Colleges	% Districts with 200-299 Colleges	% Districts with 300-399 Colleges	% Districts with 400-499 Colleges	% Districts with 500-999 Colleges	% Districts with >1000 Colleges
National	19.44%	13.57%	26.43%	19.86%	15.10%	4.06%	0.98%	0.28%	0.14%	0.14%
Assam	22.58%	38.71%	35.48%	0.00%	3.23%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Chhattisgarh	18.52%	29.63%	29.63%	11.11%	11.11%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Haryana	4.55%	4.55%	45.45%	45.45%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Kerala	0.00%	0.00%	7.14%	42.86%	50.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Maharashtra	0.00%	0.00%	8.33%	33.33%	38.89%	13.89%	2.78%	2.78%	0.00%	0.00%

Source: AISHE, 2021

Figure I.2.10: Distribution of Colleges Across Case Study States Districts (%)



Source: AISHE, 2021

2.2.1.3 Institution Type and Management

Out of the 1,168 registered universities, 58.6% are government-managed (35% / 240 total are central government, 65% / 445 total are state government), 0.9% (10 universities) are private deemed (aided), and 40.5% are private (unaided). Out of the 42,824 colleges surveyed by AISHE, 21.5% are government colleges, 13.2% are private (aided), and 65.3% are private (unaided).

Public-funded universities (constituting 58.6% of total universities) contribute 73.7% of total enrolment, with private universities accounting for 26.3% of total enrolment. Government colleges (constituting 21.5% of total colleges) contribute 34.8% of total enrolment. Private (aided) colleges (constituting 13.3% of total colleges) account for 20.6% of enrolment. Private (unaided) colleges (constituting 65.2% of total colleges) account for only 44.6% of total enrolment.

Within all case study states, the majority of universities were state public universities or state private universities.

The types of colleges were more varied (Table I.2.16, Figure I.2.11), with Assam having more government colleges than private, while Haryana, Kerala, and Maharashtra had more private colleges. Chhattisgarh had slightly more private than government colleges, but this was a difference of only 51 institutions. Assam stands out amongst the participating states for the predominance of government-funded colleges: private aided and unaided colleges constitute less than 20% of all colleges in Assam. Within the private college sector, unaided colleges were more prominent than aided colleges in all states.

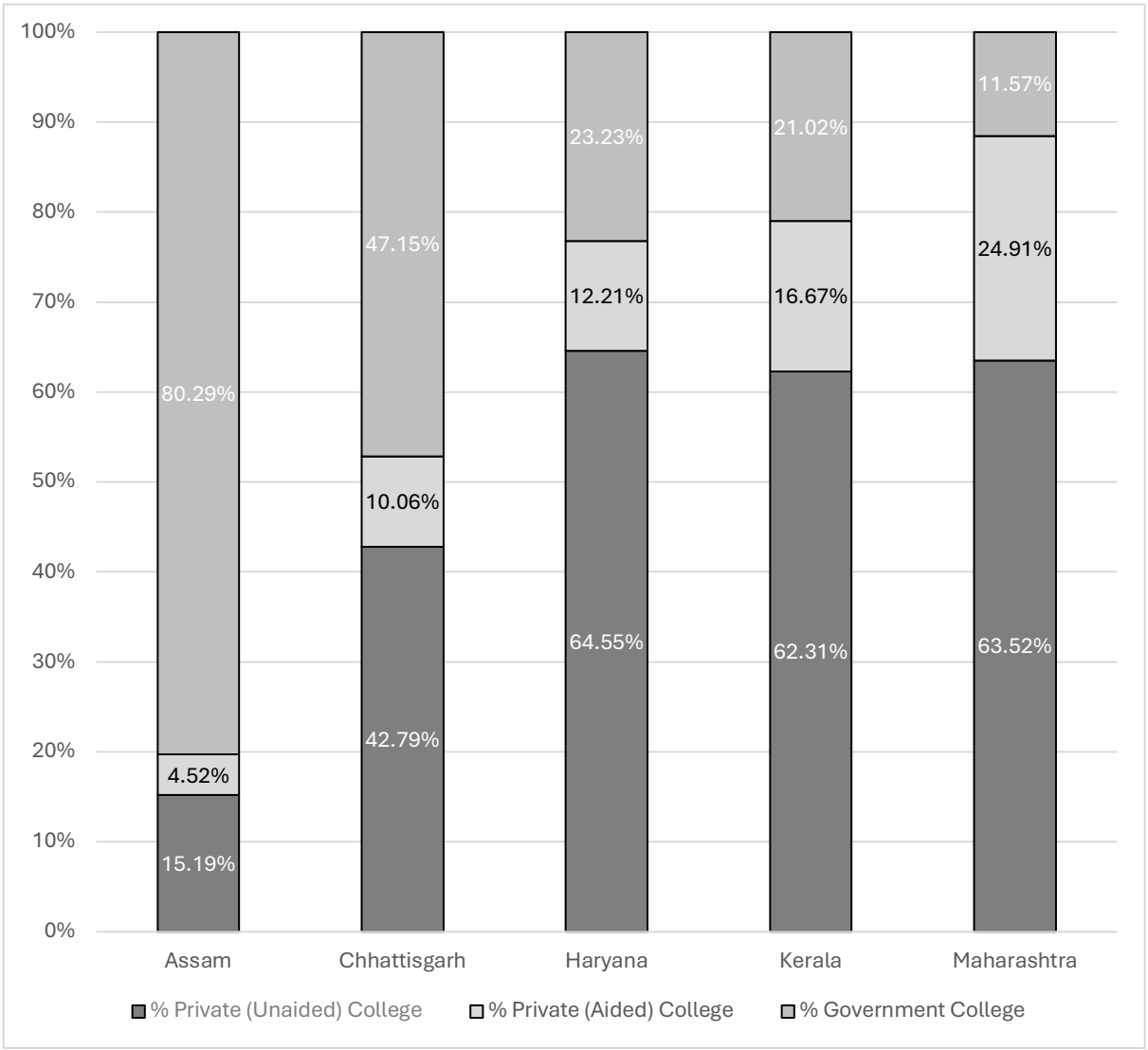
Table I.2.16: State-wise Number of HEIs as per Type of College

State	Private (Unaided) College	Private (Aided) College	Private Total	Government	Overall Total
Assam	84	25	**109**	444	**553**
Chhattisgarh	383	90	**473**	422	**895**
Haryana	703	133	**836**	253	**1089**
Kerala	830	222	**1052**	280	**1332**
Maharashtra	2976	1167	**4143**	542	**4685**

Source: AISHE, 2021

Note: Government in the table refers to public funded colleges.

Figure I.2.11: Distribution of Colleges with Case Study States



Source: AISHE, 2021

2.2.1.4 Enrolment

Total enrolment in HE at the national level has increased to nearly 43.3 million in 2021-2022 from 41.4 million in 2020-2021 (increase of 1.88 million, 4.6%), and 34.2 million in 2014-2015 (an increase of 26.5%). Since 2014-2015, enrolment for the age group 18-23 years specifically has grown from a Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) of 23.7 to 28.4 in 2021-2022. The vast majority of these are enrolled in undergraduate level programmes.

In the year 2021-2022, the GER in HE for the age group 18-23 years has increased to 28.4, from 27.3 in 2020-2021, and 23.7 in 2014-2015. About 78.9% of 18-23 year-olds are enrolled in undergraduate level courses, and 21.1% are enrolled in postgraduate level courses. Undergraduate enrolment is significantly higher in Arts (34.2%), with Sciences (14.8%), Commerce (13.3%), and Engineering and Technology (11.8%) following.

Enrolment within all case study states was largely concentrated at undergraduate level (Table I.2.17), ranging between 75% and 89% of the overall enrolment in each state, aligning with the national figure of around 80% of all regular mode enrolment being undergraduate level.

Table I.2.17: State-wise Enrolment through Regular Mode at Undergraduate Level (Including Estimation)

State	Undergraduate	Total	Percentage
National	30,703,223	38,147,087	80.49%
Assam	555,397	624,848	88.89%
Chhattisgarh	483,549	612,277	78.98%
Haryana	685,340	908,993	75.40%
Kerala	789,338	1,015,085	77.76%
Maharashtra	2,993,830	3,877,842	77.20%

Source: AISHE, 2021

For those enrolled on undergraduate programmes in distance mode (i.e. study work is sent via materials to complete at home and occasional in-person presence is required), Assam and Chhattisgarh were over 20% lower than the national percentage of 66.44%, whereas Haryana, Maharashtra, and Kerala were above it at between 71.92% and 77.24% (Table I.2.18).

Table I.2.18: State-wise Enrolment through Distance Mode at Undergraduate Level (Based on Actual Response)

State	Undergraduate	Total	Percentage
National	3,037,954	4,572,509	66.44%
Assam	24,009	53,164	45.16%
Chhattisgarh	19,080	43,982	43.38%
Haryana	116,293	161,689	71.92%
Kerala	208,018	269,321	77.24%
Maharashtra	504,898	694,538	72.70%

Source: AISHE, 2021

Across the case study states, there has been growth in undergraduate enrolment to varying levels (Table I.2.19). Based on the estimated numbers provided, Assam and Maharashtra experienced 4.15% and 5.55% growth respectively from 2017-2018 (although Assam had experienced higher numbers in some of the years in between). At 15.99% and 18.61% respectively, Kerala and Haryana were relatively in line with the national growth of 17.66%. Of note, Chhattisgarh had experienced over 30% of undergraduate enrolment growth in the five-year period.

Table I.2.19: State-wise Growth in Enrolment at Undergraduate Level

State	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022	% Growth
National	29,016,350	29,829,075	30,647,287	32,657,509	34,139,233	17.66%
Assam	556,344	596,119	547,993	602,711	579,406	4.15%
Chhattisgarh	384,523	406,296	415,381	475,143	502,629	30.71%
Haryana	693,505	722,439	722,650	781,693	822,563	18.61%
Kerala	876,233	881,307	902,557	1,087,978	1,016,386	15.99%
Maharashtra	3,314,911	3,351,689	3,392,975	3,493,976	3,498,728	5.55%

Source: AISHE, 2021

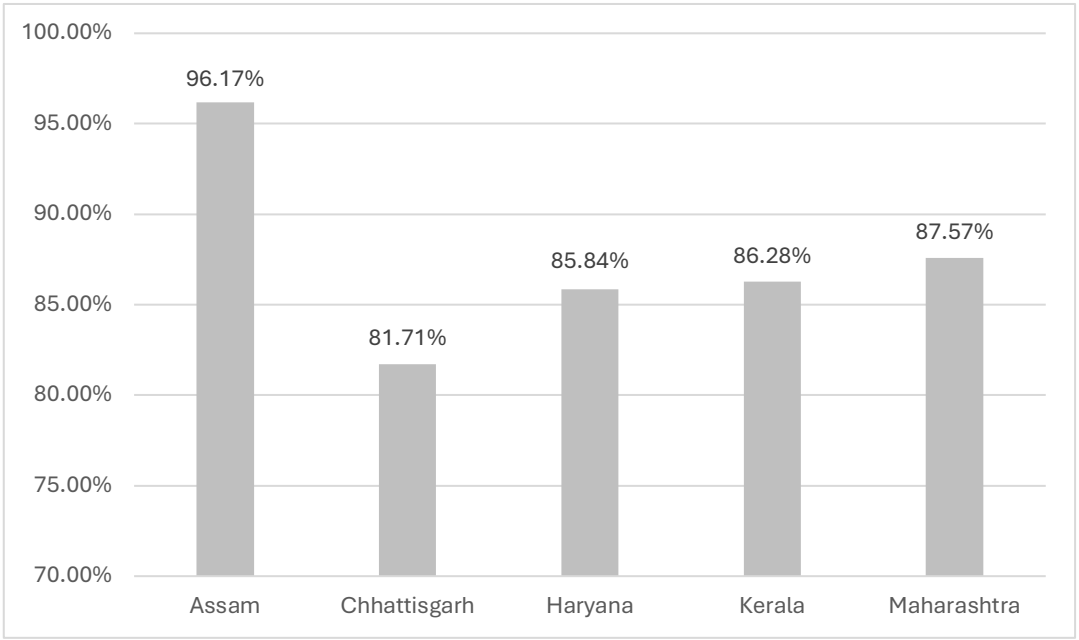
Within all case study states, the vast majority of students enrolled at colleges were enrolled at the undergraduate level (Table I.2.20, Figure I.2.12).

Table I.2.20: State-wise Enrolment Proportion at Undergraduate Level

State	Total Undergraduate Enrolment	Total Enrolment	% Enrolment at Undergraduate Level
Assam	481,680	500,874	96.17%
Chhattisgarh	443,053	542,243	81.71%
Haryana	573,981	668,674	85.84%
Kerala	682,158	790,660	86.28%
Maharashtra	2,808,284	3,206,919	87.57%

Source: AISHE, 2021

Figure I.2.12: State-wise Enrolment Proportion at Undergraduate Level



Source: AISHE, 2021

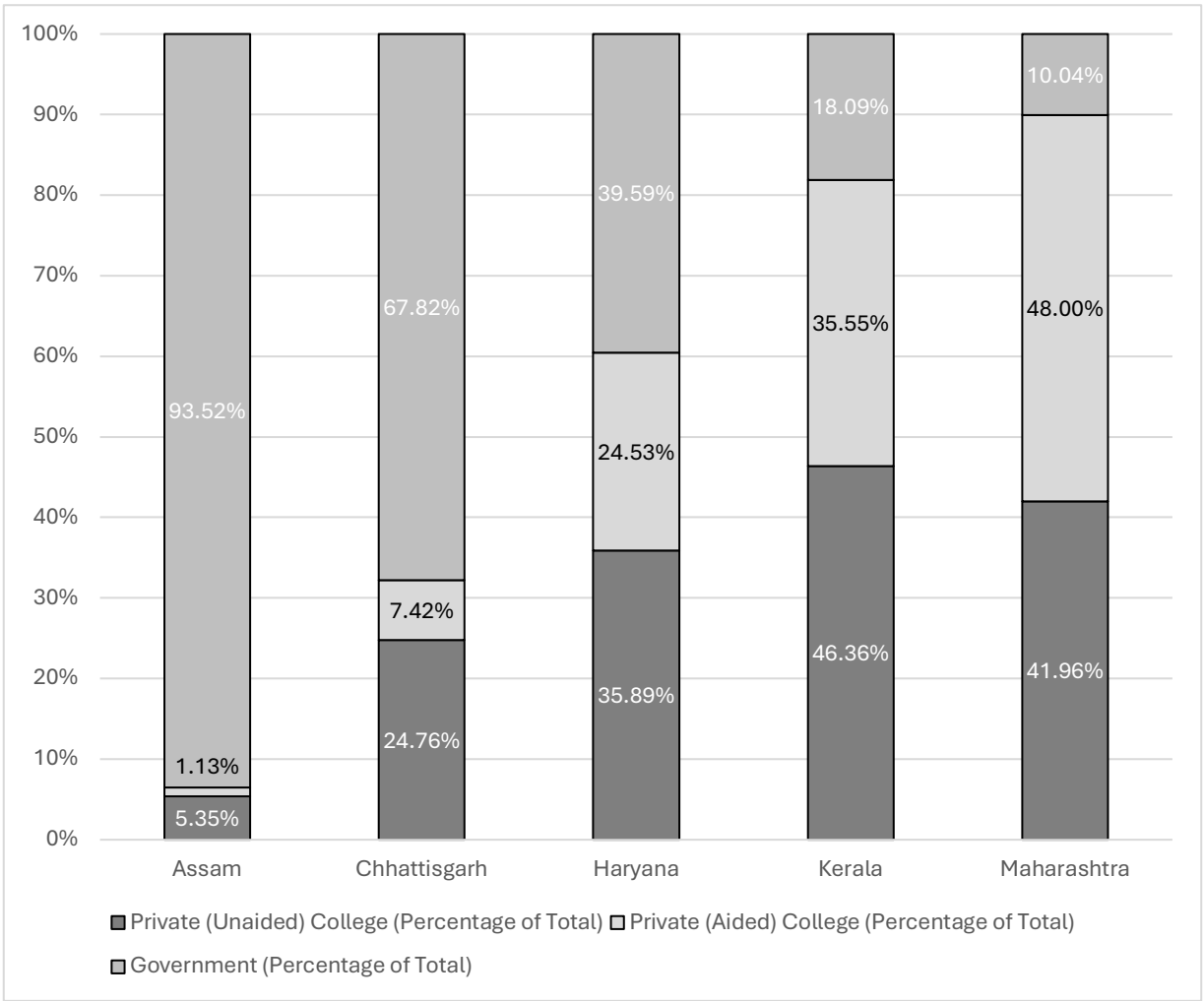
In terms of enrolment numbers across private colleges and government colleges (Table I.2.21, Figure I.2.13), Assam and Chhattisgarh had a majority of students enrolled into government colleges, whereas Haryana, Kerala and Maharashtra had a majority of students enrolled into private colleges.

Table I.2.21: State-wise Enrolments in Private and Government Colleges

State	Private (Unaided) College	Private (Unaided) College (Percentage of Private)	Private (Aided) College	Private (Aided) College (Percentage of Private)	Private Total	Private Total (Percentage of Total)	Government	Government (Percentage of Total)	Overall Total
Assam	26792	82.60%	5644	17.40%	**32436**	6.48%	468438	93.52%	**500874**
Chhattisgarh	134239	76.94%	40240	23.06%	**174479**	32.18%	367764	67.82%	**542243**
Haryana	239968	59.40%	164011	40.60%	**403979**	60.41%	264695	39.59%	**668674**
Kerala	366522	56.60%	281085	43.40%	**647607**	81.91%	143053	18.09%	**790660**
Maharashtra	1345493	46.64%	1539294	53.36%	**2884787**	89.96%	322132	10.04%	**3206919**

Source: AISHE, 2021

Figure I.2.13: State-wise Enrolments in Private and Government Colleges



Source: AISHE, 2021

Over the past five years, the percentage of growth in average enrolment numbers in government colleges has varied across the regions but, with the exception of Assam, there has been a consistent increase. Further, the percentage of growth in enrolment in colleges during the last five years has been varied across the case study states. Chhattisgarh has the highest percentage of 10.18% of college enrolment, followed by Kerala with a growth of 7.22%, and in Assam there has been a significant decrease in college enrolment numbers during the last five years (-7.83%). In Haryana (0.49%) and Maharashtra (1.03%), there has been slight increase in the college enrolment numbers.

Table I.2.22: Average Enrolment per College Over the Last 5 Years

State	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022	% Growth
National	698	693	680	646	709	1.58%
Assam	983	971	870	795	906	-7.83%
Chhattisgarh	550	565	557	546	606	10.18%
Haryana	611	610	590	584	614	0.49%
Kerala	554	568	575	531	594	7.22%
Maharashtra	678	681	670	672	685	1.03%

Source: AISHE, 2021

2.2.1.5 Summary

Growth in the number of universities at national level during the last five years reflects variedly across the five case study states. Assam had the highest growth percentage of universities and Kerala had the lowest. Within all case study states, a majority of universities were state public universities or state private universities.

Amongst all case study states, Maharashtra had the highest number of HEIs, with the highest number of colleges across different districts of the state. This broadly reflects the large population of 18-23 years old in the state. Kerala featured at the top as far as density of colleges available per 100,000 students' population is concerned. All case study states had varied types of colleges ranging from private unaided colleges, private (aided) colleges, to government colleges. Across the case study states, there were more private colleges, except in Assam, where government colleges exceeded in number than private colleges.

Overall, all case study states reflected significant enrolment at undergraduate level through both regular mode and distance mode. Enrolment at undergraduate level through regular mode was significantly more than enrolment through distance mode. Assam's enrolment through regular mode exceeded the national average, whereas Kerala exceeded the national average in enrolment through distance mode at the undergraduate level. All five case study states had a growth in enrolment at undergraduate level, with Chhattisgarh far exceeding the national average. As far as enrolment of students at varied type of HEIs is concerned, a majority of undergraduate students were enrolled in colleges across the case study states. However, enrolment in various types of colleges was varied across case study states, where within some states such as Assam and Chhattisgarh students' enrolment at government colleges was higher than enrolment at private colleges. In the last five years, there has been a slight increase in the percentage of enrolment at colleges at the national level. However, this varied across the case study states, where Chhattisgarh had the highest college enrolment percentage (10.18%) and in Assam there was a significant decrease in enrolment numbers at college level.

2.2.2 HE and Equity Across the States and National Picture

This section provides a snapshot of HE access and equity along the lines of gender, social groups, and disability in student composition at the undergraduate level. Based on the AISHE data set, the following section presents contemporary scenario of HE enrolment in terms of student representation at the national level and case study states.

2.2.2.1 Gender

Seventeen universities (1.5%) are exclusively for women, and 4,470 colleges (10.4%) reported being exclusively for women. This aligns with the enrolment in HE women's increase of 20.7 million (32%) since 2014-2015.

In terms of GER for age group 18-23 years, women's GER has increased to 28.5 in 2021-2022 (from 27.9 in 2020-2021, and 22.9 in 2014-2015). According to AISHE 2021-2022, this is the fifth consecutive year where women's GER has been more than men's GER.

The Gender Parity Index (GPI) in all case study states except Maharashtra was higher than 1 across social groups, which means that there were more women than men enrolled in HE in

each of the case study states. Notably, the GPI in the four states of Assam, Chhattisgarh, Haryana and Kerala was also higher than the Indian average for all social groups (Table I.2.23).

Table I.2.23: State-wise Gender Parity Index

GPI			
	General	***SC***	***ST***
Assam	1.09	1.07	1.04
Chhattisgarh	1.23	1.14	1.42
Haryana	1.22	1.21	-
Kerala	1.44	1.80	1.41
Maharashtra	0.90	0.93	0.78
National	1.01	1.01	0.98

Source: AISHE, 2021

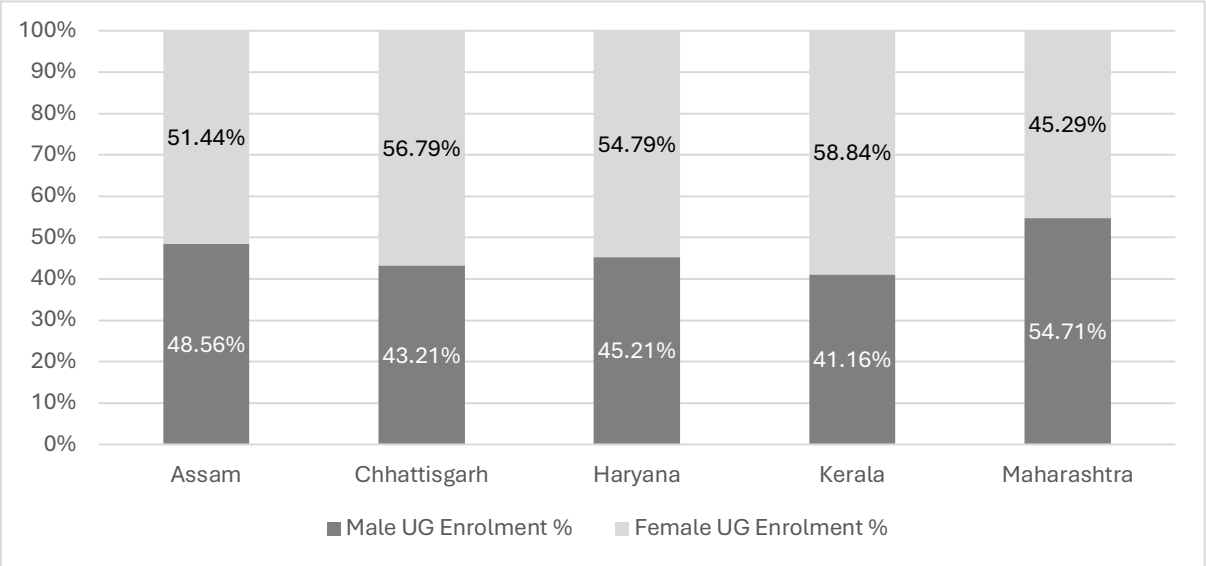
Gender parity is also evident in the enrolment numbers at undergraduate level (Table I.2.24, Figure I.2.14). Overall women outnumber men in Assam, Chhattisgarh, Haryana, and Kerala in enrolment at undergraduate level. In Maharashtra, the representation of women in undergraduate level is slightly lower than that of men.

Table I.2.24: State-wise Enrolment as per Gender at Undergraduate Level

State	Male Undergraduate Enrolment	Male Undergraduate Enrolment %	Female Undergraduate Enrolment	Female Undergraduate %	Total Undergraduate Enrolment
Assam	233,924	48.56%	247,756	51.44%	481,680
Chhattisgarh	191,429	43.21%	251,624	56.79%	443,053
Haryana	259,503	45.21%	314,478	54.79%	573,981
Kerala	280,805	41.16%	401,353	58.84%	682,158
Maharashtra	1,536,337	54.71%	1,272,047	45.29%	2,808,384

Source: AISHE, 2021

Figure I.2.14: State-wise Enrolment as per Gender at Undergraduate Level



Source: AISHE, 2021

2.2.2.2. Social Groups and Disability

Of the 43.3 million students enrolled, 15.3% belonged to SC, 6.3% belonged to ST, 37.8% were from Other Backward Classes (OBC), and the remaining 40.6% were from other groups.

Enrolment of SC students at undergraduate level has increased to 2.7 million in 2021-2022, from 2.41 million in 2020-2021 (Table I.2.25, Figure I.2.15). The overall increase in SC enrolment since 2014-2015 is 44%. Within this, there has been an overall increase since 2014-2015 of 51% of SC Female students (3.17 million in 2021-2022, 2.90 million in 2020-2021).

Enrolment of ST students at undergraduate level has increased to 6.62 million in 2021-2022, from 5.89 million in 2020-2021 (Table I.2.25, Figure I.2.15). The overall increase in ST enrolment since 2014-2015 is 65.2%. Within this, there has been an overall increase since 2014-2015 of 80% of ST Female students (1.34 million in 2021-2022, 1.22 million in 2020-2021).

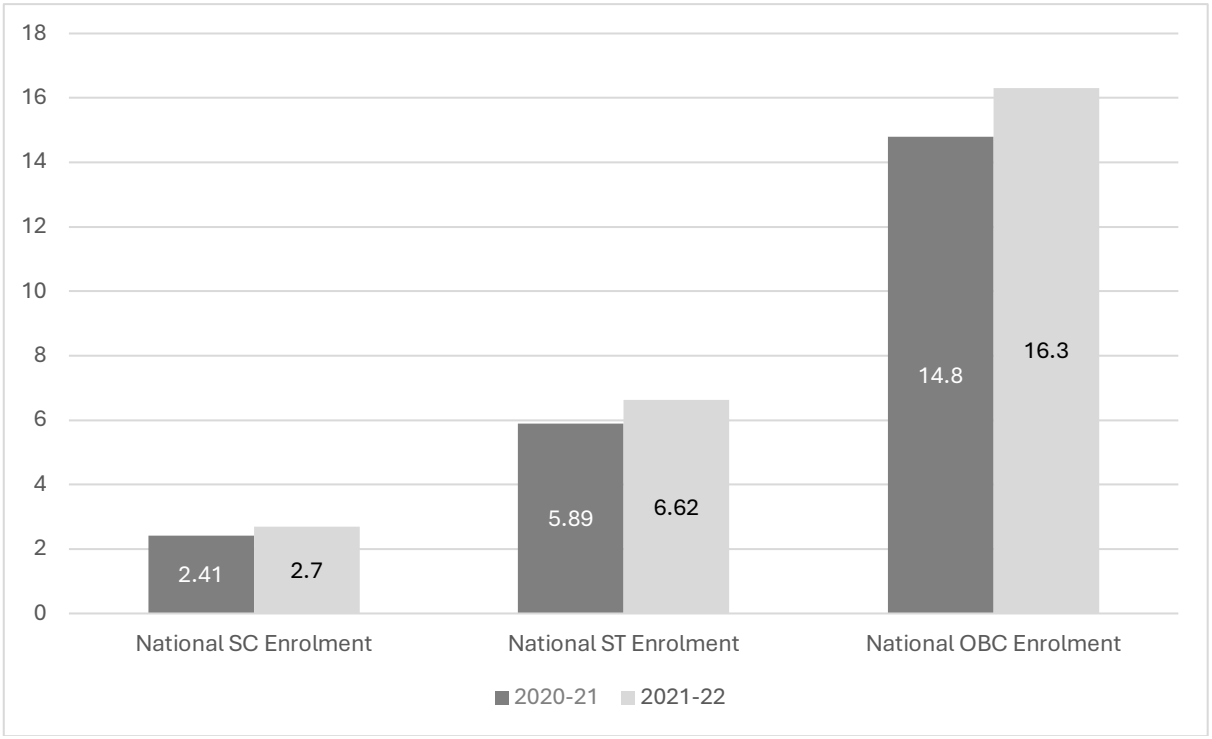
Enrolment of OBC students at undergraduate level has increased to 16.3 million in 2021-2022, from 14.8 million in 2020-2021 (Table I.2.25, Figure I.2.15). The overall increase in OBC enrolment since 2014-2015 is 45%. Within this, there has been an overall increase since 2014-2015 of 49.3% of OBC Female students (7.81 million in 2021-2022, 7.28 million in 2020-2021).

Table I.2.25: National SC, ST, and OBC Enrolment

Options	2020-2021 (in million)	2021-2022 (in million)	% Growth
National SC Enrolment	2.41	2.70	12.03%
National ST Enrolment	5.89	6.62	12.39%
National OBC Enrolment	14.80	16.30	10.14%

Source: AISHE, 2021

Figure I.2.15: National Minority Enrolment



Source: AISHE, 2021

Enrolment of Minority (religious) students at undergraduate level has increased to 3.01 million in 2021-2022, from 2.18 million in 2014-2015, an increase of 38%. Within this, there has been an overall increase since 2014-2015 of 42.3% of Minority Female students (1.52 million in 2021-2022, 1.07 million in 2014-2015).

Within the different social groups, SC students GER has increased to 25.9 in 2021-2022, from 23.1 in 2020-2021 and 18.9 in 2014-2015. SC Female GER has increased to 26 in 2021-2022, from 23.9 in 2020-2021 and 18.1 in 2014-2015. ST student GER has increased to 21.2 in 2021-

2022, from 18.9 in 2020-2021 and 13.5 in 2014-2015. ST Female GER has increased to 20.9 in 2021-2022, from 19.1 in 2020-2021 and 12.2 in 2014-2015.

In terms of Person with Disability (PWD) students, 88,748 were reported as enrolled at undergraduate level of HE (51,373 male, 37,375 female). Of the 88,748 reported PWD students, 16,638 (18.75%) were enrolled across the five case study states. The highest numbers were within Maharashtra (8,171 students) and Kerala (5,315 students) respectively (Table I.2.26).

Table I.2.26: State-wise PWD Enrolment at Undergraduate Level

State	Total	Male	Female
Assam	661	429	232
Chhattisgarh	1,210	799	411
Haryana	1,281	798	483
Kerala	5,315	2,843	2,472
Maharashtra	8,171	4,955	3,216

Source: AISHE (2021)

2.2.2.3 Summary

As per the AISHE data, there has been significant and sustained increase in access and equity along the lines of gender, varied social groups and people with disabilities. At the national level, the data set indicates that gender parity has been attained overall and across different social groups except for ST (GPI of 0.98). Representation of women in HE (18-23 years) has also increased in the last five consecutive years at the national level. This reflects in the overall GPI of all case study states except for Maharashtra. The GPI across the social group in four case study states (except Maharashtra) surpasses the national average. A similar trend is evident in the state-wise enrolment regarding gender at the undergraduate level.

There has been an increase in the overall GER of SC and ST students at the national level. This increase in enrolment could also be evidenced in increased enrolment of women students from SC and ST groups. A similar trend is reflected in the enrolment of SC, ST, and OBC groups at the undergraduate level of HE. Further, there has been an increase in the representation of women students from SC, ST, and OBC groups. Enrolment of students from minority religious groups have increased overall with a significant increase in the representation of women students from

those minority groups. A considerable number of PWD students were enrolled for undergraduate level education in the case study states.

2.3 HE Access and Choice Strategies at the State Level

Some of the participating states have adopted initiatives to address informational barriers faced by students from socially and economically disadvantaged backgrounds when making choices about HEI, in addition to providing financial support and reservations. This section will provide a brief overview of the policies of participating states, that are aimed specifically at providing information about HE choices, including the type of support provided and the intended beneficiaries. The section is based on information provided by the respective state research teams for the 'Widening Access to Higher Education in India: Institutional Perspectives' (WAHEI) project.

2.3.1 Examples of Initiatives

Institutional initiatives of HE outreach: In Kerala, *Sasthrayaan* is an initiative led by the University of Calicut and Cochin University of Science and Technology (CUSAT). As a part of this initiative these HEIs organise Open Days for school students and the general public. During this programme, facilities and research outputs of the university are shared with the public with an aim to offer a glance into the HE, research, and innovation. The programme is designed to be interactive and involves exhibition stalls, live demonstrations, and visits to the departments. Further, experts are invited to deliver talks on career guidance.

Programmes aimed at establishing links between schools and HEIs.

a. **Assam:** In 2022-2023 the government of Assam launched a mentorship programme, named *AROHAN*. This mentorship programme connects meritorious government school students of 9th to 12th class with mentors, wherein government officials, teachers, HEI FMs, postgraduate students, professionals, and entrepreneurs mentor select students. As a part of this programme students are offered a chance to visit prestigious HEIs and have provision of availing academic and career guidance.

b. **Chhattisgarh:** *Poshak Vidyalaya Sampark Abhiyan* (Feeder School Outreach Campaign) identifies meritorious students from primary and secondary schools and lays a route to facilitate their pathways to HE. Selected students and their families are offered information related to academic opportunities, scholarships, and suitable support programmes to enable the students to pursue higher and further education.

c. **Haryana:** *Twinning of Schools Programme* promotes collaboration between government schools and private schools, Navodaya Vidyalayas (central schools targeting rural and so-called 'backward' areas), Kendriya Vidyalayas (central schools), ITIs (Industrial Training Unit, i.e. vocational institutions), polytechnics, and HEIs. Through student visits and shared activities, the programme helps students learn about different courses and educational opportunities, experience new learning environments, and share knowledge and resources across institutions (GoH, 2023).

d. **Kerala:** *Additional Skill Acquisition Programme* was launched by the government of Kerala in 2014 to establish links between secondary education, HE, and employment. The programme is aimed at secondary students who opt for non-academic HE pathways.

e. **Maharashtra:** School Connect 2.0 programme prepares students to transition from school education to HE by organising interactive sessions such as workshops, campus tours, industry visits, and invited talks from experts. Further, it offers students of 9th to 12th class to access resources and opportunities related to HE opportunities, competitive exams, and personality development courses.

2.3.2 Summary

Based on the above, it is evident that strategies to enable HE access and choice have the potential for further strengthening. At present, a few institution-led programmes and campaigns are in place as identified by the project teams. However, the presence of strategies in each state does indicate demand for national HE outreach strategies.

2.4 State of the Academic Profession at State Level

This section offers a snapshot of the academic profession in the participating states. The first part looks at the level of representation of different social groups amongst FMs at HEIs in each state based on AISHE data as discussed in previous sections; the second part provides an overview of state policies with respect to the redeployment of FMs; and the third part highlights the states' approach towards the Professional Development (PD) of teaching staff.

2.4.1 Number of FMs and Student-Faculty Ratio

At the national level, there were 1.59 million FMs recorded in 2021-2022, an increase of 46,618 from the previous year.

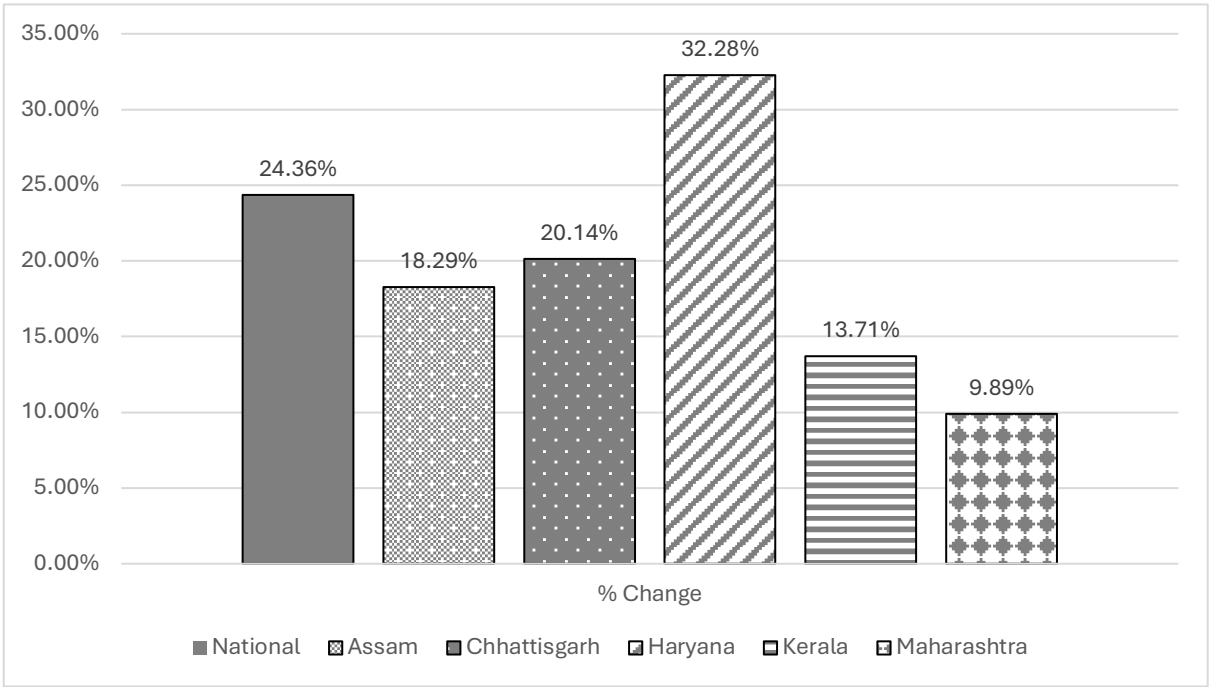
Over the previous five years, there has been an average growth of nearly 25% in the number of FMs. Across the case study states, although all had seen growth, the scale varied. Haryana had seen over 32% growth, which was above the national average, whereas Maharashtra had experienced less than 10% growth since 2017-2018. Chhattisgarh, Assam, and Kerala were all also under the national average, but closer to it at approximately 20%, 18% and 14% respectively (Table I.2.27, Figure I.2.16).

Table I.2.27: State-wise Growth in FMs Numbers

State	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022	% Growth
National	1,284,755	1,416,299	1,503,156	1,551,070	1,597,688	24.36%
Assam	19,728	22,849	23,080	23,302	23,336	18.29%
Chhattisgarh	19,640	20,630	22,235	22,163	23,595	20.14%
Haryana	31,068	35,677	39,231	39,256	41,098	32.28%
Kerala	55,277	59,236	61,558	61,080	62,855	13.71%
Maharashtra	152,602	158,939	163,132	162,673	167,692	9.89%

Source: AISHE, 2021

Figure I.2.16: State-wise Growth in FMs Numbers



Source: AISHE, 2021

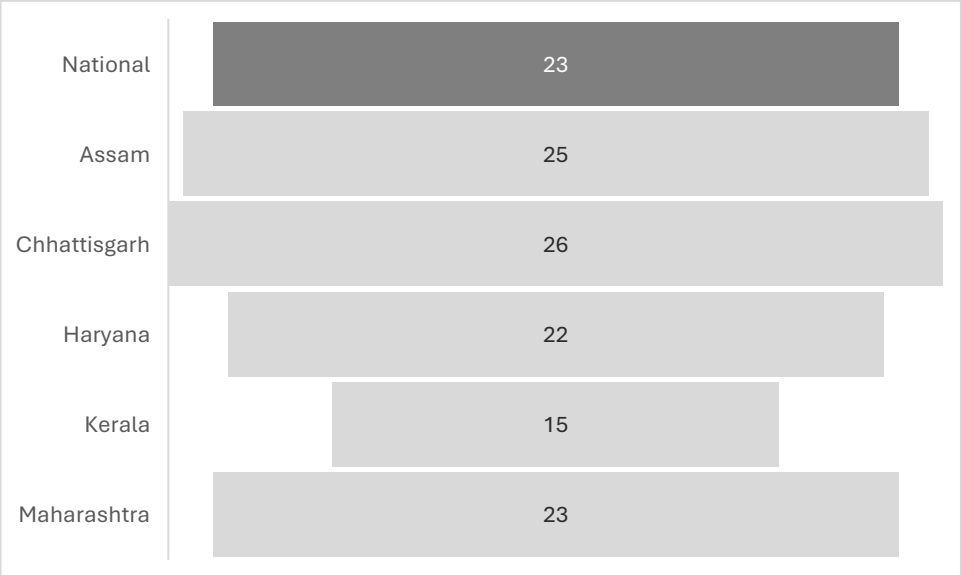
The average student-faculty ratio reported across the country was 23. This closely aligns with the number reported across the case study states, with the exception of Kerala which had an average of 15 students per FM (Table I.2.28, Figure I.2.17).

Table I.2.28: State-wise Student-Faculty Ratio

State	All Institutions (Regular Mode)
National	23
Assam	25
Chhattisgarh	26
Haryana	22
Kerala	15
Maharashtra	23

Source: AISHE, 2021

Figure I.2.17: State-wise Student-Faculty Ratio



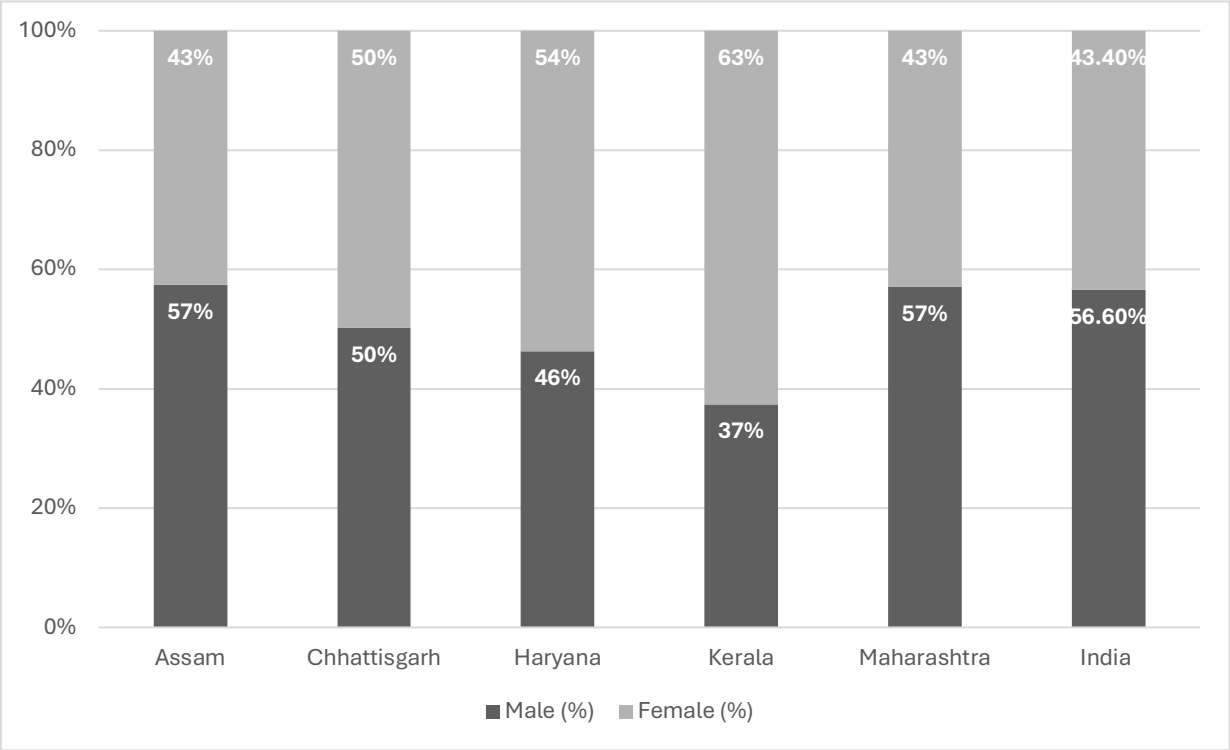
Source: AISHE, 2021

2.4.2 Equity in the Academic Profession

According to the data presented in AISHE, of the 1.59 million faculty teachers in 2021-2022 nationally, 56.6% were male and 43.4% were female. The number of female faculty had increased by 22% since 2014-2015 (from c.569,000 to c.694,000) and the ratio to male faculty had increased from 75 women for every 100 men in 2020-2021 to 77 women for every 100 men one year later, indicating a progressive rise in women representation.

In most case study states, the relative proportions of male and female teaching staff across HEIs are not vastly different. In Kerala, 63% of FMs are female, which is the highest proportion of female FMs amongst participating states. In two states—Assam and Maharashtra—male FMs outnumber female FMs, while in Chhattisgarh, FMs are nearly evenly split between males and females (Figure I.2.18).

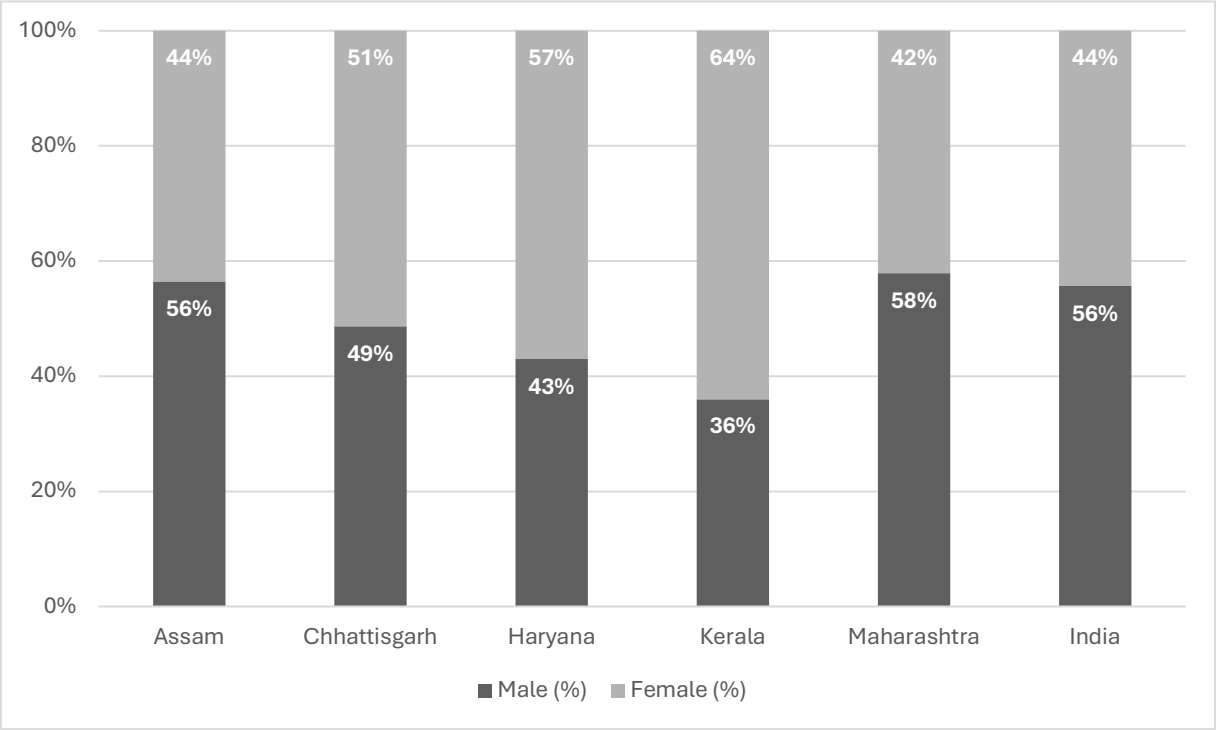
Figure I.2.18: State-wise FMs as per Gender



Source: AISHE, 2021

The overall gender composition of FMs in HEIs is reflected in the faculty makeup of colleges across the states. Assam and Maharashtra have higher numbers of male FMs than female FMs in colleges, and Kerala has the highest proportion of female FMs. In the three states with more female than male college FMs—Chhattisgarh, Haryana and Kerala—the proportion of female FMs in colleges is higher than their proportion in the HEI sector as a whole (Figure I.2.19).

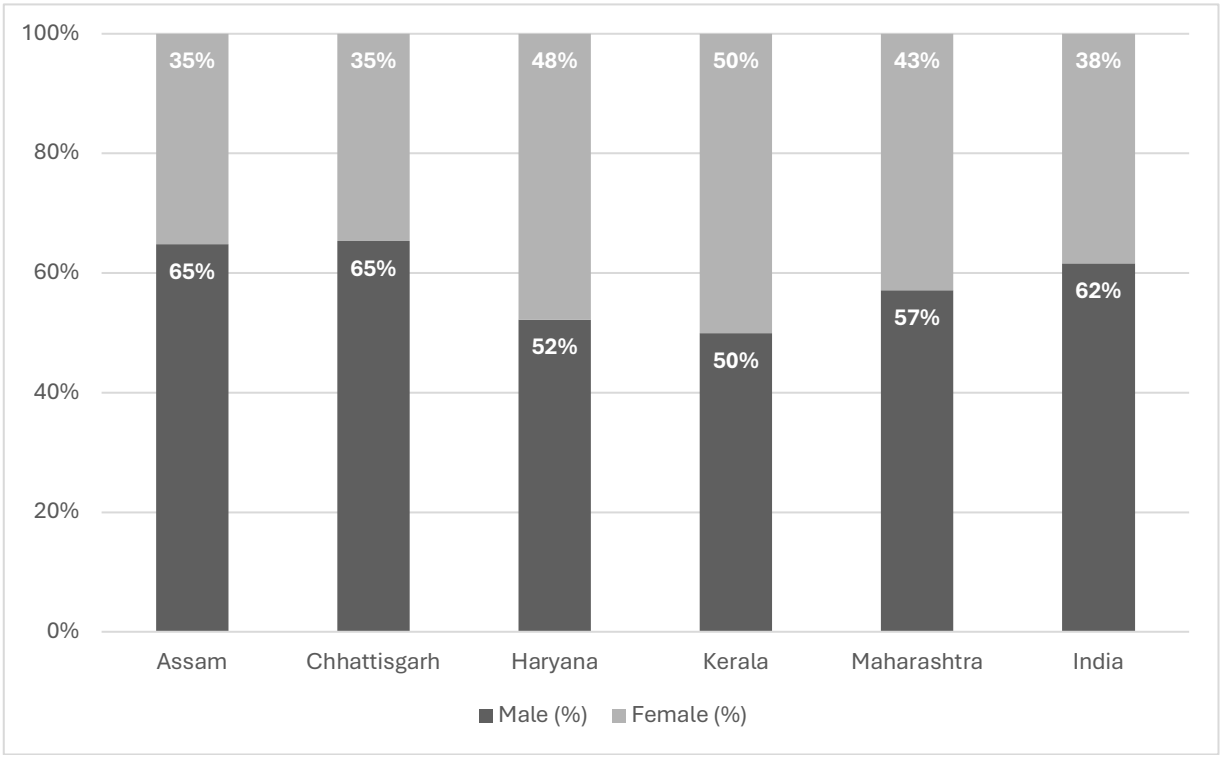
Figure I.2.19: State-wise FMs as per Gender at Colleges



Source: AISHE, 2021

The picture is significantly different amongst FMs at universities. Male FMs outnumber female FMs in all states except Kerala, where gender composition of faculty is equally split between males and females (Figure I.2.20). This suggests that, while women are well represented amongst teaching staff in the HEI sector in general, men still dominate in the more prestigious positions in the profession.

Figure I.2.20: State-wise FMs as per Gender at Universities



Source: AISHE 2021

At a national level, over half of faculty staff belonged to the 'Other' social category, with OBC being second largest at 32.3%, SC being at only 9.3%, and ST being at 2.6% of the population (Table I.2.29, Figure I.2.21). Maharashtra, within the case study states, had a higher proportion of SCs in HEI faculty than the national average, and reflected the group's share in the state's overall population (i.e. 11.8%).

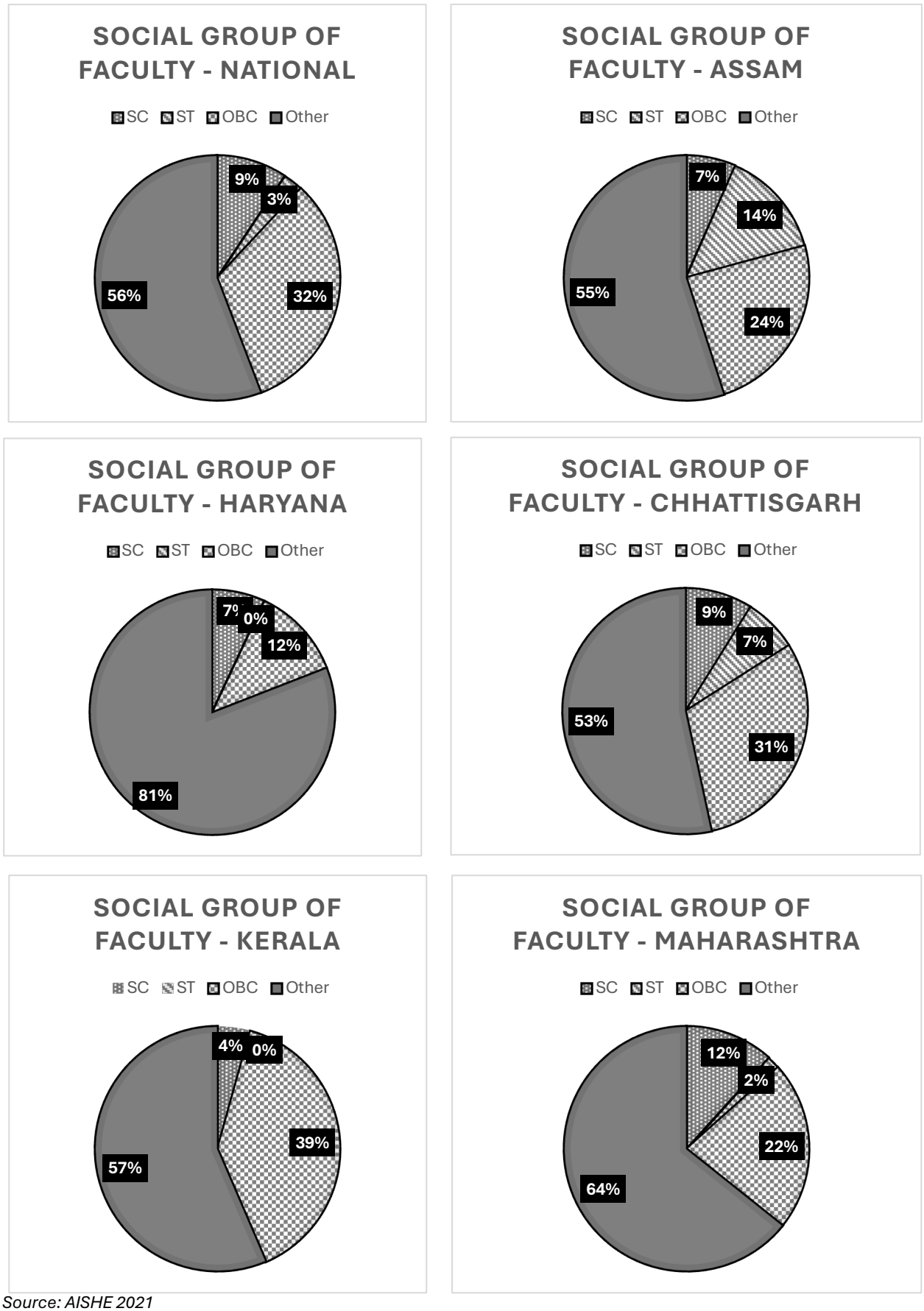
STs were most represented amongst FMs in Assam, and the proportion of STs in HEI faculty exceeded their share of the state's total population (12.5%). The low representation of STs in Haryana and Kerala reflects the fact that these states do not have sizeable ST populations (0.1% and 1.5% respectively). In Chhattisgarh and Maharashtra, STs are underrepresented amongst HEI teaching staff in relation to their share of the overall population (i.e. 30.6% and 9.4% respectively).

Table I.2.29: State-wise FMs as per Social Groups

State	SC	ST	OBC	Other
National	9.30%	2.60%	32.30%	55.79%
Assam	6.53%	14.24%	24.28%	54.95%
Chhattisgarh	8.89%	7.12%	30.63%	53.37%
Haryana	6.87%	0.12%	12.09%	80.92%
Kerala	3.98%	0.33%	39.25%	56.44%
Maharashtra	11.66%	1.72%	22.36%	64.26%

Source: AISHE 2021

Figure I.2.21: State-wise FMs as per Social Groups



Source: AISHE 2021

At the national level, just over 5% of faculty were reported as being Muslim, but the representation differed quite significantly in the case study states. Assam and Kerala had a significantly higher percentage of Muslim faculty at 12.23% and 13.7% respectively. In contrast, Chhattisgarh and Haryana had only 2.5% and 1.82% respectively. Maharashtra was closest to the national average at just over 5% (Table I.2.30).

Table I.2.30: State-wise Muslim FMs

State	All Faculty	Faculty Muslim	Percentage Faculty Muslim
National	1,597,688	89,770	5.62%
Assam	23,336	2,854	12.23%
Chhattisgarh	23,595	589	2.50%
Haryana	41,098	748	1.82%
Kerala	62,855	8,614	13.70%
Maharashtra	167,692	8,488	5.06%

Source: AISHE 2021

In terms of other minority religious groups, the national average was an 8.78% representation. Four of the five case study states were below this percentage with Kerala higher at 31.06% (Table I.2.31). The case study states reflect variation in religious diversity among FMs.

Table I.2.31: State-wise FMs from Other Minority Groups

State	All Faculty	Faculty Other Minority	Percentage Faculty Other Minority
National	1,597,688	140,205	8.78%
Assam	23,336	756	3.24%
Chhattisgarh	23,595	1,617	6.85%
Haryana	41,098	1,736	4.22%
Kerala	62,855	19,522	31.06%
Maharashtra	167,692	13,113	7.82%

Source: AISHE 2021

Across the country, over 10,000 FMs were reported as being PWD, which represents 0.65% of the faculty population. Within the case study states, all were under 1% of faculty as PWD.

Representativeness of disability was highest in Maharashtra where 1,089 PWD faculty were reported, aligning with the national percentage average. Assam, Chhattisgarh, and Kerala were all below the average of 0.65% representation, at between 0.51% and 0.58%. Although Haryana reported only 312 individuals, this was proportionately the highest at 0.76% of all faculty for the region (Table I.2.32).

Table I.2.32: State-wise PWD FMs

State	All Faculty	Faculty PWD	Percentage Faculty PWD
National	1,597,688	10,329	0.65%
Assam	23,336	133	0.57%
Chhattisgarh	23,595	121	0.51%
Haryana	41,098	312	0.76%
Kerala	62,855	363	0.58%
Maharashtra	167,692	1,089	0.65%

Source: AISHE 2021

2.4.3 Policies Regarding Recruitment and Redeployment of FMs

Recruitment and redeployment of FMs occurs in similar ways across states, but with some localised differences. For instance, in Assam, recruitment of FMs is as per the guidelines of the University Grants Commission. For recruitment of FMs in government colleges, applications are invited by the Director of Higher Education (DHE) Assam, through advertisements in leading newspapers and mass media. In the case of provincialised colleges, calls for recruitment are published on respective HEIs' websites by the principals of respective colleges after due approval from DHE Assam.

To give a second example, in Kerala, recruitment of FMs is also as per the guidelines of the University Grants Commission. The recruitment of FMs in government colleges is conducted by the Kerala Public Service Commission (KPSC). The redeployment of government college FMs is managed by the Kerala Collegiate Education Department. The redeployment of FMs from government-aided colleges is managed by the respective corporate government-aided managements and approved by the Kerala Collegiate Education Department.

As a final example in this section, for Maharashtra, again FM recruitment is as per the guidelines of the University Grants Commission. Calls for applications for FMs positions are advertised through local and national newspapers. Shortlisted applicants are then invited for interviews by respective HEIs. The redeployment of FMs from government colleges is managed by the government department. Likewise, the redeployment of FMs in government-aided colleges is managed by the trust that manages the government-aided colleges.

2.4.4 Summary

Overall, there has been growth in FM numbers and diversity, although with varying levels in different states. Student-faculty numbers were mostly aligned with the national average (with the exception of Kerala which saw significantly fewer students per faculty).

Although the profession remains male-dominated, there had been an increase in female faculty which was shifting the ratio. This was generally reflected in the case study states, although Kerala was noteworthy for having 63% female faculty. Haryana also had more female faculty at 54%. Nationally, over half of faculty belonged to the 'Other' social group, which was generally the case in the case study states, although Haryana in particular stood out in this area as having over 80% of FMs in the 'Other' group (i.e. less than 20% belonged to SC/ST/OBC groups). The case study states reflect variation in religious diversity, with Assam and Kerala having particularly high numbers of Muslim faculty, and Kerala also having particularly high other minority representation. PWD faculty representation was small (less than 1%) and generally in line with the national picture. In terms of recruitment and redeployment, recruitment and redeployment were generally informed by the University Grants Commission.

2.5 Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated the national and case study contexts in relation to population demographics and more specifically the picture of the HE environment. Presentation of the case study states shows significant differences in relation to population size, age, social groups, and poverty rates which may influence access to HE. Discussion of number and types of institutions, and enrolments reflect these differences whilst demonstrating a national picture of overall growth in HE. In terms of equity and access, less advantaged social groups have been enrolling

in higher numbers in recent years, potentially in part due to the initiatives offered both nationally and within the specific case study states.

Data relating to the academic profession shows a growth in staff numbers over the five-year period, although the extent of this growth varies across states. Although the number of female faculty has increased, there are still more male FMs across the case study states. Likewise, less advantaged social groups are increasingly represented although their representation is lower than the 'Other' social groups. The proportion of FMs reporting disabilities was also relatively small. Recruitment and redeployment largely follows national guidelines. Overall, this chapter has demonstrated that the demographic and HE landscape of India is complex and varied across states, with the case study states exemplifying that, although national trends may be generally consistent, the rates of change and specific contexts may greatly influence how potential students are able to access and understand HE possibilities.

Chapter 3: Profile of the Case Study Institutions

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) included in the study, in order to provide the context for the study sample that is analysed in subsequent chapters. The HEIs have been anonymised to the extent possible to protect their identities and those of the participants, as stipulated in the project's ethical code. For each state, information has been presented as per participating HEIs—State University (SU), Government College In-Depth (GCID), Government College 'A' (GCA), and Government College 'B' (GCB), noting that far more information was gathered for SU and GCID, which is reflected in the sections below. This chapter offers an overview of demographics of Faculty Members (FMs), Professional Development (PD) opportunities availed by FMs, demographics of undergraduate students, and existing institutional Higher Education (HE) outreach strategies and activities for each institution within each partner state. The data presented in this chapter were gathered and shared by the State Research Teams of the 'Widening Access to Higher Education in India: Institutional Perspectives' (WAHEI) research project and have been collated and synthesised for the purposes of this report by the report authors.

3.2 Assam

3.2.1 Assam State University

The participating SU in Assam, the north-eastern region, was established in the 1940s and is accredited as an A+ grade institution by the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC). It is one of the region's oldest universities, located in the western part of the state. The university offers a wide range of undergraduate, postgraduate, Doctor of Philosophy (PhD), certificate, and diploma programmes. Recently, the university introduced new undergraduate programmes, as well as a five-year integrated master's programme, on campus as part of its National Education Policy (NEP) implementation. Overall, it comprises around 50 postgraduate departments. The University follows the Four-Year Undergraduate Programme (FYUP) in alignment with the NEP 2020, across its 300+ affiliated colleges and institutions.

According to administrative records, the SU had a total faculty strength of 416, comprising 331 permanent and 85 contractual FMs. A majority of the permanent FMs, that is, 168, were Assistant Professors. The SU also has 53 Associate Professors and 110 Professors. Across Assistant, Associate, and full Professors, men outnumber women in each category. There were reportedly c.128 vacant positions across various categories at the time of data collection.

For the WAHEI study, FMs teaching on undergraduate programmes were invited to participate in the survey; 112 FMs from 24 departments consented to participate, with the following sample characteristics:

- **Gender:** 56.2% were men and 43. 8% were women.
- **Age group:** Most FMs (33.9%) were in the age group of 41- 50 years, followed by FMs (31.2%) in the age group of 31-40 years. 16.1% of FMs were in the age group of 20-30 years and 18.8% of FMs were over 50 years of age.
- **Social group:** a majority (76.6%) were from General category. 15.3% of the participating FMs were Other Backward Classes (OBC). 5.4% were Scheduled Tribes (ST) and 1.8% were Scheduled Castes (SC).
- **Religion:** Most FMs (88.2%) identified as Hindus and 10.0% of FMs identified as Muslims.
- **Disability:** None of the participating FMs identified as disabled.
- **Family status:** A majority (71.4%) of the FMs were married. 57.1% of FMs had children.
- **LGBTQIAP+:** Two FMs identified as LGBTQIAP+.
- **Residence information:** A majority (95.5%) of FMs were natives of Assam. 83.5% of the FMs were residents of an urban locale.

At SU, a total of 108 valid responses for the WAHEI survey were recorded regarding access to PD programmes in the preceding year, with the following key findings:

- **Participation in PD:** 68.5% (n=74), confirmed that they had availed of PD opportunities.

- **Location of PD:** Most opportunities were availed within FMs' own HEIs (51.4%). The second most common (20.3%) were Human Resource Development Centres (HRDCs) within the state. This was followed by other colleges and universities (15.2%). A further 13.1% had attended HRDC programmes in other states.

- **PD programme type:** Orientation Programmes were the most availed PD opportunity (21.4%), followed by Refresher Courses (20.9%) and Staff Training activities such as Faculty Development Programmes (FDPs) (19.4%), with Short-Term Courses (18.9%), and Writing and Publication Workshops (10.0%) accounting for smaller proportions.

- **Reason for non-participation (N=30):** The highest number of non-participants cited a lack of interest in applying (10 of 30). Eight respondents attributed their non-participation to a shortage of available opportunities, whilst five were unable to apply owing to their employment status.

Student admission data for on-campus programmes in 2023, drawn from secondary records, are summarised below. A total of 766 students were admitted across various courses. Of these, 378 (49.3%) enrolled in the Five-Years Integrated Masters Programme (FYIMP), 141 (18.4%) in Bachelor of Technology (B.Tech) courses, 68 (8.9%) in the Integrated Master of Commerce (M.Com) programme, 59 (7.7%) in the Bachelor of Arts (BA) Bachelor of Law degree (LLB) course, and 120 (15.7%) in the LLB programme. Regarding B.Tech admissions, the total enrolment was 141 students, distributed across four branches. Admissions were determined based on Combined Entrance Examination (CEE) 2023 and Joint Entrance Examination (JEE Main) 2023 ranks, supplemented by departmental entrance tests.

A total of 501 undergraduate students, from different SU departments, consented to participate in the survey, with the following sample characteristics:

- **Gender:** 53.3% of the participating students identified as women, 46.5% identified as men, and one student identified as Transgender.

- **Age group:** Most students were in the age group of 18-20 years except for 20 students who were over 24 years of age.

- **Social group:** 45.0% of the participating students were from the General social group, 26.7% were from OBC, 12% were ST, 8.4% were SC and 7.2% belonged to Economically Weaker Sections (EWSs).

- **Religion:** The majority of the participating undergraduate students (85.4%) identified as Hindus, 12.0% identified as Muslims, 1.4% identified as Christians, 0.2% identified as Jain and 0.2% as Buddhist.

- **Disability:** 1.0% of the participating undergraduate students were physically disabled.

- **Family status:** None of the participating students were married, though one student was divorced or separated. 18 students responded as being 'other', where they responded: 'single', 'committed', 'in a relationship' and 'dating'. None of the participating student had children.

- **LGBTQIAP+:** Two participants identified as LGBTQIAP+ and 12 students (2.4%) opted for the 'prefer not to say' option.

SU has undertaken several initiatives to broaden access for students from remote and geographically marginalised areas. These include conducting admission tests at multiple locations across Assam, establishing dedicated helplines to assist prospective applicants, and reserving seats in postgraduate programmes for students from fringe villages.

3.2.2 Assam GCID

The GCID selected from Assam was founded in the 1980s to facilitate HE in a rural region. In the 2000s, this college was recognised by the University Grants Commission (UGC) and is accredited with a B+ grade by NAAC. At its inception, it was a single-faculty Arts institution with 10 departments. At present, it has 19 departments, ranging from vocational to senior secondary courses. The institution offers undergraduate degrees in Arts, Sciences, and Commerce, as well

as vocational courses and a postgraduate programme in Arts. GCID is situated in a Muslim-majority locale within Assam.

According to administrative records, GCID, being a more localised institution affiliated to SU, had a total strength of 51 FMs, 23 of whom were permanent, making up 45.10% of the total faculty, while 28 held contractual positions. 48 FMs participated in the survey, with the following characteristics:

- **Gender:** Amongst the participating FMs 50.0% identified as women and 50.0% identified as men.
- **Age group:** Most participating FMs (41.7%) from GCID were in the age group of 20-30 years. 27.1% were in the age group of 31- 40 years of age, 4.2% of FMs were 41-50 age group and 27.1% were in the age group of 51-60 years.
- **Social group:** The majority (77.109%) of the participating FMs identified as General category, 16.7% identified as OBC, and the remaining FMs identified as SC and ST.
- **Religion:** 50.0% of the FMs identified as Hindus and the other 50.0% identified as Muslims.
- **Disability:** None of the participating FMs identified as disabled
- **Family status:** 50.0% of the participating FMs were unmarried, 47.9% of FMs were married and 2.1% were divorced or separated. 43.8% of FMs had children, with the average number of children being 1.6.
- **LGBTQIAP+:** None of the participating FMs identified as LGBTQIAP+.
- **Residence information:** All participants were born in Assam. 68.8% of the participating FMs were from rural areas.

At GCID, a total of 48 valid responses for the WAHEI survey were recorded regarding access to PD programmes in the preceding year, with the following key findings:

- **Participation in PD:** 33.3% of FMs had participated in PD.

- **Location of PD:** Attendance was distributed evenly, with 26.9% each reporting participation at their own institution, at other colleges or universities within the state, and at HRDCs in other states.

- **PD programme type:** Orientation programmes (23.5%) and refresher courses (20.6%) were the most frequently attended, followed by short-term courses (20.6%), and staff training (17.7%). Smaller proportions engaged in writing and publication workshops and summer/winter school workshops.

- **Reason for non-participation (N=32):** The most reported barrier was the absence of available opportunities, cited by 42.1% (n=16) of respondents. This was followed by teaching responsibilities, which prevented 36.8% (n=14) from applying, whilst 18.4% (n=7) were constrained by their contractual employment status. Notably, no GCID respondent indicated a lack of desire to apply.

Administrative data on undergraduate student enrolment at GCID for the year 2023 indicate a total of 1,189 students across various programmes. Of these, 943 (79.3%) were enrolled in the BA programme, 114 (9.6%) in the Bachelor of Science (BSc) programme, 77 (6.5%) in the Bachelor of Vocation (B.Voc) programme, and 55 (4.6%) in the B.Com programme.

A total of 500 undergraduate students from GCID participated in the WAHEI survey:

- **Gender:** Within the sample, women students (69.8%) outnumbered men (30.2%) students.

- **Age group:** The majority of students were in the age group of 19-21 years and only one student was over 24 years of age.

- **Social group:** The majority (79.0%) of the participating students identified as General category, 15.2% identified as SC, and remaining students identified as EWS (2.6%), OBC (2.0%), and ST (1.2%).

- **Religion:** The majority (81.2%) of the participating students were Muslim and the remaining 18.8% students identified as Hindus.

- **Disability:** Three of the participating students identified as physically disabled.
- **Family status:** Ten students reported being married.
- **LGBTQIAP+:** 4.8% students opted to not disclose if they identified as LGBTQIAP+.
- **Residence information:** All participating undergraduate students were born in Assam.

At GCID, the National Service Scheme (NSS) Cell, in collaboration with the Internal Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC), engages with broader societal issues through targeted outreach initiatives. These do not necessarily pertain specifically to HE outreach.

3.2.3 Assam GCA and GCB

GCA, established in the 1960s, serves a rural region of Assam. According to administrative records, GCA had a total faculty strength of 63 members; 45 were on permanent contract and 18 were appointed on a contractual basis. There were no professors, visiting FMs, or temporary FMs at GCA at the time of data collection. Among 45 permanent FMs, 24 were Associate professors and 21 were Assistant professors. In GCA, men FMs outnumbered women faculty. Most permanent FMs belonged to General category (22 FMs), ten of them belonged to ST category, and three of them belonged to SC category. In the case of contractual FMs, there was an equal representation from ST, OBC, and General categories. The majority of the FMs identified as Hindus, two identified themselves as Christians, and the other two were Muslims. Amongst contractual faculty, all FMs were Hindus. Most permanent FMs were urban residents, while all contractual FMs resided in a rural locale. GCA has launched a forward-looking mentorship programme to advance quality education and literacy across the region. Led by FMs, this initiative guides both students and faculty—within and beyond the immediate academic context—to raise overall educational standards and ensure a better-prepared cohort of prospective students. Under the Unnat Bharat Abhiyan scheme, the college has also adopted five villages, engaging local communities through awareness campaigns and *gram sabhas* (village assembly usually with elected members and adults of the village) in support of sustainable development.

GCB was founded in the 1970s in a semi-urban area, the result of sustained efforts and demands from the local community. It is accredited with a B++ grade by NAAC in the most recent assessment cycle. The college at the time of information collection served 2,900 regular students and had a faculty of 59 members offering courses in Arts, Sciences, Vocational, and professional disciplines. At GCB, 43 FMs held permanent contracts, with a slight overrepresentation of men (55.8%). These permanent FMs were from diverse social groups. 51.2% of them were from General category, 23.3% were OBC, 16.3% were ST, and 6.9% were from SC category. The majority of the permanent FMs were Hindus and three of them identified as Muslims. Permanent FMs, in the case of GCB, were residents of urban and rural locales. At GCB, there were 13 members of faculty on a contract basis; most of them were men. A majority of FMs were from General category with representation from OBC and ST categories. All contractual FMs were Hindus and residents of rural locales. Amongst 16 temporary FMs, the majority were women (13 FMs) with only three men. Approximately half of the temporary FMs were from General category and majority of them identified as Hindus. Some FMs identified as Muslims as well. They were also residents of a rural locale. With regard to GCB, the available secondary data sources did not yield clear evidence of initiatives specifically focused on HE outreach. However, the institution demonstrates a strong commitment to community engagement through a range of environmental initiatives.

3.3 Chhattisgarh

3.3.1 Chhattisgarh State University

The SU in Chhattisgarh, in the central region, was established in the 1960s, when the region was part of the state of Madhya Pradesh. The university is in a well-established urban area and has more than 160 affiliated colleges from various regions of the state. The university was accredited with a B++ ranking in the latest NAAC at the time of writing. Overall, it comprises 32 schools, institutes, and centres. The university introduced undergraduate programmes as early as the 1970s. Currently, the university offers certificate, Diploma, postgraduate Diploma, undergraduate, postgraduate, and doctoral programmes spanning a range of disciplines. The university has targeted programmes and initiatives which support students from tribal communities at various levels of HE.

At the SU, the total FM strength across various departments is more than 100. 23 FMs participated in the WAHEI survey:

- **Gender:** A majority of FMs were female (65.2%), while male respondents accounted for 34.8%.
- **Age group:** The majority of FMs belonged to the 41–50 years age group (51.6%), the 31–40 years category accounted for 30.1%, a smaller proportion of respondents fell within the 51–60 years age group (12.9%); only 4.3% of respondents were in the 20–30 years group.
- **Social group:** The majority of FMs belonged to the General category (60.9%), 21.7% belong to OBC category, and an equal representation from SC and ST, each constituting 8.7% of the sample.
- **Religion:** All FMs were Hindus.
- **Disability:** None of the participating FMs identified as disabled.
- **Family status:** 95.7% of FMs were married, and 91.3% had children.
- **LGBTQIAP+:** None of the participating FMs identified as LGBTQIAP+.
- **Residence information:** A majority (90.0%) of FMs were natives of the state. All FMs were residents of urban locale.

At SU in Chhattisgarh a total of 23 valid responses for the WAHEI survey were recorded regarding access to PD programmes in the preceding year, with the following key findings:

- **Participation in PD:** All FMs had taken PD opportunities.
- **Location of PD:** All FMs had availed PD programmes at their own university.
- **PD programme type:** A majority (57.0%) of respondents participated in Orientation Programmes, 22.0% attended writing and publication workshops, 17.0% engaged in staff training such as Faculty Induction or Development Programmes, and a small proportion (4.0%) completed refresher courses.

Administrative records show that the SU in Chhattisgarh has a total student strength of 5000 across various departments, pursuing undergraduate and postgraduate courses. In terms of the WAHEI student survey, 121 students consented to participate:

- **Gender:** 57.9% of students were men and 42.1% were women.
- **Age group:** A majority of 72.0% of students were in the age group of 18-20 years old. 24.8% were in the age group of 21-23 years and 3.4% were 24 years old or above.
- **Social group:** 57.9% of the students were from SC category and 42.1% were from ST category.
- **Religion:** A majority of the students (98.3%) were Hindus and 1.7% were Christians.
- **Disability:** None of the participating students identified as disabled.
- **Family status:** All students were unmarried and none of them had caring responsibilities.
- **LGBTQIAP+:** None of the participating students identified as LGBTQIAP+.
- **Residence information:** All students were natives of Chhattisgarh. 51.2% were residents of urban locale and 48.8% were residents of rural locale.

At SU, several HE outreach strategies, such as career counselling sessions and admission guidance workshops, were organised in nearby schools to raise awareness and enable access to HE. Apart from these initiatives, the FMs actively participate in the nationwide Inspire Program for High School Students in India. As part of this programme, the FMs provide information about the university, the department, and the facilities available at the SU.

3.3.2 Chhattisgarh GCID

The GCID from Chhattisgarh was established in the 2010s in a rural area. It was accredited with a grade B by NAAC in the most recent exercise at the time of writing. The college currently offers four undergraduate and two postgraduate courses. At present, the college has a total enrolment of around 700 students.

13 FMs participated in the WAHEI survey for GCID:

- **Gender:** 53.8% of participating FMs were women and 46.2% were men.
- **Age group:** A majority of participating FMs, 46.2% were 20–30 years old and 30.8% were in the age group 31–40 years.
- **Social group:** A majority of FMs belong to the OBC category (53.8%), followed by General (23.1%), SC (15.4%), and 7.7% were from ST category.
- **Religion:** A majority of FMs (84.6%) were Hindus, 15.4% were from Sikh community.
- **Disability:** None of the respondents identifying as differently abled.
- **Family status:** In GCID, a majority of respondents (61.5%) were married, while a significant share (38.5%) were unmarried.
- **LGBTQIAP+:** None of the participating FMs identified as LGBTQIAP+.
- **Residence information:** All FMs were natives of Chhattisgarh. A majority of respondents (92.3%) reported residing in urban areas and (7.7%) were residents of rural areas.

At GCID in Chhattisgarh total of 13 valid responses for the WAHEI survey were recorded regarding access to PD programmes in the preceding year, with the following key findings:

- **Participation in PD:** All FMs had availed PD opportunities.
- **Location of PD:** 62.0% of FMs availed PD within their own institution and 38.0% availed PD offered by other colleges and universities.
- **PD programme type:** 62.0% of FMs availed orientation programmes and 38.0% attended writing and publication-related workshops.

At GCID, according to administrative records, at the time of data collection there were a total of 716 students enrolled across the 10 departments of the college. 256 students participated in the WAHEI survey from GCID:

- **Gender:** 58.6% of the participating students were men and 41.4% were women.
- **Age group:** A majority of the participating students were in the age group of 18-20 years old (70.7%), 26.2% were 21 to 23 years, and 3.2% were 24 years or above.
- **Social group:** The majority, 60.2% of participating students belong to the SC category, and 39.8% belong to the ST category.
- **Religion:** 96.1% of the students were Hindus and 3.9% identified as Christians.
- **Disability:** None of the respondents identified as differently abled.
- **Family status:** All students were unmarried, and none of the respondents had caring responsibilities.
- **LGBTQIAP+:** None of the participating FMs identified as LGBTQIAP+.
- **Residence information:** All students were natives of Chhattisgarh. 92.2% were residents of rural locale and 7.8% were residents of urban locale.

No HE outreach strategies or activities were reported from the administrative data collection phase.

3.3.3 Chhattisgarh GCA and GCB

GCA was established in the 1970s with a specific agenda to offer HE in rural areas of Chhattisgarh. The college has been accredited with a NAAC grade C. The college offers undergraduate and postgraduate programmes in Sciences, Arts, and Commerce.

GCB is a post-graduate college located in a semi-urban area of the state. The college was established in the 1980s and has been accredited with a grade C. Similar to GCA, GCB offers undergraduate and postgraduate programmes in Arts, Sciences, and Commerce. At GCA and GCB, HE outreach is carried out through the NSS, led by FMs and undergraduate students. Further, science exhibitions and essay writing competitions—organised by undergraduate students and FMs at the colleges, where community members were invited to visit—serve as opportunities to facilitate access to HE.

3.4 Haryana

3.4.1 Haryana State University

The SU in Haryana, located in the northern region, was established in the 1950s and received an A++ rating from the most recent NAAC at the time of data collection. At the time of writing, SU houses 49 departments and institutes (offering 175 courses), across 10 faculties. The university offers around 28 undergraduate programmes. Over the years, the university has pioneered in opening up HE to women, with a current representation of 54.0% women in the current enrolments. This SU has around 94 affiliated degree colleges, most of which are funded entirely by the government or are government aided. Only 15.0% of the affiliated colleges are private unaided degree colleges. One-third of the affiliated colleges are exclusively for women, and the majority of the colleges facilitate HE in rural regions of Haryana.

For the WAHEI study, FMs teaching on undergraduate programmes were invited to participate in the survey; 57 FMs consented to participate, with the following sample characteristics:

- **Gender:** 58.0% of the participating FMs were men and 42.0% were women.
- **Age group:** 46.0% of FMs were in the age group of 31 to 40 years; 40.0% were 41 to 50 years of age, and about 7.0% of the FMs were in the age group of 51 to 60 years.
- **Social group:** A majority (63.0%) are from General category, 16.0% were OBCs, and 19.0% were from SCs category.
- **Religion:** 90.0% of FMs identified as Hindus, 3.5% were Buddhist, and 1.8% were Sikh.
- **Disability:** None of the respondents identified as differently abled.
- **Family status:** A majority of FMs were married, 16.0% of FMs were unmarried and 7.0% reported as separated. 68.4% of FMs had children.
- **LGBTQIAP+:** None of the participating FMs identified as LGBTQIAP+.
- **Residence information:** 84.0% of the FMs were natives of Haryana. 33.3% of FMs were residents of an urban locale, and 66.7% were residents of a rural locale.

At SU, 19 FMs in the WAHEI sample accessed PD in the preceding year; the following key findings were recorded:

- **Participation in PD:** 33.9% of FMs availed PD opportunities.
- **Location of PD:** 54.5% of FMs participated in PD within SU, 4.5% participated in PD in another HEI, 36.4% participated in PD offered by HRDC within Haryana, and 4.5% participated in PD offered by HRDC in another state.
- **PD programme type:** 15.9% of FMs participated in orientation programmes, 15.9% participated in Refresher courses, 20.5% participated in FDPs, 18.2% participated in writing and publication related workshops, and 9.1% participated in short term summer/winter workshops.
- **Reason for non-participation:** 70.0% of FMs who did not participate in PD reported that opportunities related to PD had been made available to them and 7.5% of FMs could not avail PD owing to their employment status.

A total of 512 students were enrolled across five undergraduate programmes at SU. Students were drawn from rural and urban areas in broadly equal proportions. The gender composition, however, skewed towards women, with 61.0% of the total student body being women. Given that SU's undergraduate offerings in this context were professional programmes open to students from across academic streams, it is notable that approximately 52.0% came from an Arts background, followed by those from Commerce, whilst around one-fifth had studied Sciences at the senior secondary level. With regard to caste composition, 45.0% of students belonged to the General category, whilst 28.0% were from OBCs. SU also enrolled a small number of international students from Ethiopia and Nigeria, though these accounted for less than 1% of the total intake. In terms of economic background, considerable disparity was evident: 40.0% of students came from lower-income households with annual family incomes below 200,000 Indian Rupee (INR), whilst 10.0% were from more affluent backgrounds with annual family incomes exceeding 800,000 INR. The majority of students (72.0%) had received their schooling in private or semi-private institutions, with only one-fifth attending fully government-run schools. Approximately one-third had been taught in English at school, whilst a further 27.0% reported Hindi or their mother tongue as their medium of instruction. Around

two-thirds had studied under the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) syllabus, with the remaining one-third having completed their senior secondary education under a state board syllabus. (Table I.3.16)

In terms of the WAHEI student survey, 279 students consented to participate:

- **Gender:** 50.9% of participants were men and 49.1% were women.
- **Age group:** 20.8% of students were 18 years or below, 65.0% were 19 to 20 years of age, 10.5% were 21 to 22 years of age, and 4.7% were 23 years or older.
- **Social group:** A majority of the participating undergraduates (45.7%) were from General category, 28.3% were OBC, and 23.0% were from SC category.
- **Religion:** A majority 93.0% identified as Hindus, 4.8% were Sikh, 1.1% were Muslim, and 1.1% were from other religious minority groups.
- **Disability:** 0.7% of the participating students identified as physically differently abled.
- **Family status:** 99.6% students were unmarried.
- **LGBTQIAP+:** None of the participating students identified as LGBTQIAP+.
- **Residence information:** 50.2% of students were residents of urban locale, and 49.8% of students were residents of rural locale.

SU's officially documented HE outreach-related activities were largely confined to sharing information through its institutional website, which is maintained and updated periodically.

3.4.2 Haryana GCID

The GCID from Haryana is located in a semi-urban setting and is the only institution offering HE to the surrounding 25 villages. This HEI was established as a private, co-educational institution in the 1990s and was integrated with government HEIs in the 2000s. At present, the college offers a range of undergraduate and three postgraduate courses, with an enrolment of around 1300 students. GCID has around 50 FMs.

From GCID, 34 FMs consented to participate in the WAHEI survey. The demographic details of the participating FMs are as follows:

- **Gender:** 44.1% of FMs were men and 55.9% were women.
- **Age group:** 25.0% of FMs were 51 to 60 years of age, while another 35.0% were in the age group of 41 to 50 years, and 33.3% of FMs were 31 to 40 years old.
- **Social group:** A majority of the FMs (52.9%) were from General category, 29.4% belonged to SC category, and 17.6% were from OBC category.
- **Religion:** 97.1% of FMs were Hindus and 2.9% identified as Sikh.
- **Disability:** None of the respondents identified as differently abled.
- **Family status:** A majority of the FMs (85.3%) were married, 11.8% were unmarried, and 2.9% were separated or divorced. 85.3% of FMs had children.
- **LGBTQIAP+:** None of the FMs identified as LGBTQIAP+.
- **Residence information:** 94.1% of FMs were natives of Haryana. 44.1% of FMs were residents of a rural locale, and 55.9% were residents of urban locale.

At GCID, 29 FMs had availed PD courses in the last academic session. The details related to their participation are as follows:

- **Participation in PD:** 84.8% of FMs availed PD opportunities.
- **Location of PD:** 34.9% availed PD in HRDC within Haryana, 30.2% availed PD in another state; 23.3% availed PD opportunities within their colleges, and 11.6% availed PD from another college/university.
- **PD programme type:** 26.1% of FMs participated in staff training, 22.7% in orientation programmes, 22.7% participated in refresher courses, 17% participated in short-term courses, 9.1% participated in writing and publication workshops, and 2.3% participated in summer/winter school workshops**.**

- **Reason for non-participation:** Some FMs were not able to avail PD courses owing to their employment status.

The first-semester enrolment across all disciplines—Arts, Commerce, and Sciences—at the selected GCID, stood at 527 students. The college had students from both rural and urban areas, with 60.0% coming from rural backgrounds. In terms of gender composition, women accounted for 61.0% of the student body. The majority of students (60.0%) had studied Arts at the senior secondary level, whilst those from Sciences and Commerce backgrounds each constituted 20.0% of the intake. With regard to caste composition, approximately half of the students belonged to the OBC social group—a reflection, in part, of the predominantly OBC caste composition of the surrounding villages—whilst SC students accounted for 28.0% of the total enrolment. In terms of economic background, the student body at GCID reflects considerable diversity, though the majority come from lower-income households, with 67.0% reporting annual family incomes below 200,000 INR. Students from more affluent backgrounds were also represented, with approximately 3.0% coming from households with annual family incomes exceeding eight lakhs. A large majority of students (63.0%) had attended government schools, and around 70% had completed their senior secondary education under a state board syllabus, with only 28.0% having studied under the CBSE curriculum. With regard to religious identity, the student population is predominantly Hindu. However, it also includes students from other faith backgrounds, with Sikhs accounting for 4.0% and Muslims for 1.7% of the total enrolment.

In terms of the WAHEI student survey, 191 students consented to participate:

- **Gender:** 62.3% of the participating undergraduates were men and 37.7% were women.

- **Age group:** 38.7% of the students were 18 years or below; 55.2% were in the age group of 19-20 years, 4.1% were 21-22 years of age, and 2.0% were 23 years or more.

- **Social group:** SCs constituted about 41.9%, closely followed by OBCs at 38.7%. General category students account for 17.8% and 1.6% of the students were from EWS category.

- **Religion:** 95.8% students were Hindus, 0.5% Muslims, and 3.7% of undergraduate students were Sikh.
- **Disability:** 0.5% of the participating students identified as physically disabled.
- **Family status:** All participating students were unmarried.
- **LGBTQIAP+:** None of the participating students identified as LGBTQIAP+.
- **Residence information:** 87.4% of students were residents of rural locale and 12.6% of students were residents of urban locale.

At GCID a committee of senior and active FMs, appointed by the Institutional Leader (IL), helps prospective students complete online application forms, typically around the time admission dates are announced. This voluntary initiative is largely a response to the challenges posed by centralised admissions processes and the information gaps that leave rural colleges underserved and under-enrolled. As a part of the twinning programme in the educational institutions in Haryana, many schoolteachers plan independent visits to nearby government colleges to familiarise students with future academic pathways.

3.4.3 Haryana GCA and GCB

Both GCA and GCB in Haryana were rural-serving HEIs. GCA is among the newly established women's government college of the state. Currently, it offers three undergraduate programmes in Arts, Sciences, and Commerce, with a staff of one principal and 10 regular FMs.

GCB is a co-educational college, established in the 2000s, on lands donated by the villagers. At present, it offers four streams of undergraduate programmes, namely Humanities, Commerce, Life Sciences and Physical Sciences and postgraduate programmes in Commerce and Geography. According to the latest records, it has a total student strength of 900, 30 teaching staff, and 20 non-teaching staff. GCB had a total student strength of 285 and operates as a co-educational institution serving an entirely rural student population.

3.5 Kerala

3.5.1 Kerala State University

From the southern region, an SU from Kerala established in the 1960s was selected. The university was awarded a grade A in the recent NAAC accreditation cycle. It is a leading residential university which has more than 400 affiliated colleges. Historically, teaching departments of the university focus on post-graduate programmes; however, integrated undergraduate-postgraduate programmes were launched recently (four years ago at the time of writing). The university has an off-campus centre to support the enrolment of tribal students.

For the WAHEI study, FMs teaching on undergraduate programmes were invited to participate in the survey; 19 FMs consented to participate, with the following sample characteristics:

- **Gender:** 73.7% of the participating FMs were men and 26.3% were women.
- **Age group:** 47.4% of FMs fall into the 31–40 age group, followed by 31.6% in the 41–50 age range; 10.5% are between 20–30 years, and another 10.5% are in the 51–60 range.
- **Social group:** A majority of FMs (73.7%) were OBCs, 21.1.% were from General category, and 5.3% were from SC category.
- **Religion:** The majority of FMs (47.4%) were Hindus, 31.6% were Muslims, and 21.1% were Christians.
- **Disability:** None of the participating FMs identified as differently abled.
- **Family status:** 94.7% of FMs were married and 5.3% were unmarried or in a relationship. 84.2% of FMs had children.
- **LGBTQIAP+:** 6.25% of FMs identified as LGBTQIAP+.
- **Residence information:** All FMs were natives of Kerala, 68.4% were residents of a rural locale, and 31.6% were residents of urban locale.

The following responses relate to FMs from SU participation in PD courses in the preceding year:

- **Participation in PD:** 57.9% of FMs participated in PD.
- **Location of PD:** 31.8% of FMs participated in PD at their own college or university, 31.8% participated in PD offered by other institutions, 22.7% participated in PD offered by HRDC within the state, and 13.7% participated in PD offered by HRDCs of other states.
- **PD programme type:** 23.1% of FMs participated in orientation programmes, 20.5% participated in staff training initiatives, 17.9% opted for refresher courses, 12.8% opted writing and publication workshops, 12.8% availed short-term courses, and 12.8% availed summer/winter school workshops.
- **Reason for non-participation:** 42.1% of FMs did not avail any PD opportunity. 37.5% could not avail these opportunities owing to the nature of their employment, 25.0% did not avail due to familial responsibilities, 25.0% did not have a desire to apply, and 12.5% reported a lack of opportunities.

In terms of the WAHEI student survey, 69 undergraduate students consented to participate:

- **Gender:** 72.1% of participants identified as women and 27.9% as men.
- **Age group:** A majority of students (52.9%) were 19 years old.
- **Social group:** A majority (63.8%) of students were from OBC, 18.8% were from General category, 11.6% were SC category, 1.4% were SC, and 4.3% were from EWS.
- **Religion:** 60.9% of students were Hindus, 34.8% were Muslims, and 4.3% were Christians.
- **Disability:** One student identified as disabled.
- **Family status:** 98.6% were unmarried, only one student was married. 98.3% of students did not have caring responsibilities; only one student had a child.

- **LGBTQIAP+:** One of the participating students identified as LGBTQIAP+.
- **Residence information:** All students were natives of Kerala, with 68.9% residing in rural areas and 31.1% in urban areas.

Beyond the individual-level initiatives undertaken by ILs and FMs, no formally instituted HE outreach activities were identified at SU.

3.5.2 Kerala GCID

The GCID from Kerala was established in the 2010s as part of the establishment of new Arts and Science Colleges in Assembly constituencies where there were no government or government-aided colleges. GCID serves rural and marginalised population from the coastal regions of Kerala. At present, this college offers undergraduate and integrated postgraduate programmes across a range of disciplines, including Arts, Sciences, and Commerce.

In GCID, there were 27 FMs, and 20 of them consented to participate in WAHEI survey. The demographic profile is presented below.

- **Gender:** 75.0% of FMs were women and 25.0% men.
- **Age group:** A majority of FMs (47.4%) were in the 31–40 age range, followed by 42.1% in the 41–50 group, 5.3% were 20–30 years and another 5.3% were 51–60 years.
- **Social group:** 65.0% of the FMs were OBC, 25.0% were from General category, and 10.0% were from SC community. There was no representation from ST or EWS groups.
- **Religion:** 50.0% of the FMs were Hindus, 45.0% Muslims, and 5.0% Christians.
- **Disability:** 10.0% of the FMs identified as having physical disabilities.
- **Family status:** 95.0% of FMs were married, while 5.0% were divorced or separated. Most FMs (90.0%) have children, with an average of 1.89 children per individual.
- **LGBTQIAP+:** None of the FMs identified as LGBTQIAP+.

- **Residence information:** 95.0% of GCID FMs were born in Kerala, while one FM (5.0%) was born in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). 50.0% of FMs were residents of rural locale, and 50.0% of the FMs were urban residents.

Information on GCID FMs in PD programmes in the preceding year has been presented below.

- **Participation in PD:** 78.9% of FMs participated in PD.
- **Location of PD:** 43.8% of FMs participated in programmes by HRDC within the state, 18.8% participated PD organised by their college, 18.8% participated in PD programmes offered by other colleges or universities, and another 18.8% of FMs participated in PD offered by HRDCs in other states.
- **PD programme type:** Refresher courses were the most frequently attended programme type (29.0%), followed by orientation programmes (22.6%), staff training initiatives (19.4%), short-term courses (12.9%), and writing and publication workshops (9.7%). An exchange programme was reported under the 'other activities' category by FMs.
- **Reason for non-participation:** 21.1% of respondents had not participated in any PD. 66.7% of FMs did not participate owing to familial responsibilities and 33.3% reported a lack of available opportunities.

Out of 199 undergraduate students at GCID, 178 students consented to participate in the WAHEI survey.

- **Gender:** 64.2% of undergraduates were women and 35.8% were men.
- **Age group:** 93.8% of students were 18-20 years old.
- **Social group:** 74.7% of undergraduates were OBCs, 14.0% were SC, 6.2% were from General category, and 5.1% were from EWS category. There were no students from ST category.
- **Religion:** 53.7% of students were Muslim, 44.6% were Hindu, and 1.7% were Christian.

- **Disability:** 3.5% students reported disabilities; 80.0% of them were intellectually disabled with one student with chronic neurological or blood disorder.
- **LGBTQIAP+:** None of the participating students identified as LGBTQIAP+.
- **Residence information:** All students were natives of Kerala, 76.6% residing in rural areas and 23.4% in urban areas.

Beyond the individual-level initiatives undertaken by ILs and FMs, no formally instituted HE outreach activities were identified at GCID.

3.5.3 Kerala GCA and GCB

GCA was established by a philanthropic committee in the 2000s. It is a government-aided HEI designated as a minority educational institution, with a commitment to serve underprivileged and marginalised communities in the tribal settlements and teak plantations in the surrounding areas. The institution offers a diverse range of undergraduate, postgraduate, and research programmes. The college is nationally appreciated for reserving 20% of its seats for orphans. This college also has many national and international collaboration initiatives. There were 63 FMs in GCA. 58 FMs were from OBC category and five were from General category. 50 FMs were Muslims and 12 were Hindus. 32 FMs were women and 31 were men. A majority of the faculty (58 FMs) were residents of a rural locale and five resided in urban locale.

GCB is a renowned institution of HE located in a hill district of Kerala. It was established in the 1980s with a vision to facilitate HE access to students from hilly and tribal regions of the state. At present, GCB offers six undergraduate and four postgraduate programmes across disciplines such as Humanities, Sciences, and Commerce. The college takes pride in its impressive gender ratio, with over 80% of women students, demonstrating its dedication to empowering women through education. GCB consistently produces university rank holders and accomplished individuals in academics and sports, highlighting its legacy of academic and extracurricular excellence. The total FM strength was 49. A majority of faculty (23 FMs) belong to OBC category, 16 were from General category, four were from SC, and six were from ST category. A majority of the faculty (26 FMs) were Hindus, 12 FMs were Christians, and 11 FMs were Muslims. 29 FMs

were women and 20 were men. Two FMs identified as disabled. Majority of faculty (35 FMs) resided in rural areas and 14 were based in urban area.

3.6 Maharashtra

3.6.1 Maharashtra State University

One of the prominent SUs located in Maharashtra, representing the western region of India, was selected for this research project. In the recent evaluation cycle (at the time of writing), the university was accredited with an A+ grade by NAAC. Ever since its establishment in the 1950s, this SU has played an important role in mobilising the local public towards the value of knowledge, freedom, democracy, and development. This university has been offering undergraduate and postgraduate programmes since its early years. At present, the university has 52 academic departments offering five undergraduate, 75 postgraduate, and 46 doctoral programmes, as well as 25 diplomas, advanced diplomas, postgraduate diplomas, and certificate programmes. Around 473 colleges in four districts were currently affiliated with this partner institution.

There were 15 FMs from SU who were engaged in teaching undergraduate courses in the university departments. All 15 FMs consented to participate in the WAHEI survey. Their demographic details are as follows:

- **Gender:** 66.7% of the respondents were men, while 33.3% were women.
- **Age group:** A majority (46.7%) of respondents fell within the 31-40 age group. 33.3% were in the 41-50 age group, 13.3% were 20-30 years old, and 6.7% were in the age group of 51-60 years.
- **Social group:** 26.7% of faculty were from General category, 20.0% of FMs were from OBC category, 20.0% were from SC, 20.0% were from ST category, and 13.3% were from EWS category.
- **Religion:** 86.7% of FMs identified themselves as Hindu and 13.3% identified as Buddhist.

- **Disability:** None of the respondents identified as physically disabled.
- **Family status:** The majority of respondents, 86.7% were married and 13.3% were unmarried. 80% of respondents had children.
- **LGBTQIAP+:** None of the FMs identified as LGBTQIAP+.
- **Residence information:** 93.3% of FMs were natives of Maharashtra. 42.9% of FMs were residents of rural areas and 57.1% were from urban areas.

In terms of participating in PD activities, the WAHEI survey found:

- **Participation in PD:** All FMs had availed PD.
- **Location of PD:** All FMs had availed PD within SU.
- **PD programme type:** FMs participated in orientation and induction programmes, workshops, short-term FDPs, conferences, and seminars.

A total of 163 students were enrolled in on-campus undergraduate programmes. All 163 students of the SU consented to participate in the WAHEI survey. The demographics details of the students are as follows:

- **Gender:** 78.5% of the students were men and 21.5% were women.
- **Age group:** 27.0% of the participating students were 19 years old, 23.9% were 20 years old, 14.1% were 21 years old, 4.9% were 23 years old, and 3.7% were 24 years old.
- **Social group:** 36.8% students were from General category, 26.4% were from SC category, 25.8% were from OBC category, 2.5% were from ST category, and 8.6% were from EWS.
- **Religion:** 60.7% of students identified as Hindus, 17.2% were Buddhist, 16.6% were Muslims, 4.3% were Christians, one student was Sikh and another was Jain.
- **Disability:** None of the participating students identified as disabled.

- **Family status:** A majority of students (95.7%) were unmarried, only 7 students reported being married. 1.8% of students had children.
- **LGBTQIAP+:** Two students identified as LGBTQIAP+.
- **Residence information:** 67.5% of students were natives of Maharashtra. 56.4% were residents of urban locale and 43.7% of students were residents of rural locale.

SU has a community radio station operating on campus which additionally serves as a channel for reaching and informing local communities about HE options. The university's campus also attracts visits from students of nearby schools and junior colleges, who come as part of institutional trips to explore facilities such as the museum, library, and historical monuments located within the university grounds—providing an informal yet meaningful point of engagement with HE for prospective students.

3.6.2 Maharashtra GCID

GCID from Maharashtra is one of the oldest colleges in the region, established in the 1960s. It was established with the vision of enabling HE access for students from rural communities. At the time of writing, the college offers 16 undergraduate, 25 postgraduate, and 12 PhD programmes, as well as 21 short-term certificate courses and two diploma programmes. The college was accredited with an A++ grade by NAAC in the recent round of evaluation.

There were 100 FMs from GCID who were engaged in teaching undergraduate courses. All 100 FMs consented to participate in the WAHEI survey. Their demographic details have been presented below.

- **Gender:** 43.0% of the respondents were men, while 57.0% were women.
- **Age group:** A majority (39.0%) of FMs fell within the 31-40 age group, 36.0% were in the age group of 41-50 years, 13.0% of FMs were 51 to 60 years, and 12.0% of the FMs were 20-30 years old.

- **Social group:** 54.0% of the FMs were from General category, 19.0% were from SC category, 18.0% were from OBC category, 6.0% were from EWS category, and 3.0% were from ST category.

- **Religion:** 85.0% of FMs identified themselves as Hindus, 9.0% of respondents identified as Buddhist, 5.0% of FMs were Muslims, and 1.0% of FMs identified as Jains.

- **Disability:** 2.0% of faculty (2 FMs), identified as differently abled.

- **Family status:** 78.0% (78 FMs) were married, while 19.0% (19 FMs) were unmarried, and 2.0% (2 FMs) identified as divorced or separated. 71% of faculty (71 FMs) reported having children.

- **LGBTQIAP+:** None of the FMs identified as LGBTQIAP+.

- **Residence information:** 99.0% of FMs were natives of Maharashtra. 83.0% (78 FMs) of FMs were residents of urban areas and 17.0% (16 FMs) were residents of rural areas.

In terms of participation in PD programmes, the WAHEI survey found the following:

- **Participation in PD:** All FMs had availed PD.

- **Location of PD:** All FMs had availed PD within GCID and other college/universities within the State.

- **PD programme type:** FMs participated in orientation and induction programmes, workshops, short-term FDPs, conferences, and seminars.

GCID had a total student enrolment of 7,733 across its undergraduate and postgraduate programmes in the academic year 2022-2023, of whom 3,372 were first-year undergraduate students. Of the 2,137 seats reserved for students from reserved categories, 1,825 were filled, representing an enrolment rate of 85.4%. 45.9% of the total students belong to General category, 31.0% were from OBC category, 20.4% were from SC category, and 2.8% belong to ST category. Women students account for approximately 45.0% of the total student body, whilst more than 60.0% of students come from rural or semi-urban areas within the state. Regionally, students from the Marathwada region constitute the largest proportion of the student body, followed by

those from Vidarbha and North Maharashtra, with students from western Maharashtra being comparatively fewer in number.

A total of 642 from GCID consented to participate in the WAHEI survey. The demographics details of the students are as follows:

- **Gender:** 60.1% of the participants were women, 39.7% were men, and 0.2% identified as transgender.
- **Age group:** 89.9% students were in the age group of 18-20 years, 8.6% were 21-23 years, and 1.1% were above the age group of 24 years.
- **Social group:** 40.1% students were from General category, 29.6% were from OBCs, 17.4% were from SC group, 2.4% ST respondents, and 10.5% were from EWS category.
- **Religion:** 83.1% respondents were Hindus, 11.1% were Buddhists, 3.1% were Muslims, 2.0% were Jains, 0.5% were Christians, 0.3% Sikh, and 0.5% were Zoroastrian/Parsi.
- **Disability:** 2.0% of the participating students identified as differently abled.
- **Family status:** 98.8% of students were unmarried, 1.1% were married, and 1 student was divorced or separated. 0.8% of students had children.
- **LGBTQIAP+:** One student identified as LGBTQIAP+.
- **Residence information:** 95.2% of students were natives of Maharashtra. 49.8% respondents reported an urban residence, while 50.2% students came from rural backgrounds.

GCID actively disseminates information about career opportunities and available programmes—spanning Science and Technology, Commerce and Management, and Humanities—to students completing Class 12. Extensive outreach activities, however, were largely confined to a select number of programmes, namely Bachelor of Business Administration (BBA), BCA (Bachelor of Computer Applications), Master of Business Administration (MBA), and Master of Computer Applications (MCA). For these programmes,

teaching faculty visits junior and senior colleges in the surrounding region to inform students about the opportunities available in their respective fields. These visits include practical guidance on online application form submission, entrance examination preparation, and programme and institution selection.

3.6.3 Maharashtra GCA and GCB

Both GCA and GCB from Maharashtra offered undergraduate and postgraduate programmes in the 1970s. GCA was established to enable HE access to previously underrepresented sections of society. At present, the college offers five undergraduate, one postgraduate programme, and three short-term certificate courses. The college has a total of 544 men and 366 women students, with women accounting for approximately 40% of the student body. GCA is located in the eastern part of the city, and students from this area prefer enrolling at the institution. GCA encompass student enrolment across all three years of undergraduate study. Whilst GCA individual FMs take it upon themselves to visit nearby villages, engage with parents, and encourage them to enrol their children in the college's undergraduate programmes. These FMs also assist families in navigating the admissions process and, in many instances, provide personal financial support to students in need.

At the time of writing, GCB offers five undergraduate, 16 postgraduate and eight PhD programmes. It also runs 13 short-term certificate courses and two diplomas. GCB is one of the more prominent colleges in the city, with 1,678 students admitted to first-year undergraduate programmes. At GCB, FMs offer counselling to prospective students at the point of admission to undergraduate programmes, typically during June and July, at the start of the academic year. A small number of FMs also visit schools and colleges in the vicinity to inform students about the learning opportunities available at GCB. Several FMs go further by personally sponsoring students, covering tuition fees and, in some cases, boarding expenses.

3.7 Conclusion

Overall, this chapter provides an overview of the participating HEIs in each state, using primary and secondary data collected by the five state research teams in India. First, the chapter offered an overview of the faculty and student composition at each HEI across the selected states. The

HEIs selected by the state research teams reflect the diversity of HEIs across various parameters, including the range of courses and subjects offered, the numbers of FMs employed, the locations and communities served by HEIs.

This chapter scoped the social demographics of FMs and undergraduate students at the selected HEIs in each state. The sampled HEIs varied considerably between states and also between SUs and government colleges. In general, SU FMs tended to be from more privileged social groups than FMs in government colleges; SUs also tended to have a higher proportion of FMs who were men. There was a very low occurrence of FMs with disabilities and FMs identifying as other than heterosexual. There was a slightly higher incidence of students than FMs with disabilities and identifying as LGBTQIAP+. Due to colleges serving relatively local communities, there was more variance of social group of students. Chapter 4 explores FMs in more detail and Chapter 6 presents more information on students. In terms of PD participation for FMs, most FMs avail faculty development opportunities, with non-participation in PD being mainly related to contract type, interest, and availability of opportunities.

Lastly, this chapter also scoped various HE outreach activities conducted at each state level, based on administrative and official information provided by the HEIs to the state research teams. This review of existing institutional HE outreach practices revealed relatively little information, but the information provided shows that HE outreach is already carried out in a range of ways. Chapter 5 explores this in more detail.

In sum, this chapter provided in-depth portraits of each sampled HEI in order to provide the context behind the whole-sample analysis presented in Chapters 4, 5, and 6.

Chapter 4: Who Are the Faculty Members?

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents an analysis of who the faculty are, where they come from, and how their trajectories into and within academia have evolved. Based on interviews from Institutional Leaders (ILs) and survey data and interviews from Faculty Members (FMs) across State Universities (SUs) and government colleges, the chapter maps the demographic, social, and educational characteristics of respondents and examines their professional pathways. This chapter addresses the following Research Question (RQ): 'RQ1a: Who is delivering HE in colleges and universities in rural and semi-urban locations? Who are the FMs and the ILs?'

4.2 Demographic Background of Faculty Members

This section presents the demographic profile of FMs across SUs and government colleges. It examines their age, gender, social group, religion, disability status, relationship, parental status, and place of permanent residence. Together, these indicators offer a snapshot of who constitutes the teaching workforce in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in our sample, and they reveal patterns of representation and diversity across institutions.

4.2.1 Demographic Background

Table I.4.1: Year of Birth – Whole Responses

Age Range	N	%
Less than 30	94	20.0
30-40	178	37.9
40-50	142	30.2
50-60	55	11.7
More than 60	1	0.2
Total	**470**	**100**

Table I.4.2: Year of Birth – By State Universities and Government Colleges

Age group	State Universities		Government Colleges	
	N	%	N	%
20-30	40	15.6	54	25.2
31-40	98	38.3	80	37.4
41-50	91	35.5	51	23.8
51-60	26	10.2	29	13.6
60+	1	0.4	0	0
Total	**256**	**100**	**214**	**100**

The majority of FMs (88%) are under 50 years old. Only 11.9% of FMs are older than 50, with one FM in the over 60 age bracket (Table I.4.1). Across both SUs and government colleges, the majority of FMs were in the age bracket of 31-40, followed by 41-50. Government college FMs on the whole were younger, with 62.6% under 40 compared to 53.9% in the SUs.

Table I.4.3: Gender

Gender	Total Valid Responses		State Universities		Government Colleges	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
1. Female	230	48.5	108	41.7	122	56.7
2. Male	244	51.5	151	58.3	93	43.3
Total	**474**	**100**	**259**	**100**	**215**	**100**

The gender distribution is fairly balanced, with 51.5% male and 48.5% female FMs (Table I.4.3). SUs have a 41.7% female and 58.3% male faculty composition. Conversely, government colleges have a higher female proportion at 56.7%, compared to 43.3% males. No FMs identified as transgender.

Table I.4.4: Caste / Social Group

Caste / Social Group	Total Valid Responses		State Universities		Government Colleges	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
SC	60	12.7	25	9.7	35	16.3
ST	17	3.6	12	4.7	5	2.3
OBC	120	25.4	68	26.4	52	24.2
General (Non-SC/ST/OBC)	266	56.2	150	58.1	116	54.0
EWS (Non-SC/ST/OBC)	10	2.1	3	1.2	7	3.3
Total	**473**	**100**	**258**	**100**	**215**	**100**

The data sample includes FMs from diverse social groups. Overall, the proportions are as follows: the highest belong to the General category (56.2%), followed by 25.4% from Other Backward Classes (OBC) backgrounds, and smaller proportions for Scheduled Castes (SC) (12.7%), Scheduled Tribes (ST) (3.6%), and Economically Weaker Section (EWS) (2.1%) (Table I.4.4).

In SUs and government colleges, the general category makes up a large part of the faculty population (58.1% and 54%, respectively). The OBC proportion is 26.4% in SUs and 24.2% in government colleges. The SC population is 9.7% in SUs and 16.3% in government colleges. The proportions of ST (4.7% in SUs and 2.3% in government colleges) and EWS (1.2% in SUs and 3.3% in government colleges) are comparatively lower (Table I.4.4).

Table I.4.5: Religion

Religion	Total Valid Responses		State Universities		Government Colleges	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Hindu	389	82.2	226	87.6	163	75.8
Muslim	55	11.6	17	6.6	38	17.7
ORM	29	6.1	15	5.8	14	6.5
Total	**473**	**100**	**258**	**100**	**215**	**100**

Most FMs are identified as Hindus (82.2%). Meanwhile, 11.6% and 6.1% belong to Muslim and other religious minority groups, respectively (Table I.4.5).

In SUs and government colleges, the majority of faculty belong to Hindu (87.6% and 75.8%, respectively). Government colleges have 17.7% Muslim faculty, which is higher than the 6.6% in SUs. Other Religious Minorities (ORM) has a similar proportion, at 5.8% in SUs and 6.5% in government colleges (Table I.4.5).

Table I.4.6: Differently Abled

Differently Abled	Total Valid Responses		State Universities		Government Colleges	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Yes	4	0.8	0	0.0	4	1.9
No	468	99.2	258	100	210	98.1
Total	**472**	**100**	**258**	**100**	**214**	**100**

Overall, FMs who are differently abled constitute 0.8% of the total faculty (Table I.4.6). In SUs, no FMs belong to the differently abled group, whereas government colleges have a 1.9% representation.

Table I.4.7: LGBTQIAP+

Options	Total Valid Responses		State Universities		Government Colleges	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Yes	3	0.7	3	1.2	0	0.0
No	448	98.7	250	98.0	198	99.5
Prefer not to say	3	0.7	2	0.8	1	0.5
Total	**454**	**100**	**255**	**100**	**199**	**100**

The data indicates that a very small proportion of FMs, 0.7%, identify as LGBTQIAP+, with an additional 0.7% opting not to disclose their orientation (Table I.4.7).

Table I.4.8: Relationship Status

Relationship Status	Total Valid Responses		State Universities		Government Colleges	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Married	355	74.9	198	76.4	157	73
Unmarried	106	22.4	54	20.8	52	24.2
Divorced/separated	11	2.3	6	2.3	5	2.3
Other	2	0.4	1	0.4	1	0.5
Total	**474**	**100**	**259**	**100**	**215**	**100**

A significant majority of FMs are married, accounting for 74.9% of the total. Unmarried FMs constitute 22.4%, while 2.3% of individuals are divorced/separated (Table I.4.8).

A total of 76.4% of faculty at SUs are married, compared to 73% at government colleges. The proportions of unmarried and divorced faculty are consistent across both types of institutions (Table I.4.8).

Table I.4.9: Parental Status

Do you have any children?	Total Valid Responses		State Universities		Government Colleges	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Yes	318	69.6	173	70.6	145	68.4
No	139	30.4	72	29.4	67	31.6
Total	**457**	**100**	**245**	**100**	**212**	**100**

Furthermore, 69.6% of all FMs have children (Table I.4.9). Specifically, 70.6% of faculty at SUs are parents, whereas 68.4% of faculty in government colleges have children.

Table I.4.10: Place of Permanent Residence

Options	Total Valid Responses		State Universities		Government Colleges	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Rural	152	32.6	69	27.0	83	39.5
Urban	314	67.4	187	73.0	127	60.5
Total	**466**	**100**	**256**	**100**	**210**	**100**

Regarding residential background, 67.4% of FMs' place of permanent residence is in urban areas, with the remaining 32.6% from rural areas (Table I.4.10).

In SUs (Table I.4.10), 73% of faculty come from urban backgrounds, and 27% from rural areas. In contrast, 60.5% of faculty in government colleges are urban residents, while 39.5% are from rural areas.

4.2.2 Summary

In summary, the FMs surveyed across participating SUs and government colleges come from varied social and geographic backgrounds, though some groups continue to have a stronger presence than others. Most respondents belong to Hindu households, with smaller proportions from Muslim, Christian, and other communities. The General category remains dominant, followed by OBCs, while representation from SC and ST groups is limited. Only a few respondents reported living with a disability.

Most faculty are married and live in nuclear families. A large share comes from urban and semi-urban areas, while a smaller but significant group is based in or comes from rural areas, which may shape their understanding of the educational contexts their students come from. Overall, the data suggest that the social profile of faculty in the participating institutions remains largely homogeneous, with modest representation from historically underrepresented and rural backgrounds.

4.3 Demographic Background of Institutional Leaders

This section provides an overview of the demographic of the 20 ILs included in the study as a group, based on the brief profile questionnaires that IL interview participants completed.

4.3.1 Demographic Background

Only three of the 20 ILs were female, and the remaining seventeen were male. Thirteen ILs were within the age range of 50-60, four were 40-49, two were 60, and one was 39. Eleven ILs were in the General social group, seven were OBC, and two belonged to SC. There was one IL who identified as Christian, two who were Muslim, and the remaining 17 were all Hindu. The three ILs who were not Hindu were all within the same region, Kerala. Only one IL identified as having a disability (physical). All ILs were married and with children, and none identified as LGBTQIAP+. All but one were born in India, with the one outlier being born in the Middle East. Eleven ILs described their place of birth as urban, eight described it as rural, and one provided an invalid answer.

The earliest appointment to IL was in 2012, with the vast majority being appointed to the position in the 2020s (apart from the 2012 appointment and one 2018 appointment). The earliest year of joining the institution they were currently employed at was 1991 (two cases). Nine IL had joined the institution the same year that they were appointed IL. Twelve IL were appointed to the institution by direct recruitment calls of the institutions, four had completed examinations conducted by the government, and three had been promoted. All but one IL were on regular appointments.

4.3.2 Summary

The demographic picture at IL level is quite different to that of the FMs. The majority of FMs were over the age of 30, but under the age of 50, contrastingly, ILs were mostly concentrated in the age group of 50-60. The gender distribution of FMs was relatively even, but the ILs were primarily male. All ILs were married and with children, and overall were from relatively diverse social groups, which aligns with the profiles of the FMs discussed in the previous section. Apart from one, all ILs were born in India but from a mix of urban and rural areas. The majority had been appointed to the role of IL in the past five years, mainly following direct recruitment calls from

the institutions with some completing government-conducted examinations or being internally promoted.

4.4 Institutional Leaders and Faculty Members: Residence and Commute Information

This section explores the living arrangements and commuting patterns of ILs and FMs. It analyses where faculty reside during the week and weekends, the extent to which they live on or near campus, and the modes of transport they use to reach their workplace. These patterns can shed light on issues of mobility, accessibility, and work-life balance, which can influence faculty engagement, participation in institutional life, and interactions with local communities.

4.4.1 Residence and Commute Information

Table I.4.11: Staying in More Than One Residence on a Weekly Basis

	Total Valid Responses		State Universities		Government Colleges	
	N	**%**	**N**	**%**	**N**	**%**
Yes	71	15.2	41	15.8	30	14.4
No	397	84.8	218	84.2	179	85.6
Total	**468**	**100**	**259**	**100**	**209**	**100**

A small but notable proportion (15.2 percent) of the total FMs live far from their workplace, maintaining multiple residence. In contrast, a majority of FMs commute from their residence daily (Table I.4.11).

The proportion of faculty commuting and residing in more than one residence on a weekly basis across both types of institutions, SUs and government colleges, is similar (Table I.4.11).

Table I.4.12: If Yes, During the Working Week, Where Do You Live in Relation to Your Place of Work

Options	Total Valid Responses		State Universities		Government Colleges	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
On Campus	10	14.9	9	23.1	1	3.6
Same town/location	33	49.3	18	46.2	15	53.6
Same district but not same town/location	7	10.4	1	2.6	6	21.4
Same state, different district	17	25.4	11	28.2	6	21.4
In a different state	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Total of Answer = Yes	**67**	**100**	**39**	**100**	**28**	**100**

Out of those who are staying in more than one residence, 14.9% of faculty stays inside the campus, 49.3% are in the same town as of their workplace, 10.4% live in the same district but not same town/location, and around one fourth (25.4%) are in the same state as of their workplace but live in some other district (Table I.4.12).

In SUs (Table I.4.12), nearly half of the FMs (46.2%) reside in the same town as their workplace, followed by 28.2% who live in the same state but a different district. About 23.1% of FMs reside on campus, making easy for them to commute, while only 2.6% live in the same district but not the same town.

In government colleges (Table I.4.12), a majority (53.6%) of the FMs also reside in the same town/location as the college. A smaller proportion (21.4%) of FMs live either in the same district or same state, and only 3.6% reside on campus.

Table I.4.13: Place of Residence During Weekends/Vacations

Options	Total Valid Response		State Universities		Government Colleges	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
On Campus	3	4.5	2	5.3	1	3.6
Same town/location	16	24.2	6	15.8	10	35.7
Same district but not same town/location	13	19.7	6	15.8	7	25.0
Same state, different district	32	48.5	22	57.9	10	35.7
In a different state	2	3.0	2	5.3	0	0.0
Total of Answer = Yes	**66**	**100**	**38**	**100**	**28**	**100**

Table I.4.13 shows that during weekends, majority of the FMs (48.5%) stays in the same state but in a different district, while 24.2% resides in the same town as their workplace. Comparatively lower proportion stays in the institution campus (4.5%) and in a different state (3.0%).

The analysis (Table I.4.13) reveals distinct residence and commuting patterns among FMs in SUs and government colleges. In SUs, a majority of faculty (57.9%) reside within the same state but in different districts during weekends, with an equal proportion (15.8%) living in the same town and district but not on campus. Only 5.3% of faculty stay on campus, and another 5.3% reside outside the state in their permanent homes.

Conversely, in government colleges, the predominant pattern indicates that 35.7% of faculty reside in the same town or location, and an equivalent percentage live within the same state but in different districts. A smaller proportion of faculty (25.0%) lives in the same district but outside the town, with only 3.6% residing on campus.

Table I.4.14: If No, Where Do You Live in Relation to Your Place of Work

Option	Total Valid Responses		State Universities		Government Colleges	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
On Campus	61	16.5	56	28.6	5	2.8
Same town/location	205	55.0	106	54.1	99	55.9
Same district but not same town/location	58	15.5	18	9.2	40	22.6
Same state, different district	46	12.3	15	7.7	31	17.5
In a different state	3	0.8	1	0.5	2	1.1
Total of Answer = Yes	**373**	**100**	**196**	**100**	**177**	**100**

Regarding permanent residence, approximately 55.0% of faculty in both institutions reside in the same town/location as their workplace, which may contribute to reduced commuting time (Table I.4.14). On campus residence is higher in SUs (28.6%) compared to government colleges (2.8%). In government colleges, a significant proportion of FMs (22.6%) live within the same district but outside the town, and 17.5% reside in the same state but different districts. An almost negligible percentage of FMs live outside the state (0.5% in SUs and 1.1% in government colleges).

Table I.4.15: Mean Distance from Usual Weekly Residence to University/College (in kms)

HEI	Mean distance from weekly residence to HEI (kms)
State Universities	25.90
Government Colleges	17.32
Whole sample	22.00

Note: N=459 (valid responses), 250 in SUs, 209 in government colleges.

The above Table I.4.15 indicates that faculty of government colleges live relatively closer to their institutions, as they reported a lower mean distance 17.32 km, whereas faculty in SUs are commuting from farther distances with a mean distance of 25.90 km.

Table I.4.16: Average Travel Time from Faculties' Usual Weekly Residence to University/College

HEI	Mean travel time from weekly residence to HEI (minutes)
State Universities	37.52
Government Colleges	37.95
Whole sample	37.72

Note: N=457 (valid responses), 250 in SUs, 207 in government colleges.

Though the difference in the mean distance travelled by FMs of SUs and government colleges is 8.58 km, the mean travel time for FMs from both institutions is approximately the same. FMs of SUs take an average of 37.52 minutes to travel from their weekly residence to the university, while FMs of government colleges take 37.95 minutes to reach their institution.

Table I.4.17: Mode of Transportation to College/University

Options	Total Valid Responses		State Universities		Government Colleges	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Walking	64	9.5	46	11.5	18	6.6
Cycle	12	1.8	11	2.8	1	0.4
Rickshaw/Auto	53	7.9	23	5.8	30	11.1
Bus/Minivan	76	11.3	51	12.8	25	9.2
Train	17	2.5	9	2.3	8	3.0
Bike/Scooty/Scooter	213	31.7	99	24.8	114	42.1
Carpool	27	4.0	1	0.3	26	9.6
Personal Car	204	30.4	156	39.0	48	17.7
Other	5	0.7	4	1.0	1	0.4
Total	**671**	**100**	**400**	**100**	**271**	**100**

Table I.4.17 shows that the majority of the faculty commute primarily by private vehicles, including bike/scooter (31.7%) and personal car (30.4%). Walking is utilised by 9.5%, public transportation, including buses/minivan by 11.3%, and autorickshaws by 7.9%. A relatively

small percentage of faculty uses alternative modes of transportation such as cycle (1.8%), train (2.5%), carpool (4%), and other miscellaneous modes (0.7%). No respondents mentioned travelling by metro or tractor.

Use of different transportation modes differ between the two types of institutions (Table I.4.17). In SUs, 39.0% of faculty primarily commute using personal four-wheelers, whereas in government colleges, a majority (42.1%) use two wheelers. Furthermore, 24.8% of FMs at SUs commute by bicycle or motorcycle, while 17.7% of FMs at government colleges depend on personal vehicles.

4.4.2 Summary

To sum up, most FMs live in the same city or town as their institution, while others travel from nearby districts or semi-urban areas. Faculty of government colleges live relatively closer to their institutions, demonstrated by shorter average distances. However, the time to travel to institutions is similar and averages around 37.72 minutes. Travel time varies, but many respondents reported spending between one and two hours each day commuting, using a mix of personal vehicles and public transport. Only a small proportion live in campus housing, and several institutions have limited residential facilities. These findings offer a snapshot of how faculty are geographically positioned in relation to their workplaces. The spatial proximity of many faculty to their institutions suggests a potential to contribute to the larger goal of expanding awareness and informed access to Higher Education (HE). Faculty who live nearby are well placed to interact with local schools and community networks, which could help strengthen the connection between HE and the communities it serves.

4.5 Institutional Leaders' and Faculty Members' Family Educational Background

This section provides insights into the educational and occupational backgrounds of FMs' parents and spouses, offering an understanding of intergenerational mobility and socio-economic positioning. It examines differences in parental education, employment, and family income, as well as whether the FMs are first-generation academics. By tracing these family-level factors, the section can help in understanding how faculty may perceive their role in

enabling informed access for students from diverse socio-economic and educational backgrounds.

4.5.1 Educational and Family Background

Table I.4.18: Mother's Qualification

Level of education	Total Valid Responses		State Universities		Government Colleges	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Do not know	13	2.8	3	1.2	10	4.8
Not Applicable	2	0.4	1	0.4	1	0.5
Did not access formal schooling	37	8.0	13	5.0	24	11.6
1st to 5th class	54	11.6	18	7.0	36	17.4
6th to 8th class	46	9.9	25	9.7	21	10.1
9th to 10th class	102	21.9	57	22.1	45	21.7
11th to 12th class	79	17.0	49	19.0	30	14.5
Diploma / Industrial Training Institute (ITI) / Industrial Training Centre (ITC)	21	4.5	18	7.0	3	1.4
Degree education (e.g., Bachelor of Arts (BA), Bachelor of Science (BSc))	75	16.1	46	17.8	29	14.0
Post-graduate education (e.g., Master of Arts (MA), Master of Science (MSc))	32	6.9	25	9.7	7	3.4
Master of Philosophy (MPhil) and/or Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)	4	0.9	3	1.2	1	0.5
Total	**465**	**100**	**258**	**100**	**207**	**100**

In the context of family educational history (maximum level completed), 8% of FMs mothers did not attend formal schooling, 11.6% completed primary schooling, 9.9% completed elementary school. The majority of mothers (21.9%) completed their secondary education, followed by

senior secondary (17.0%) and degree education (16.1%). Only 0.9% mothers have earned an MPhil/PhD (Table I.4.18).

The majority of mothers of the FMs in both institutions (Table I.4.18) (22.1% in SUs and 21.7% in government colleges) had at least completed secondary school (9th to 10th class). Government colleges have a higher percentage of mothers of FMs who have not received any formal education (11.6%) than SUs (5.0%). Mothers who have completed their graduation is higher in proportion in SUs (17.8%) in comparison to government colleges (14.0%). Only 1.2% mothers have done MPhil/PhD in SUs and 0.5% in government colleges.

Table I.4.19: Father's Qualification

Level of education	Total Valid Responses		State Universities		Government Colleges	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Do not know	9	1.9	3	1.2	6	2.9
Not Applicable	3	0.6	0	0.0	3	1.4
Did not access formal schooling	15	3.2	4	1.5	11	5.2
1st to 5th class	30	6.4	11	4.2	19	9.0
6th to 8th class	17	3.6	8	3.1	9	4.3
9th to 10th class	61	13.0	26	10.0	35	16.7
11th to 12th class	58	12.4	28	10.8	30	14.3
Diploma/ITI/ITC	42	9.0	29	11.2	13	6.2
Degree education (e.g., BA, BSc)	150	32.0	93	35.9	57	27.1
Post-Graduate education (e.g., MA, MSc)	68	14.5	45	17.4	23	11.0
MPhil and/or PhD	16	3.4	12	4.6	4	1.9
Total	**469**	**100**	**259**	**100**	**210**	**100**

The overall proportion (Table I.4.19) of FM fathers who did not attend formal schooling is 3.2%, whilst 6.4% completed their primary education, and 3.6% completed elementary education (6th

to 8th). The majority of the fathers of FMs (32.0%) finished HE and 14.5% completed post-graduate education, while 3.4% did MPhil/PhD.

If we look at the breakdown of SUs and government colleges (Table I.4.19), 1.5% and 5.2% of FM fathers did not attend formal schooling, respectively. More fathers of FMs from government college completed their primary education (9.0%) than those from SUs (4.2%). The proportion of fathers of FMs who have completed HE is high in both SUs (35.9%) and government colleges (27.1%). 17.4% FM fathers from SUs and 11% from government colleges completed their post-graduate degree.

Across regions and institutional types, interview data with both FMs and ILs reveals a shift from limited formal education in earlier generations towards higher levels of educational attainment in more recent generations. Whereas grandparents were previously limited in formal schooling, parents, sibling, and spouses attained higher educational levels up to postgraduate qualifications, across various esteemed fields. There are some exceptions to this, for example, Nana, the IL for SU in Maharashtra, reported a paternal grandfather who worked as a teacher and a maternal grandmother who held a position of education officer, suggesting a tradition of working in the educational sector. Nana also reported a brother with a master's and PhD qualifications. Notably, the IL at the SU in Haryana discussed being the third generation to attend HE, with both parents, and paternal and maternal grandfathers, accessing HE (although neither grandmother had accessed HE). Despite these outliers, the general situation across regions and institutions was one of generational shifts towards HE. It was also common for spouses to have HE qualifications, often at postgraduate level (e.g. the spouse of an IL at Government College In-Depth (GCID) in Maharashtra held a PhD; multiple others held a postgraduate degree).

In particular, the educational qualifications of women have notably improved across generations, with mention of more daughters and sisters now holding advanced degrees (SU and GCID, Assam). This aligns with the Gender Parity Index (GPI) which indicates increased parity across genders in HE in India (MoE, 2023). A key example here is the IL of Government College 'A' (GCA) in Haryana, whose mother and grandparents had no formal education, and father had only accessed school education, making her leap to IL significant. It was common for mothers of those interviewed to be homemakers (e.g. as was the case for all ILs in Haryana).

Although there was significant reporting of parents and siblings having HE qualifications, FMs and ILs were often the first of their family to pursue a faculty career, with some exceptions. There was also discussion of family members who were involved in school-level teaching, suggesting a family background in education more broadly. There was also some blurring of understanding with some FMs saying that they had family members who were faculty but were revealed in interviews to be schoolteachers, suggesting potential confusion with the distinction between different academic positions.

Table I.4.20: Occupation / Former Occupation of Mother

Occupation / Former Occupation	Total Valid Responses		State Universities		Government Colleges	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Self Employed -Agriculture	19	4.6	14	5.7	5	3.0
Self Employed -Non-Agriculture	4	1.0	3	1.2	1	0.6
Wages Worker	3	0.7	2	0.8	1	0.6
Salaried	66	16.0	47	19.3	19	11.3
Housewife	309	75.0	173	70.9	136	81.0
Unemployed / No Occupation	11	2.7	5	2.0	6	3.6
Total	**412**	**100**	**244**	**100**	**168**	**100**

Table I.4.20 shows that most FMs' mothers are housewives (75.0%), but that 16.0% are salaried employees. Agriculture (4.6%), self-employed non-agriculture (1%), and wage workers (0.7%) are the occupations with a proportion of less than 10%. In total, 2.7% of mothers are unemployed.

According to data from SUs and government colleges (Table I.4.20), over 70% are housewives, while salaried individuals come in afterwards (19.3% in SUs and 11.3% in government colleges). The lowest percentage of mothers of FMs in both institutions work for a wage (0.8% in SUs and 0.6% in government colleges).

Table I.4.21: Occupation / Former Occupation of Father

Occupation / Former Occupation	Total Valid Responses		State Universities		Government Colleges	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Self Employed - Agriculture	82	19.7	37	15.0	45	26.3
Self Employed - Non-Agriculture	51	12.2	38	15.4	13	7.6
Wages Worker	24	5.8	12	4.9	12	7.0
Salaried	232	55.6	154	62.6	78	45.6
Unemployed / No Occupation	28	6.7	5	2.0	23	13.5
Total	**417**	**100**	**246**	**100**	**171**	**100**

Overall data (Table I.4.21) suggests that 55.6% fathers of FMs are working as salaried employees, and 31.9% are self-employed in agriculture and non-agriculture sector. 5.8% of FM fathers are waged workers, whereas 6.7% are unemployed.

Data of SUs and government colleges (Table I.4.21) show that salaried employee is the most prominent occupation of fathers, 62.6% and 45.6% respectively. FM fathers self-employed in SUs are around 15%. In government colleges, FM fathers self-employed in agriculture sector is higher than SUs. SUs have fewer unemployed fathers of FMs (2.0%) than government colleges (13.5%).

Table I.4.22: Occupation / Former Occupation of Spouse

Occupation / Former Occupation	Total Valid Responses		State Universities		Government Colleges	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Self Employed - Agriculture	2	0.6	0	0.0	2	1.6
Self Employed - Non-Agriculture	21	6.7	9	4.7	12	9.8
Salaried	195	62.5	123	64.7	72	59.0
Housewife	83	26.6	53	27.9	30	24.6
Unemployed / No Occupation	8	2.6	4	2.1	4	3.3
Scholar	3	1.0	1	0.5	2	1.6
Total	**312**	**100**	**190**	**100**	**122**	**100**

The overall data (Table I.4.22) suggests that majority of FMs spouses are salaried (62.5%) followed by housewife/househusband (26.6%). A small proportion of spouses are self-employed in non-agricultural sectors (6.7%), while almost negligible numbers are unemployed (2.6%), engaged in agriculture sector (0.6%), and are scholars (1.0%).

Disaggregated data (Table I.4.22) shows a similar pattern. Among SUs spouses of FMs, 64.7% are salaried and 27.9% are housewives/househusbands. In government colleges, the proportion of salaried spouses is slightly lower (59.0%), while housewives/househusbands constitute 24.6%. FM spouses self-employment in non-agricultural activities are higher in government colleges (9.8%) than in SUs (4.7%).

Table I.4.23: Average Monthly Family Income

Monthly income in Indian Rupee (INR)	Total Valid Responses		State Universities		Government Colleges	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Less than 25,000	23	5.1	3	1.2	20	9.6
25,001-50,000	65	14.3	19	7.7	46	22.1
50,001-75,000	45	9.9	28	11.4	17	8.2
75,001-100,000	115	25.3	78	31.7	37	17.8
More than 100,000	206	45.4	118	48.0	88	42.3
Total	**454**	**100**	**246**	**100**	**208**	**100**

45.4% of FMs have an average monthly family income of more than 100,000 INR. 5.1% of the faculty had the lowest income (less than 25,000 INR) (Table I.4.23).

Table I.4.23 shows that the highest income for 48.0% of FMs at SUs and 42.3% at government colleges is more than 100,000 INR. The lowest average income at SUs is less than 25,000 INR, monthly. Whereas, in government colleges (8.2%) it ranges from 50,001-75,000 INR.

Table I.4.24: First Person in the Family to Hold a Faculty Position

Options	Total Valid Responses		State Universities		Government Colleges	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Yes	356	75.6	194	75.2	162	76.1
No	115	24.4	64	24.8	51	23.9
Total	**471**	**100**	**258**	**100**	**213**	**100**

75.6% of the respondents are the first in their family to hold a faculty position (Table I.4.24).

Table I.4.24 indicates that 75.2% of FMs at SUs and 76.1% at government colleges are first in their families to join the college as FM.

Table I.4.25: First Person in the Family to Hold a Faculty Position by Demographic Group

	Options	State Universities (Yes)	State Universities (No)	Total	Government Colleges (Yes)	Government Colleges (No)	Total
Gender	Female (N)	83	24	**107**	82	39	**121**
	Female (%)	77.6	22.4	**100**	67.8	32.2	**100**
	Male (N)	111	40	**151**	80	12	**92**
	Male (%)	73.5	26.5	**100**	87.0	13.0	**100**
Social Group	SC (N)	24	4	**28**	30	4	**34**
	SC (%)	85.7	14.3	**100**	88.2	11.8	**100**
	ST (N)	10	2	**12**	3	2	**5**
	ST (%)	83.3	16.7	**100**	60.0	40.0	**100**
	OBC (N)	60	8	**68**	42	10	**52**
	OBC (%)	88.2	11.8	**100**	80.8	19.2	**100**
	General (N)	99	50	**149**	82	33	**115**
	General (%)	66.4	33.6	**100**	71.3	28.7	**100**
	EWS (N)	3	0	**3**	5	2	**7**
	EWS (%)	100.0	0.0	**100**	71.4	28.6	**100**
Religion	Hindu (N)	167	58	**225**	121	40	**161**
	Hindu (%)	74.2	25.8	**100**	75.2	24.8	**100**
	Muslim (N)	15	2	**17**	29	9	**38**
	Muslim (%)	88.2	11.8	**100**	76.3	23.7	**100**
	ORM (N)	11	4	**15**	12	2	**14**
	ORM (%)	73.3	26.7	**100**	85.7	14.3	**100**
Place of Permanent Residence	Rural (N)	54	14	**68**	68	15	**83**
	Rural (%)	79.4	20.6	**100**	81.9	18.1	**100**
	Urban (N)	138	48	**186**	90	35	**125**
	Urban (%)	74.2	25.8	**100**	72.0	28.0	**100**

The above data in Table I.4.25 indicates that across almost every category, a significant majority of FMs are first-generation to hold a faculty position, though the rates vary by demographic group.

Disadvantaged groups (SC, ST, OBC, EWS) have the highest rates of being the first in their family to hold a faculty position, often exceeding 80-90%, while the General category has the lowest rates (66-71%).

In SUs, more females than males are first-generation (73.5% male vs. 77.6% female), but in government colleges, the rate is much higher for males (87.0% male vs. 67.8% for females).

For SUs, faculty from rural backgrounds and those identifying as Muslims (88.2%) shows a high rate of being first-generation academics, whereas in government colleges, ORM and rural background faculty are predominantly first-generation academics, with reported rates of 85.7% and 81.9%, respectively.

In the interviews, the ILs were often the first in their family to pursue an academic career. There were some exceptions for this, for example the Assam GCA IL and Assam Government College 'B' (GCB) IL mentioned siblings who had become an FM first. The IL at Assam GCID mentioned that his father and brother were both schoolteachers, suggesting a gradual development of faculty positions within the family.

Among the FMs interviewed the majority were the first to hold faculty positions, which aligns with the survey findings. There were some exceptions, for example, Sharmishtha, FM in Maharashtra GCB, mentioned that her father had a PhD degree and was a professor. Likewise, Deva, another FM in Maharashtra, made reference to their brother being an FM and guiding them. Family members in the teaching profession more broadly was also common. It was also common for participants to suggest that there were other FMs in their family when in reality they had other educational professionals in the family. This highlights some blurred perceptions in understanding the distinction between the two academic positions. The notable confusion in reporting FMs within the family could be attributed to both factors: some respondents may have misunderstood the term to include any kind of teaching, including at the school level, while others may have been influenced by how +1 and +2 education is commonly referred to as 'junior college' in the state. In such cases, schoolteachers may have been considered 'faculty members', contributing to the ambiguity.

4.5.1.1 Summary

In summary, FMs in the participating institutions generally come from families with moderate to high levels of education and relatively stable occupational backgrounds. Many respondents reported that their fathers had completed at least secondary or higher-secondary schooling, and a considerable number held college or professional degrees. Mothers' education levels were somewhat lower but still reflected access to schooling beyond the primary stage for a large share of respondents. Parental occupations were concentrated in education, government service, and small business, with fewer reporting employment in agriculture or the informal sector. This pattern points to families that are generally stable in income and familiar with formal education. Many FMs are the first in their families to enter academic professions, though not always the first to complete HE. A significant majority of FMs were the first in their family to hold a faculty position, particularly in the case of those from disadvantaged groups and/or rural backgrounds. There were also differences between SUs and government colleges, with females in SUs being more likely to be first-generation FMs whereas the rate was higher in males in government colleges. There were also several discussions of family members who were schoolteachers, so not FMs but still working within the field of education.

Taken together, the data suggest that most faculty come from educated, middle-income households, reflecting gradual movement within the professional and service classes rather than entry from the most disadvantaged sections of society.

4.5.2 Schooling History

This section traces the schooling experiences of FMs, including the type of schools attended, language of instruction, and the curriculum or board under which they studied. These experiences shape faculty perspectives on secondary-level education systems and influence their capacity to relate to students who are still navigating school-to-college transitions. The section also highlights the urban-rural divide in schooling backgrounds, which may affect how faculty understand and engage with disadvantaged students.

Table I.4.26: Location of Senior Secondary School (11th-12th Class)

Options	Total Valid Responses		State Universities		Government Colleges	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Rural	90	19.1	39	15.1	51	23.8
Urban	331	70.1	188	72.9	143	66.8
Semi-urban	51	10.8	31	12.0	20	9.3
Total	**472**	**100**	**258**	**100**	**214**	**100**

Location of senior secondary schools attended by FMs was mostly urban (70.1%). Only 10.8% and 19.1% attended semi-urban and rural school, respectively (Table I.4.26).

Data of both institutions (Table I.4.26) shows a significant proportion within urban schooling at senior secondary stage (72.9% in SUs and 66.8% in government colleges). Semi urban schooling remains relatively low in both the institutions (12.0% in SUs and 9.3% in government colleges).

Table I.4.27: Type of School (11th-12th Class)

Options	Total Valid Responses		State Universities		Government Colleges	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Co-education	381	80.7	201	77.6	180	84.5
Single sex	91	19.3	58	22.4	33	15.5
Total	**472**	**100**	**259**	**100**	**213**	**100**

At senior secondary level, nearly 80% of faculty had attended co-educational schools, while 19.3% had studied in single-sex schools (Table I.4.27).

A similar trend is observed in SUs and government colleges as well (Table I.4.27). 77.6% of faculty in SUs and 84.5% in government colleges attended co-education schools.

Table I.4.28: Management of School (11th-12th Class) – Whole Responses

Options	Total Valid Responses		State Universities		Government Colleges	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Government	233	49.7	154	59.7	79	37.4
Government-aided/ Private-aided	145	30.9	46	17.8	99	46.9
Private (unaided)	91	19.4	58	22.5	33	15.6
Total	**469**	**100**	**258**	**100**	**211**	**100**

For 11th-12th class, 49.7% (nearly half) attended Government schools, 30.9% attended government-aided/private-aided schools, and 19.4% attended private unaided schools (Table I.4.28).

Table I.4.28 reveals that the proportion of faculty attended government school is high in SUs (59.7%), while in government colleges, it is high for government-aided/private-aided schools (46.9%). The attendance of faculty attending private-unaided school is low in government colleges, in comparison to SUs (22.5%).

Table I.4.29: Syllabus (11th-12th Class)

Options	Total Valid Responses		State Universities		Government Colleges	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
State	400	84.9	202	78.0	198	93.4
CBSE	63	13.4	51	19.7	12	5.7
Other	8	1.7	6	2.3	2	0.9
Total	**471**	**100**	**259**	**100**	**212**	**100**

At the high school level, a significant majority of faculty (84.9%) had studied under the State board syllabus, while only 13.4% were affiliated with Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) (Table I.4.29).

Across both institutions (Table I.4.29), the pattern remains similar, with the majority of faculty having studied under the State board.

Table I.4.30: Medium of Instruction (11th-12th Class)

Options	Total Valid Responses		State Universities		Government Colleges	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Regional Language	112	23.7	41	15.8	71	33.3
English	255	54.0	148	57.1	107	50.2
Hindi	105	22.2	70	27.0	35	16.4
Total	**472**	**100**	**259**	**100**	**213**	**100**

In Table I.4.30, the majority of faculty (54.0%) reported English as their medium of instruction, in senior secondary school. Regional languages accounted for 23.7% of responses, followed by Hindi (22.2%).

The medium of instruction remains predominantly English across both types of institutions (Table I.4.30). At SUs, 27.0% of faculty had Hindi as their medium of instruction, while only 15.8% studied in regional languages. Conversely, in government colleges, the pattern is reversed, with 33.3% of faculty studying in regional languages and 16.4% in Hindi.

Table I.4.31: Stream Choice (11th-12th Class)

Options	Total Valid Responses		State Universities		Government Colleges	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Sciences	238	50.3	126	48.6	112	52.3
Commerce	49	10.4	21	8.1	28	13.1
Arts/Humanities	178	37.6	105	40.5	73	34.1
Other	8	1.7	7	2.7	1	0.5
Total	**473**	**100**	**259**	**100**	**214**	**100**

Among the FMs, the Sciences stream emerged as the most popular (50.3%). Commerce (10.4%) and other stream (1.7%) were the least favoured by FMs at the senior secondary level (Table I.4.31).

This pattern is consistent across both types of institutions (Table I.4.31), with Sciences being the most commonly chosen stream and Commerce being less preferred at the senior secondary level.

Table I.4.32: Place of Residence During Schooling (11th-12th Class)

Options	Total Valid Responses		State Universities		Government Colleges	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
School hostel	29	6.2	16	6.2	13	6.2
Day Scholar living at home	391	83.2	221	85.3	170	80.6
Day scholar living away from home with relative/friends	14	3.0	10	3.9	4	1.9
Day scholar living in a rented accommodation	23	4.9	7	2.7	16	7.6
Day scholar living in paying guest accommodation	4	0.9	1	0.4	3	1.4
Other	9	1.9	4	1.5	5	2.4
Total	**470**	**100**	**259**	**100**	**211**	**100**

Majority of FMs (83.2%) were day scholars living at home. Approximately 15% of the others resided in school hostel (6.2%), were day scholars living with their relatives/family (3%), lived in rented accommodations (4.9%), lived in paying guest accommodation (0.9%) (Table I.4.32).

Across both types of institutions (Table I.4.32), the pattern is somewhat similar. A large majority of FMs were day scholars living at home in both institutions (85.3% in SUs and 80.6% in government colleges). A small proportion resided in school hostels (6.2% in both), while a few reported living away from home with relatives/friends (3.9% in SUs and 1.9% in government

colleges) and in paying guest accommodations (0.4% in SUs and 1.4% in government colleges). The proportion of faculty living in a rented accommodation is slightly higher in government college (7.6%) compared to SUs (2.7%).

4.5.2.1 Summary

To sum up, most FMs completed their schooling in government or government-aided schools, particularly in rural and semi-urban areas. A smaller number studied in private or central board schools. English was the medium of instruction for many respondents, though a significant proportion had studied in regional languages. Most faculty studied under state education boards, while a smaller number came through national boards such as CBSE or Indian Certificate of Secondary Education (ICSE). At the senior secondary level, Sciences was the most common stream of study, followed by Arts and Commerce. Taken together, these patterns suggest that FMs' early education was grounded in local, largely public schooling systems that reflect the everyday realities of the regions where they now teach. Their own familiarity with these contexts may help them understand the pathways through which students from similar school backgrounds progress toward HE.

4.5.3 Higher Education History

This section examines the academic pathways that brought FMs into HE. It covers subject and institutional choices, types of institutions attended, and access to scholarships or reservations. These experiences provide important context for understanding FMs' own decision-making processes and the forms of guidance they might later offer to students considering HE options.

Table I.4.33: Subject of Bachelor's Degree

Subject studied	Total Valid Responses		State Universities		Government Colleges	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Sciences	145	30.9	75	29.4	70	32.6
Engineering and Technology	55	11.7	29	11.4	26	12.1
Arts and Humanities	170	36.2	94	36.9	76	35.3
Social Science	54	11.5	37	14.5	17	7.9
Management and Business Administration	46	9.8	20	7.8	26	12.1
Total	**470**	**100**	**255**	**100**	**215**	**100**

The data of Table I.4.33 indicates that the most common undergraduate subject among FMs was Arts and Humanities (36.2%). Sciences was the second most pursued field (30.9%). Engineering and Technology and Social Science each constitute about 12% (11.7% and 11.5%, respectively). Management and Business Administration was chosen by just 9.8% of respondents.

A broadly similar pattern is observed across both types of institutions (Table I.4.33), though slight variations exist. A majority of the faculty had opted for Arts and Humanities (36.9% in SUs and 35.3% in government colleges) as their undergraduate subject, followed by Sciences (29.4% in SUs and 32.6% in government colleges). An equal proportion of faculty had opted for engineering and Technology in both institutions. Social Science was more prevalent in SUs, and Management and Business Administration was preferred more by the faculty of government colleges.

Table I.4.34: Higher Education Institution

Options	Total Valid Responses		FMs at State Universities		FMs at Government Colleges	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Affiliated College	340	72.0	169	65.5	171	79.9
University	132	28.0	89	34.5	43	20.1
Total	**472**	**100**	**258**	**100**	**214**	**100**

Table I.4.34 reveals that 72.0% of the faculty studied at institutions that were affiliated college, while the rest (28.0%) studied at universities.

Government colleges have a higher percentage of faculty from affiliated college (79.9%) than from SUs (65.5%). In contrast, 34.5% of faculty of SUs and 20.1% of government colleges studied at universities (Table I.4.34).

Table I.4.35: Type of Institution

Options	Total Valid Responses		State Universities		Government Colleges	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Government	263	56.1	173	67.3	90	42.5
Government-aided/ Private-aided	155	33.0	49	19.1	106	50.0
Private	51	10.9	35	13.6	16	7.5
Total	**469**	**100**	**257**	**100**	**212**	**100**

Table I.4.35 indicates that the majority of the faculty (56.1%) earned their bachelor's degree from government institutions, followed by 33.0% in government-aided/private-aided institutions, and the least in private institutions (10.9%).

A substantial majority of faculty in SUs enrolled in government institutions (67.3%). Meanwhile, almost an equal proportion of respondents from government colleges studied at government (42.5%) and government-aided/private-aided (50.0%) institutions. More faculty from SUs

completed their bachelor's degree at private institutions (13.6%) compared to those from government colleges (7.5%).

Table I.4.36: Location of Institution

Options	Total Valid Responses		State Universities		Government Colleges	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Rural	56	11.9	28	10.9	28	13.1
Urban	343	72.8	182	70.5	161	75.6
Semi-urban	72	15.3	48	18.6	24	11.3
Total	**471**	**100**	**258**	**100**	**213**	**100**

A higher percentage of faculty pursued their HE in urban institutions (72.8%), with smaller proportions in semi-urban (15.3%) and rural areas (11.9%) (Table I.4.36). No FMs had studied for an undergraduate degree abroad.

This pattern holds for both institutions (Table I.4.36), with a significantly higher proportion studied in urban areas (70.5% in SUs and 75.6% in government colleges). Within government colleges, the share of faculty who studied in rural background (13.1%) is slightly higher than those from semi-urban backgrounds (11.3%).

Table I.4.37: Funding

Options	Total Valid Responses		State Universities		Government Colleges	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Freeship (tuition waiver)	27	5.9	11	4.4	16	7.7
Fellowship	4	0.9	0	0.0	4	1.9
Scholarship	48	10.4	19	7.6	29	13.9
Self-funded	363	78.9	212	84.5	151	72.2
Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) funding	4	0.9	2	0.8	2	1.0
Funding Pool (e.g. faculty / administration staff)	3	0.7	2	0.8	1	0.5
Other	11	2.4	5	2.0	6	2.9
Total	**460**	**100**	**251**	**100**	**209**	**100**

A large proportion of FMs (78.9%) financed their HE through self-funding, while the remaining approximately 20% used other sources such as scholarships (10.4%), fellowships (0.9%), freeship (5.9%), PTA funding (0.9%), funding pool (0.7%), and other (2.4%) (Table I.4.37).

Table I.4.37 reveals that the majority paid for their education themselves (84.5% in SUs and 72.2% in government colleges). Scholarships were also a common source (7.6% and 13.9%, respectively), while other financial support accounted for less than 10% in both institutions.

Table I.4.38: Have You Cleared the NET

Options	Total Valid Responses		State Universities		Government Colleges	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Yes	237	51.6	157	61.8	80	39.0
No	222	48.4	97	38.2	125	61.0
Total	**459**	**100**	**254**	**100**	**205**	**100**

The proportion of faculty who cleared National Eligibility Test (NET) (51.6%) is nearly equal to those who did not (48.4%) (Table I.4.38).

Among both types of institutions (Table I.4.38), 61.8% of faculty of SUs had cleared NET, whereas 61% of faculty of government college had not.

Table I.4.39: Cleared SLET

Options	Total Valid Responses		State Universities		Government Colleges	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Yes	95	21.1	44	17.6	51	25.4
No	356	78.9	206	82.4	150	74.6
Total	**451**	**100**	**250**	**100**	**201**	**100**

The proportion of faculty who cleared State Level Eligibility Test (SLET) (21.1%) is lower than those who did not (78.9%) (Table I.4.39).

Among both types of institutes (Table I.4.39), most faculty across both institutions had not cleared SLET (82.4% in SUs and 74.6% in government colleges).

Table I.4.40: Availed Reservation for Educational Degrees

Option	Total Valid Responses		State Universities		Government Colleges	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Bachelor's degree	72	24.1	35	25.9	37	22.6
Master's degree	81	27.1	38	28.1	43	26.2
M.Phil. degree	23	7.7	6	4.4	17	10.4
PhD degree	36	12.0	13	9.6	23	14.0
NET/SLET examination	87	29.1	43	31.9	44	26.8
Total of Answer = Yes	**299**	**100**	**135**	**100**	**164**	**100**

The data (Table I.4.40) indicates that FMs have availed the reservation in similar proportions across different qualifications; bachelor's degree (24.1%), master's degree (27.1%), and NET/SLET examination (29.1%). In contrast, reservation in MPhil (7.7%) and PhD (12.0%) is notably lower.

In summary, most FMs completed their HE in public universities within their home states. All hold postgraduate degrees, as required for teaching, and many have also earned doctorates. Several received scholarships or fellowships, while others relied on family or personal resources to fund their studies. Nearly all qualified through national or state eligibility tests such as NET or SLET. Around one quarter reported having availed of reservations during their HE (with lower numbers for MPhil/PhD. These patterns suggest that FMs' educational journeys are closely tied to local public HE systems. Their familiarity with local institutions and regional contexts may strengthen their ability to guide students from similar educational settings in accessing local universities and colleges.

The qualitative data aligns with the quantitative survey data in highlighting that HE decisions were reached through a combination of practical and personal factors. Personal recommendations from family or teachers also played a role in encouraging enrolment.

Upbringing and family background were mentioned by several of the ILs in discussing their journeys enrolling in study. The Haryana SU IL suggested that HE was a natural progression based on their family background. Other ILs in the region highlighted that their family were sources of inspiration for HE completion having accessed HE themselves (Vaasu, IL of Haryana GCID, and Ranju, IL of Haryana GCB). Likewise, James, IL of GCID in Maharashtra, stated that it was his mother's wish for him to continue his education, and he also received input from a brother-in-law regarding academic stream. Vitthal, another IL in the region (GCB) stated that both his father and grandfather were instrumental in encouraging him to pursue HE.

For the IL of GCA in Haryana, Anji, there was a suggestion of breaking the norm by being able to continue with education only with strong support from her family and spouse, whereas for others early marriage often led to dropping out of education. In contrast, Yashwant, IL of GCA, noted a lack of guidance from family leading to him independently making his own decision to enrol. Shibu, the Kerala IL of GCA was shaped by his time in an orphanage, where he received

mentoring which guided him and encouraged him to pursue humanities-focuses courses and then economics to align with aspirations to become a civil servant. He was guided by teachers at both the orphanage and government school throughout his educational path. These examples highlight the different family situations experienced by individuals when it came to enrolment.

There were also mentions of non-relational contacts providing guidance and potentially influencing enrolment decisions. As well as mentioning her family and spouse, Anji also discussed how an FM had played a significant role in subject and institution selection. She demonstrated a special respect and gratitude for the FM's guidance. Janaki, the IL of Kerala GCB, discussed facing challenges during pre-degree education due to a background in Malayalam-medium schooling, before being advised by teachers to pursue teacher training. This option was temporarily discontinued, so Janaki enrolled in a private college for teaching instead. She faced further challenges due to unfamiliarity of terminology in economics, but later grew to appreciate the subject and ultimately gained a PhD in the subject. The guidance she received and challenges she faced show that journeys are not always straightforward, although she also cited her father's consistent encouragement in playing a crucial role in her academic progress.

It was also noted that the majority of ILs had completed their studies at private-aided colleges, due to a shortage at the time of state-funded and government-aided HEIs, although postgraduate study was typically pursued from university departments close to their place of residence. The Kerala IL at SU received a state scholarship for undergraduate and postgraduate studies, and a Research Fellowship which provided essential funding for PhD study. In contrast, the IL of GCID had not received specific financial aid (but cleared the University Grants Commission (UGC) NET post-graduation) and was currently pursuing a PhD independently. Shibu, the Kerala IL for GCA who had attended an orphanage, received scholarships from Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and a university fellowship to support his postgraduate studies.

Convenience and prestige were reported by the IL of Kerala SU as motivating factors in institution selection for undergraduate and postgraduate study, with another central university in a metropolitan city being selected for PhD study, indicating an importance of attending reputable institutions. They suggested that this was a personal choice driven by quality and

location, without external input. Similarly, the IL of Kerala GCID chose an urban institution in his home district as the closest option, emphasising the role of location in influencing decisions.

In terms of subject choice, at times this was selected due to a strong passion for specific subjects (e.g. Kerala SU IL), whereas for others there was a suggestion of limited prior inquiry or strong personal preference. For example, the Kerala IL at GCID chose their subject because of convenience and limitations in choice due to a physical disability, but also with the influence of some teachers. In Maharashtra, one IL, Nana from SU, discussed how he went against his mother's wishes when it came to subject choice, opting for a BSc course instead of pursuing engineering as she wished, although he did also credit his mother as a motivating factor in higher educational enrolment.

For those with postgraduate qualifications, narratives point to two dominant pathways to advanced qualifications: one led by individual academic ambition, and the other fostered by family networks and social encouragement. For example, Nana, IL from SU, stated that pursuit of his MSc and PhD was entirely his own decision demonstrating a strong sense of academic autonomy. James, IL of GCID, described a collective influence with substantial encouragement from family members.

Interview data from FMs was similar to that of ILs in that it reflected different journeys that ultimately led to enrolment followed by career progression. HE trajectories were varied, with personal and pragmatic considerations influencing subject and location choices.

Family encouragement was often cited as a motivating factor, including one FM at Assam GCID who discussed how their mother had encouraged HE to achieve self-reliance. Some also received family support in the form of financial assistance. Various family members were cited as playing a role (e.g. Kavya, SU; Smith, GCID; Lata and Deva, GCA; and Tomson and Falguni, GCB, all Maharashtra). The level of decision-making attributed varied, with some mentioning general support and encouragement and others suggesting more leading roles.

Teachers were also mentioned (e.g. John at GCID; Sumit at GCB; and Gaju and AMU at GCA, Maharashtra), for example, AMU discussed being inspired by one particular teacher and being driven by the aspiration to emulate him as a strong case of aspirational mentorship. At GCA and GCB in Kerala, teachers were also cited as influencing further studies, while family members

provided logistical and emotional support. Friends and social networks also influenced decisions, especially regarding institutions and courses.

An interplay of individuals was also common, in particular parents and teachers combined having an influence (e.g. Sharmishtha, GCB; Shri and Vibha, SU; Andy, GCID, Maharashtra; Sujith at Kerala GCID relied of recommendation of father's friend; and Mithra also from Kerala GCID relied on a schoolteacher for institutional selections). This highlights that there are often multiple players involved in the process.

Some explained that they took their own initiative, motivated by personal desire (e.g. Mary, GCID; Radha, SU; VCK and Edison, GCB, all Maharashtra)—although in some cases FMs mentioned emotional support from family.

Disciplines, institutional types, and social mobility indicators such as scholarship access, varied, although degrees were typically pursued in urban areas (in some cases requiring migration from rural areas). However, there are outliers of this (e.g. John, FM at Maharashtra GCID and Sumit, FM at Maharashtra GCB, both of whom studied in rural areas). Deva, an FM at Maharashtra GCA discussed travelling 35km daily from his village to an urban institution, indicating the physical effort involved in rural students accessing HE. Many selected institutions close to their home due to affordability and convenience, with reputation also being considered. Once enrolled at an institution, it was relatively common to continue any further studies there, as long as the subject chosen was available, due to considered benefits of being in a familiar environment.

In terms of subject selection, personal strength and interests were cited. For example, one FM selected to study accountancy and finance due to proficiency in maths, and another pursued criminology after studying criminal law as part of their Bachelor of Law degree (LLB) course (both SU). Others discussed personal interests, for example an FM from GCID studied Zoology due to an interest in animals. There were some examples of respondents originally enrolling in one subject and then changing to another based on reflection of their skills and discussions with peers and teachers (e.g. FM from Assam GCID). Similarly, some FMs at Kerala GCID reported transitioning from initial subject choices to more promising career-oriented programmes, based on advice from teachers and peers. Mithra, an FM at GCID in Kerala discussed how their

subject was selected by her father and schoolteacher based on her academic profile, whereas others made choices based on personal decisions.

At GCID in Kerala, most FMs self-financed with some family support, although OBC reservations and NET qualifications were sometimes accessed. Likewise, FMs at Kerala GCB reported funding from SC or OBC reservations, and scholarships like hostel grants influencing access.

An FM at Kerala GCB specifically mentioned accessibility of the learning resource of braille as a deciding factor.

4.5.3.1 Summary

In summary, most FMs completed their HE in public universities within their home states. All hold postgraduate degrees, as required for teaching, and many have also earned doctorates. Several received scholarships or fellowships, while others relied on family or personal resources to fund their studies. Nearly all qualified through national or state eligibility tests such as NET or SLET. Only a small number reported having used reservation benefits at any stage of their HE. These patterns suggest that FMs' educational journeys are closely tied to local public HE systems. Their familiarity with local institutions and regional contexts may strengthen their ability to guide students from similar educational settings in accessing local universities and colleges.

Both qualitative data and quantitative survey data demonstrate that HE decisions were reached through a combination of practical and personal factors, with personal recommendations, especially from family or teachers, playing a role in encouraging enrolment. Other potentially influencing factors were proximity or accessibility of institutions, interests in and potential earnings from subject options, and funding availability.

4.5.4 FM Higher Education Access and Choice

Table I.4.41 shows that the FMs' decision to pursue HE was most often influenced by family members. Fathers (18.7%) and mothers (16.6%) were the most frequent motivators, followed by brothers (7.9%) and sisters (7.4%). Schoolteachers (4.9%) and college or university teachers (7.2%) also played a role, though their influence was comparatively limited. About one in eight

respondents (13.2%) reported being self-motivated, indicating that personal determination was an important factor.

By institutional type (Table I.4.41), the pattern is broadly similar: both university and college faculty reported family encouragement as the dominant influence, with slightly higher self-motivation among state-university faculty.

Table I.4.41: Individuals Who Encouraged or Motivated Faculty to Pursue Higher Education

Option	Total Valid Responses		State Universities		Government Colleges	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Mother	307	16.6	168	16.4	139	16.9
Father	347	18.7	190	18.5	157	19.1
Sister/s (sibling)	138	7.4	94	9.2	44	5.3
Brother/s (sibling)	147	7.9	88	8.6	59	7.2
Maternal grandmother	24	1.3	12	1.2	12	1.5
Maternal grandfather	22	1.2	11	1.1	11	1.3
Paternal grandmother	24	1.3	12	1.2	12	1.5
Paternal grandfather	30	1.6	14	1.4	16	1.9
Maternal aunt/s	30	1.6	16	1.6	14	1.7
Maternal uncle/s	36	1.9	15	1.5	21	2.6
Paternal aunt/s	24	1.3	13	1.3	11	1.3
Paternal uncle/s	32	1.7	16	1.6	16	1.9
Cousin/s	39	2.1	23	2.2	16	1.9
Schoolteacher/s	91	4.9	49	4.8	42	5.1
College/ university teacher/s	133	7.2	71	6.9	62	7.5
Friend/s	104	5.6	50	4.9	54	6.6
Senior student/s	31	1.7	20	1.9	11	1.3
Neighbour/s	27	1.5	19	1.9	8	1.0
Coaching/tutor	18	1.0	8	0.8	10	1.2
Yourself	239	12.9	138	13.4	101	12.3
Other	11	0.6	4	0.4	7	0.9
Total of Answer = Yes	**1854**	**100**	**1031**	**100**	**823**	**100**

Table I.4.42: Persons Involved in Choosing Undergraduate College/University

Option	Total Valid Responses		State Universities		Government Colleges	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Mother	219	17.6	121	17.5	98	17.8
Father	297	23.8	158	22.8	139	25.2
Sister/s (sibling)	105	8.4	75	10.8	30	5.4
Brother/s (sibling)	125	10.0	74	10.7	51	9.2
Maternal grandmother	3	0.2	2	0.3	1	0.2
Maternal grandfather	4	0.3	4	0.6	0	0.0
Paternal grandmother	7	0.6	5	0.7	2	0.4
Paternal grandfather	8	0.6	3	0.4	5	0.9
Maternal aunt/s	5	0.4	2	0.3	3	0.5
Maternal uncle/s	11	0.9	5	0.7	6	1.1
Paternal aunt/s	3	0.2	0	0.0	3	0.5
Paternal uncle/s	14	1.1	4	0.6	10	1.8
Cousin/s	21	1.7	13	1.9	8	1.4
Schoolteacher/s	35	2.8	18	2.6	17	3.1
College/university teacher/s	63	5.1	33	4.8	30	5.4
Friend/s	62	5.0	31	4.5	31	5.6
Senior student/s	13	1.0	9	1.3	4	0.7
Neighbour/s	8	0.6	3	0.4	5	0.9
Coaching/tutor	7	0.6	3	0.4	4	0.7
Yourself	235	18.8	130	18.8	105	19.0
Other	2	0.2	2	0.3	0	0
Total of Answer = Yes	**1247**	**100**	**695**	**100**	**552**	**100**

Table I.4.42 presents who was involved in choosing the undergraduate college or university. Fathers (23.8%) and mothers (17.6%) again emerge as the most significant decision-makers. Brothers (10.0%) and sisters (8.4%) also contributed. Only a small proportion mentioned college or university teachers (5.1%) or schoolteachers (2.8%), suggesting that faculty involvement in

institutional choice was limited. Nearly one-fifth of respondents (19.1%) made the decision themselves.

By institution (Table I.4.42), faculty from both SUs and government colleges followed the same trend, with parents playing the leading role and faculty guidance a minimal one.

Table I.4.43: Involvement in the Selection of Undergraduate Course/Subject

Options	Total Valid Responses		State Universities		Government Colleges	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Mother	146	14.1	83	15.3	63	12.8
Father	219	21.1	120	22.1	99	20.0
Sister/s (sibling)	76	7.3	45	8.3	31	6.3
Brother/s (sibling)	90	8.7	53	9.8	37	7.5
Maternal grandmother	2	0.2	0	0.0	2	0.4
Maternal grandfather	1	0.1	0	0.0	1	0.2
Paternal grandmother	3	0.3	1	0.2	2	0.4
Paternal grandfather	6	0.6	2	0.4	4	0.8
Maternal aunt/s	4	0.4	0	0.0	4	0.8
Maternal uncle/s	10	1.0	2	0.4	8	1.6
Paternal aunt/s	4	0.4	0	0.0	4	0.8
Paternal uncle/s	11	1.1	1	0.2	10	2.0
Cousin/s	13	1.3	5	0.9	8	1.6
Schoolteacher/s	31	3.0	12	2.2	19	3.8
College/university teacher/s	51	4.9	20	3.7	31	6.3
Friend/s	49	4.7	19	3.5	30	6.1
Senior student/s	22	2.1	17	3.1	5	1.0
Neighbour/s	5	0.5	1	0.2	4	0.8
Coaching/tutor	5	0.5	0	0.0	5	1.0
Yourself	288	27.7	161	29.7	127	25.7
Other	3	0.3	1	0.2	2	0.4
Total of Answer = Yes	**1039**	**100**	**543**	**100**	**496**	**100**

Table I.4.43 shows who influenced the choice of course or subject. Fathers (21.1%) and mothers (14.1%) were again central figures, while brothers (8.8%) and sisters (7.5%) played supportive roles. University or college teachers were cited by only 4.9% and schoolteachers by 3.0%. Notably, more than one-quarter (27.7%) said they decided independently, reflecting the absence of formal guidance systems.

Institutionally (Table I.4.43), the same overall picture holds: subject and course choices were shaped mainly within families or by individual initiative, not by structured faculty advice.

4.5.4.1 Summary

In summary, the data reveal that family members were the strongest influence on FMs' own higher-education journeys, while faculty involvement was minimal. Only a small fraction recalled receiving guidance from teachers or professors about whether to study further or where and what to study. Many described their choices as self-made, based on personal motivation or family discussion rather than professional advice.

4.5.5 Involvement of Faculty Members in HE Access

This section investigates whether FMs had any interaction with faculty during their own decision-making about undergraduate study. It explores the extent and nature of such involvement—how did they know these FMs, at what stage of access and choice the interaction occurred, and what form the guidance took. The analysis also examines the kinds of information or actions FMs themselves undertook before enrolling—such as visiting campuses, accessing brochures or online sources, or engaging with local networks.

Table I.4.44: Involvement of Faculty Members in Undergraduate College Choice

Option	Total Valid Responses		State Universities		Government Colleges	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Yes	112	23.9	53	20.5	59	28.0
No	357	76.1	205	79.5	152	72.0
Total	**469**	**100**	**258**	**100**	**211**	**100**

Table I.4.44 shows that overall, only about one in four FMs (23.9%) reported that an FM had been involved in their own undergraduate college decision. The large majority (76.1%) had no such interaction.

By type of institution (Table I.4.44), involvement was slightly higher among those now teaching in government colleges (28.0%) compared with SUs (20.5%). This suggests that, for most respondents, faculty played a limited or no role in shaping their early higher-education choices.

Table I.4.45: Involvement of College/University Teachers (Faculty Members) in the Undergraduate College Choice of Faculty Members

	Options	State Universities (Yes)	State Universities (No)	Total	Government Colleges (Yes)	Government Colleges (No)	Total
Gender	Female (N)	16	91	**107**	34	87	**121**
	Female (%)	15.0	85.0	**100**	28.1	71.9	**100**
	Male (N)	37	114	**151**	25	65	**90**
	Male (%)	24.5	75.5	**100**	27.8	72.2	**100**
Social Group	SC (N)	10	15	**25**	11	22	**33**
	SC (%)	40.0	60.0	**100**	33.3	66.7	**100**
	ST (N)	2	10	**12**	2	3	**5**
	ST (%)	16.7	83.3	**100**	40.0	60.0	**100**
	OBC (N)	16	52	**68**	11	41	**52**
	OBC (%)	23.5	76.5	**100**	21.2	78.8	**100**
	General (N)	25	124	**149**	33	81	**114**
	General (%)	16.8	83.2	**100**	28.9	71.1	**100**
	EWS (N)	0	3	**3**	2	5	**7**
	EWS (%)	0.0	100.0	**100**	28.6	71.4	**100**
Religion	Hindu (N)	48	177	**225**	45	114	**159**
	Hindu (%)	21.3	78.7	**100**	28.3	71.7	**100**
	Muslim (N)	2	15	**17**	11	27	**38**
	Muslim (%)	11.8	88.2	**100**	28.9	71.1	**100**
	ORM (N)	3	12	**15**	3	11	**14**
	ORM (%)	20.0	80.0	**100**	21.4	78.6	**100**
Place of Permanent Residence	Rural (N)	19	49	**68**	25	58	**83**
	Rural (%)	27.9	72.1	**100**	30.1	69.9	**100**
	Urban (N)	34	152	**186**	34	89	**123**
	Urban (%)	18.3	81.7	**100**	27.6	72.4	**100**

As shown in Table I.4.45, in SUs, there is a disparity in males' and females' proportion where 24.5% males reported faculty involvement compared to only 15.0% females. In government colleges, however the proportion is nearly equal for both genders (approximately 28%).

It was noted that involvement was highest for marginalised groups especially for SC faculty (40.0%) in SUs, and ST faculty had the highest rate (40.0%) in government colleges, followed by SC faculty (33.3%).

Muslim faculty in SUs reported the lowest level of involvement of their university teacher in their undergraduate college choice (11.8%), but in government colleges, their involvement proportion (28.9%) is higher than other religions.

Also, faculty from rural backgrounds reported more guidance in their college choice (27.9% in SUs and 30.1% in government colleges) compared to those from urban background.

Table I.4.46: How Did You Know Them

Option	Total Valid Responses		State Universities		Government Colleges	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Neighbour	6	4.3	2	3.3	4	5.1
Family Member	28	19.9	3	4.9	25	31.3
Family connection	19	13.5	9	14.8	10	12.5
In a faith-based setting e.g., mosque, temple	0	0	0	0	0	0
In a community group	5	3.5	2	3.3	3	3.8
Through NGO work	1	0.7	0	0.0	1	1.3
Through local politics	0	0	0	0	0	0
They were also working as a tuition teacher / in a coaching institute	5	3.5	1	1.6	4	5.0
Met them when I visited their college/university	39	27.7	24	39.3	15	18.8
Met them when they visited my school	17	12.1	10	16.4	7	8.8
Met them when they visited another community setting	4	2.8	2	3.3	2	2.5
Met them during the admissions process at their college/university	15	10.6	7	11.5	8	10.0
Other	2	1.4	1	1.6	1	1.3
Total of Answer = Yes	**141**	**100**	**61**	**100**	**80**	**100**

Table I.4.46 indicates that among those who had interacted with faculty before entering HE, the most common way they knew them was through a visit to the college or university (27.7%). Nearly one in five (19.9%) knew the FM as a family member, and 13.5% through a family connection. Other ways of knowing them were more limited—through school visits (12.1%), admissions processes (10.6%), or community or coaching interactions (about 3–4%).

By institutional type (Table I.4.46), faculty in SUs were most likely to have met them during a visit to the college or university (39.3%), while those from government colleges more often knew them through family or relatives (31.3%). These patterns suggest that contact with faculty

tended to happen either through informal family networks or occasional institutional visits, rather than organised outreach efforts.

Table I.4.47: When Were They Involved

Option	Total Valid Responses		State Universities		Government Colleges	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
During the process of making choices about higher education	89	58.6	42	58.3	47	58.8
During admissions	62	40.8	29	40.3	33	41.3
Other	1	0.7	1	1.4	0	0
Total of Answer = Yes	**152**	**100**	**72**	**100**	**80**	**100**

Table I.4.47 shows that when faculty were involved, it was most often during the process of making choices about HE (58.6%), followed by involvement during the admissions process (40.8%).

The distribution across institution type (Table I.4.47) remains almost identical—58.3% in SUs and 58.8% in government colleges reporting involvement at the choice stage, and around 40% in both during admissions. This suggests that when such engagement occurred, it happened mainly around the decision or application stages, rather than at an earlier point when students were still exploring possibilities.

Table I.4.48: What Was Their Involvement

Option	Total Valid Responses		State Universities		Government Colleges	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Advice on whether to go for higher education or other options	66	19.0	19	11.5	47	25.8
Choice of which colleges/universities to apply to	49	14.1	19	11.5	30	16.5
Choice of course/subject	88	25.4	48	29.1	40	22.0
About the admissions process	54	15.6	28	17.0	26	14.3
About covering tuition expenses / funding options	10	2.9	5	3.0	5	2.8
About higher education entry exams preparation	23	6.6	13	7.9	10	5.5
About special admissions programmes/processes e.g., reservations	5	1.4	2	1.2	3	1.6
Checking application form / other documents	29	8.4	21	12.7	8	4.4
Choice of which colleges/universities to enrol in if selected in more than one	9	2.6	2	1.2	7	3.8
Accompanying for a visit to the college/university where they worked	8	2.3	5	3.0	3	1.6
Accompanying for a visit to another college/university	5	1.4	3	1.8	2	1.1
Others	1	0.3	0	0	1	0.5
Total of Answer = Yes	**347**	**100**	**165**	**100**	**182**	**100**

Table I.4.48 shows that the most frequent forms of faculty involvement were giving advice on course or subject choice (25.4%), guidance on whether to pursue HE at all (19.0%), and advice about the admission process (15.6%). Smaller proportions mentioned help with checking application forms (8.4%), exam preparation (6.6%), or information about funding (2.9%).

By type of institution (Table I.4.48), faculty in government colleges were more likely to have received advice on whether to go for HE (25.8%), while those from SUs more often received guidance on subject or course choice (29.1%). Overall, the nature of involvement was mainly advisory and informal, rather than structured or systematic.

Table I.4.49: Before Enrolling in Your College/University for Undergraduate Study, Had You – Whole Responses

Option	N	Percent
Visited the college/university	331	33.5
Actions before enrolling in undergraduate college/university (Visited another college/university	131	13.3
Discussed options with other staff	69	7.0
Explored various online platforms, and your current college/university website	26	2.6
Referenced the college/university brochure	163	16.5
Watched informative videos on YouTube	25	2.5
Used social media platforms e.g., Facebook, Instagram	26	2.6
Read about college/university in newspapers	122	12.4
Listened to radio FM	9	0.9
Visited Common Service Centres (CSCs)	6	0.6
Consulted with NGOs	9	0.9
Visited College Fairs	22	2.2
Obtained information from the local administration	7	0.7
Actions before enrolling in undergraduate college/university (None of the above	41	4.2
Total	**987**	**100**

Table I.4.49 highlights that before enrolling in their undergraduate programme, about one-third (33.5%) of FMs had visited the college or university campus. Another 13.3% had visited other colleges for comparison, and 16.5% had used brochures for information.

Smaller proportions of FMs relied on newspapers (12.4%), while only 2–3% used online platforms, social media, or YouTube, reflecting the pre-digital nature of their student years. Interestingly, a small share (about 2.2%) reported visiting college fairs, showing that they had at

least some community-based opportunities to explore HE options. A small group of FMs (4.2%) reported not undertaking any of these activities.

By institutional type (Table I.4.49), patterns were almost identical across SUs and government colleges, showing that most participants relied on direct observation or printed materials rather than professional guidance or structured information systems.

Table I.4.50: Before Enrolling in Your College/University for Undergraduate Study, Had You – By State Universities and Government Colleges

Option	State Universities		Government Colleges	
	N	%	N	%
Visited the college/university, i.e., physically stepped to the campus before enrolling in the course you pursued	175	33.4	156	33.7
Visited other college/universities to compare options	68	13.0	63	13.6
Discussed options for higher education study with other college/university staff (e.g., administrative staff)	30	5.7	39	8.4
Explored various online platforms, such as College Dunia, as well as your current college/university website	13	2.5	13	2.8
Referenced the college/university brochures for detailed information	101	19.3	62	13.4
Watched information videos on YouTube related to college/university	11	2.1	14	3.0
Used social media platforms (e.g., Facebook, Instagram) to gather information and insights about college/university	15	2.9	11	2.4
Read about college/university in newspapers	70	13.4	52	11.2
Listened to radio FM providing information about higher education institutions	2	0.4	7	1.5
Visited Common service centres (e.g., Akshaya Kendra/e-Kendras, Saral, etc.,) to inquire about higher education options	2	0.4	4	0.9
Consulted with representative or designated contact persons from various non-governmental organisations for advice related to higher education study	3	0.6	6	1.3
Visited College Fairs	9	1.7	13	2.8
Obtained information from the local administration, such as Gram Panchayat, Nagar Panchayat, Village Administrative Officers, Municipal Councils / Corporations and District Administration	2	0.4	5	1.1
None of the above	23	4.4	18	3.9
Total of Answer = Yes	**524**	**100**	**463**	**100**

When questioned about involvement in the interviews, generally FM influence was limited. This aligns with quantitative data, indicating minimal engagement with FMs for guidance. It is also worth noting that there were some suggestions of confusion regarding what was meant by 'Faculty Member', with some comments in interviews suggesting that they were reflecting on schoolteachers and other education professionals during discussions.

The IL at Assam GCB differed from other ILs in the region in that he had some direct involvement from FMs during his undergraduate studies, particularly from the FMs at the college, who provided advice on academic matters and the admission process. Maharashtra presents a different picture, the ILs of the region contrast the other regions in that among the four ILs for whom data is provided, all confirmed faculty involvement in their HE access journey, in some cases naming specific FMs (e.g. Nana, SU IL; James, GCID IL; and Vitthal from GCB). At GCA, Yashwant noted that FMs were 'very supportive', implying a more collective influence rather than individual mentorship.

The general overview was that there was no FM involvement in HE access and choices, although there were several mentions of schoolteachers (as discussed previously). There were some exceptions, for example Jaisal (GCA Kerala) mentioned a faculty meeting before applying to discuss course uniqueness and job opportunities.

Similar to the IL data, Maharashtra presents a slightly different picture to other regions in that out of the 20 FM respondents across institutions, at least 15 individuals (75%) confirmed the involvement of FMs, indicating a strong presence of academic mentorship or encouragement at a formative stage. From SU, faculty involvement is notably evident. Shri, Radha, Kavya, and Vibha each acknowledged support from college teachers or mentors, one even mentioning an uncle who was also a college teacher, demonstrating how academic guidance sometimes came from within the family. Several faculty-related influences were also reported at government colleges, although not always. At times, there were again cases of FMs and other roles interlapping. For example, Deva (GCA) discussed how his brother was also an FM who guided him, indicating that personal and professional networks can overlap, likewise Shaw (GCID) referred to a neighbour who was a professor.

There were some exceptions to this, for example an FM at Assam SU mentioned a family friend who was also an FM playing a guiding role. One FM at Assam GCA highlighted the support and guidance they received from FMs at various stages, including encouragement to pursue a master's degree and apply for the NET. Despite this, the participant emphasised that family played a more significant role in influencing their subject and institution choices during senior secondary education. One FM at Assam GCB indicated faculty advice on subject selection.

Overall, there was limited involvement of FMs, with one FM at Assam noting that familiarity with FMs developed only after classes commenced, and another suggesting that FMs at the time were generally perceived as less approachable and accessible for such guidance. Likewise, PCF (GCA Kerala) received post-graduation fellowship guidance but not for undergraduate, indicating FM influence often emerges later. Additionally, the references to schoolteachers when asked about FMs suggests a misunderstanding of the question, suggesting consideration of any academic figure, including schoolteachers, as relevant to their HE decisions

4.5.5.1 Summary

Data discussed here highlights different perceptions of involvement of FMs in the College choices of FMs. In government colleges, around 28% of both male and female participants indicated that there had been FM involvement in their choices, whereas in SUs, nearly 10% more males than females suggested involvement (24.5% and 14.95% respectively). Generally, involvement was highest for marginalised groups and those from rural backgrounds.

Overall, the findings show that only a small proportion of FMs had experienced meaningful engagement with faculty during their own transition into HE. Where such interactions occurred, they were generally informal or based on personal connections, rather than the result of planned institutional outreach or guidance mechanisms. In most cases, the interaction took place at the stage when students were actively deciding where to study or during the admissions process, rather than at an earlier phase of exploration. The involvement of faculty was mainly advisory—providing general encouragement, clarifying subject or course options, or offering practical information about the admission procedure. Direct assistance with applications, exam preparation, or funding was rare. Thus, the analysis in the section shows that

opportunities for engagement with faculty before entering HE were limited, informal, and unstructured.

4.6 Faculty Members' Professional Trajectories

The preceding section highlighted the limited and largely informal ways in which FMs had interacted with faculty during their own transition to HE. Building on that understanding, this section turns to their professional lives within HEIs. This section maps the professional journeys of FMs—from their entry into academia to their current positions and leadership roles.

4.6.1 Professional Trajectories

Table I.4.51: Faculty Members' Years of Service (Across Institutions)

Length of service (in years)	Total Valid Responses		State Universities		Government Colleges	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Less than 5	128	30.8	63	28.6	65	33.3
5-10	74	17.8	35	15.9	39	20.0
10-15	82	19.8	53	24.1	29	14.9
15-20	57	13.7	30	13.6	27	13.8
20-25	38	9.2	23	10.5	15	7.7
25-30	15	3.6	9	4.1	6	3.1
More than 30	21	5.1	7	3.2	14	7.2
Total	**415**	**100**	**220**	**100**	**195**	**100**

Table I.4.51 shows that most FMs began teaching in the past 5 years. A significant percentage of the faculty is recently recruited, with 30.8% served for less than 5 years. Nearly half of the faculty (48.6%) have 10 years of experience or less.

By institution type (Table I.4.51), government colleges (33.3%) have a higher proportion of recently recruited faculty compared to SUs (28.6%), suggesting more recent hiring at the college level.

Table I.4.52: Whether Current Institution is the First Place of Employment as Faculty Member

Options	Total Valid Responses		State Universities		Government Colleges	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Yes	253	53.6	127	49.0	126	59.2
No	219	46.4	132	51.0	87	40.8
Total	**472**	**100**	**259**	**100**	**213**	**100**

Table I.4.52 indicates that 53.6% of FMs are working in their first institution of employment, while 46.4% have previously worked elsewhere.

By comparison (Table I.4.52), 59.2% of government college faculty reported being in their first post, compared to 49.0% in SUs, suggesting greater institutional mobility among university faculty.

Table I.4.53: If No, How Many Higher Education Institutions Have You Worked in – Whole Responses

Options	N	%
1	106	48.4
2	73	33.3
3	23	10.5
4	6	2.7
5	7	3.2
6	4	1.8
Total	**219**	**100**

Table I.4.53 shows that among those who have changed jobs, more than 80% have worked in one or two institutions before their current post, while the remaining have worked in three or more institutions. This points to limited inter-institutional mobility across the sector.

Table I.4.54: Current Position (Designation)

Options	Total Valid Responses		State Universities		Government Colleges	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Professor	29	6.2	17	6.6	12	5.7
Associate Professor	47	10.1	23	8.9	24	11.5
Assistant Professor	330	70.8	167	65.0	163	78.0
Other	60	12.9	50	19.5	10	4.8
Total	**466**	**100**	**257**	**100**	**209**	**100**

Table I.4.54 reveals that the teaching workforce is dominated by Assistant Professors (70.8%), followed by Associate Professors (10.1%) and Professors (6.2%), with the rest (12.9%) categorised as 'Other'.

By institution (Table I.4.54), government colleges have a higher share of Assistant Professors (78.0%) than SUs (65.0%), which show a larger presence of senior faculty and other academic roles.

Table I.4.55: Please State any Leadership Responsibilities ever Performed

Options	Total Valid Responses		State Universities		Government Colleges	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
None	283	66.0	181	71.3	102	57.6
Dean of the School	3	0.7	2	0.8	1	0.6
Principal (college only)	5	1.2	2	0.8	3	1.7
Head of the Department	98	22.6	34	13.0	64	36.2
Other	42	9.7	35	13.8	7	4.0
Total	**431**	**100**	**254**	**100**	**177**	**100**

Table I.4.55 shows that two-thirds (66.0%) of faculty have never held a formal leadership position. Among those who have, 22.6% have been Heads of Department, 1.2% Principals, and 0.5% Deans, with 9.8% citing other roles.

By institution (Table I.4.55), leadership experience is somewhat higher in government colleges (42.5%) than in SUs (28.2%), largely due to departmental-level responsibilities.

Table I.4.56: **Year of Joining Current University/College**

Length of service at current university/college (in years)	Total Valid Responses		State Universities		Government Colleges	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Less than 5	220	49.0	114	45.8	106	53.0
5-10	88	19.6	45	18.1	43	21.5
10-15	62	13.8	45	18.1	17	8.5
15-20	47	10.5	33	13.3	14	7.0
20-25	14	3.1	9	3.6	5	2.5
25-30	5	1.1	1	0.4	4	2.0
More than 30	13	2.9	2	0.8	11	5.5
Total	**449**	**100**	**249**	**100**	**200**	**100**

Table I.4.56 indicates that 49.0% of faculty joined their current institution within the past five years, 19.6% between five and ten years ago, and 13.8% between ten and fifteen years ago. Only 2.9% have served for more than 30 years.

Institutionally (Table I.4.56), recent recruits form 53.0% in government colleges and 45.8% in SUs, reflecting a younger tenure profile in colleges.

Table I.4.57: Mode of Appointment to Current University/College

Options	Total Valid Responses		State Universities		Government Colleges	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Direct Recruitment Call by HEI	391	83.4	223	87.1	168	78.9
Examination conducted by the State Government	64	13.6	33	12.9	31	14.6
Transferred to this institution from other institution	14	3.0	0	0.0	14	6.6
Total	**469**	**100**	**256**	**100**	**213**	**100**

Table I.4.57 shows that the majority (83.4%) entered their current post through direct recruitment by their institution, while 13.6% were appointed through state-level examinations and 3.0% via transfers.

By type (Table I.4.57), universities (87.1%) and government colleges rely on institutional recruitment.

Table I.4.58: Nature of Faculty Appointment in Current Institution

Options	Total Valid Responses		State Universities		Government Colleges	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Regular	267	56.7	159	61.6	108	50.7
Contractual	139	29.5	56	21.7	83	39.0
Guest Lecturer	43	9.1	34	13.2	9	4.2
Ad-hoc	4	0.8	0	0.0	4	1.9
Visiting Teacher	2	0.4	1	0.4	1	0.5
Other	16	3.4	8	3.1	8	3.8
Total	**471**	**100**	**258**	**100**	**213**	**100**

Table I.4.58 indicates that 56.7% of faculty are in regular appointments, 29.5% contractual, 9.1% guest, and the remainder in ad-hoc, visiting, or other categories.

According to Table I.4.58, SUs (61.6%) have a greater share of regular posts than government colleges (50.7%).

4.6.2 Summary

Across Tables 4.51 to 4.58, the faculty profile indicates a relatively young and expanding academic workforce, characterised by limited institutional mobility and a strong concentration at junior academic ranks. The majority of FMs entered the profession within the past two decades, reflecting a cohort that is still in the early stages of their academic careers. Over half remain employed at their first HEI, with this proportion slightly higher in government colleges than in SUs, suggesting comparatively low levels of movement across institutions within the sector.

In terms of current academic position, Assistant Professors constitute the overwhelming majority of staff, particularly within government colleges, while more senior and leadership roles are held by only a small minority. Around two-thirds of FMs have never held formal leadership positions, with this proportion again slightly higher in government colleges than SUs. Overall, the findings point to a workforce structure in which universities tend to offer more permanent and senior roles, whereas colleges employ a higher share of recently recruited faculty but with more opportunities for leadership positions, reinforcing a potential institutional differentiation in staffing patterns and career progression opportunities.

4.7 Summary and Conclusion

This chapter explored who the FMs in the participating SUs and government colleges are, where they come from, and how their educational and professional journeys have evolved. The faculty profile reveals a mix of social and geographic backgrounds, though some groups remain more visible than others. Men make up a larger share of the faculty, and most come from urban or semi-urban backgrounds, while fewer have roots in rural areas. The social profile reflects the broader inequalities seen in HE: faculty from the General category remain the most represented, while those from SC and ST communities continue to be fewer in number. Many come from middle-income families and are the first in their families to enter academic professions, even if not the first to complete HE.

FMs' schooling was largely within state-run or government-aided schools, particularly in rural and semi-urban areas. Many studied under state education boards, with English being the more common medium of instruction, though a sizeable number studied in their state languages. Sciences emerged as the most common stream at the higher-secondary level. Their early education thus reflects the experience of public schooling systems across different states. Most faculty continued their studies in public universities in their home states. All hold postgraduate degrees, as required for teaching, and many went on to complete doctoral research. Some were able to pursue their studies with the help of scholarships or fellowships, while others depended on family or personal means. Almost all qualified through national or state-level eligibility exams such as NET or SLET, before entering academic positions. These educational journeys show that most faculty built their academic foundations in public

universities close to home. This background provides them a deep familiarity with local institutions and the way HE works within their own regions.

When recalling how they entered HE, most faculty said their decisions were guided primarily by family members—especially parents and siblings—rather than by teachers or formal counselling. Only a few remembered receiving advice from faculty or schoolteachers. This reliance on family guidance was also evident in choices of college, course, and subject, which were often based on familiarity and limited information rather than structured academic advice. Few FMs reported that faculty had been involved in their own undergraduate college choices. Those who did said such interactions happened mainly during visits to campuses or through personal or family networks. Faculty involvement, when it occurred, was generally informal and advisory—focused on general encouragement or guidance about courses—rather than part of any structured outreach.

Most faculty now live close to their institutions, often in the same city or town, while others commute from nearby districts. This proximity positions many FMs to play a potential role in sharing information about HE with local communities and schools. Professionally, most faculty are early- to mid-career, concentrated in assistant-level positions, with limited leadership experience. Many have joined their current institutions in the last decade, and while universities have a greater share of permanent positions, government colleges depend more on contractual faculty. Taken together, these patterns reveal a faculty body whose educational and professional trajectories are deeply rooted in local public institutions and regional contexts. Their closeness—both geographical and experiential—to the systems from which most students emerge places them in a unique position to help bridge information gaps and support informed access to HE.

Chapter 5: Institutional Leaders, Faculty Members and HE Outreach – Practices and Perspectives

5.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the role of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), their Institutional Leaders (ILs), and Faculty Members (FMs) in facilitating access to Higher Education (HE), particularly for rural and first-generation students. It draws on faculty survey responses, interviews, and diary entries to understand views on how institutions can support students through information, guidance, and outreach activities. The chapter covers three main areas: the kind of guidance colleges and universities can provide to help students make informed choices; the involvement of FMs and the ways in which faculty personally and professionally engage in advising students; and the challenges FMs face in sustaining such outreach efforts.

5.2 Facilitating Access to HE: Institutional Level

5.2.1 Status of the HEIs as Rural and Rural-serving and Comfort of Rural Students

One of the key aims of the 'Widening Access to Higher Education in India: Institutional Perspectives' (WAHEI) project has been to investigate current and potential HE outreach practices in *rural and rural-serving HEIs*, given the relative challenges that students from rural backgrounds face in accessing HE and making informed choices about HE. The interviews with ILs and FMs confirmed that the HEIs included in the study—State Universities (SUs) and government colleges alike—served high numbers of rural students, including HEIs with more than 90% students from rural backgrounds.

ILs were aware that the HEIs they were leading were rural serving, while FMs did not always show such awareness, as they were more familiar with the proportions of rural students in their departments and courses. One FM, Dhiraj from Haryana SU, noted that, while there was a rural dominance in numerical terms at the SU, there was a gender imbalance in rural student population, with women students hailing more from urban backgrounds. Simultaneously,

Kuljeet, an FM in Haryana Government College In-Depth (GCID), noted that in that college women outnumbered men, due to the fact that parents are unwilling to send their daughters to colleges that are farther away and located in a city. This illustrates the complexity of the HE environment, with different factors influencing students and institutions differently and perceptions of FMs being guided by their specific contexts and understandings.

Table I.5.1: Faculty Perceptions on Whether Rural Students Would Be Comfortable Choosing this College/University

Options	Total Valid Responses		State Universities		Government Colleges	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Yes	438	94.0	239	94.1	199	93.9
No	28	6.0	15	5.9	13	6.1
Total	**466**	**100**	**254**	**100**	**212**	**100**

The total respondents (Table I.5.1) are 466 FMs, wherein a majority of FMs (94.0%) believe that rural students are comfortable choosing their institution. This may indicate that the institution is physically and economically accessible to students.

According to the survey findings, FMs from both SUs (94.1%) and government college (93.9%) overwhelmingly agree that rural students feel comfortable when choosing their college or university. A small percentage of FMs from SUs (5.9%) and government colleges (6.1%) believe that rural students would not feel comfortable choosing their college or university.

The question of whether rural students would be comfortable choosing the HEI was included in IL and FM interviews. This was in order to complement survey data and gauge the institutional climate and whether the HEIs were seen by staff members as welcoming and outward facing, i.e. as already demonstrating evidence of the potential for an HE outreach culture. Most study participants expressed that the HEIs where they were based would be a comfortable choice for rural students.

According to ILs and FMs of the SUs, the SU was perceived as a comfortable choice, based on the fact that SUs may be associated with local society (e.g. IL, SU, Assam) and have a presence in local activities, for example, via social work department and National Service Scheme (NSS)

(IL, SU, Haryana). Secondly, financial considerations were raised, given the association between rural groups and lower economic status, such as helpfully low fees and scholarships, which were mentioned by many participants across different states. The provision of hostel facilities was considered attractive and indeed essential for many rural students whose homes are too far from the HEI to enrol as a day scholar (e.g. IL, SU Maharashtra; FMs, SU, Assam). Finally, one FM (SU, Maharashtra) noted that rural students have a role in letting others from similar backgrounds know that they will find other rural students at SU if they enrol.

At government colleges, some of the same considerations emerged, although there was a sense that government colleges are closer to rural catchment areas and therefore more likely anyway to be selected by students from rural backgrounds. Indeed, the proximity of the college to home was raised by several participants as likely to be attractive to rural students (e.g. IL, GCID, Kerala; FMs, GCID, Assam; IL GCID, Chhattisgarh), as well as proximity to infrastructure such as highway or railway. Again, financial considerations were raised in terms of hostel and food provision being at reasonable rates (IL, GCID, Maharashtra). In one college, the fact that there is a uniform dress code was also seen as attractive as this may reduce inferiority complex (FM, Government College 'A' (GCA), Kerala). Some specific points were raised such as the fact that HE provisions for rural students may be part of the founding mission of an HEI (e.g. IL, Government College 'B' (GCB), Kerala), and that parents may be alumni of a college and therefore have increased familiarity with the institution (FMs, GCID, Assam).

Across all HEIs, few remarks were made about the HEIs potentially *not* being a comfortable choice for rural students. One such remark was around the fact that, if an HEI does not have hostel facilities, this may be less attractive to rural students whose homes are far away from the HEI (GCID, IL, Kerala). Other remarks were neither positive nor negative, but were related to the fact that, for many government colleges, the college is the *only* choice for students living in the vicinity; this point was made by the GCID IL and other FMs in government colleges in Assam. Another remark was that, for many rural students, the choice of college and course may not be made in an informed manner, based on perceived comfort, but instead for instance may be based on guidance from cybercafe staff.

5.2.2 Guidance and Activities for Rural Students in HEIs

In terms of facilitating access, there were institutional level supports that were considered to be both relevant and advantageous to potential students. This section discusses FMs' views on the type of information and guidance that HEIs can offer in outreach programmes to help students make informed decisions about HE.

Table I.5.2: Topics that Colleges Could Provide Guidance to Attract Rural Students and Help with HE Choices – Overall

Option	N	%
Advice on whether to go for HE or other choices	361	8.1
Choice of universities/colleges	324	7.2
Choice of course/subject	379	8.5
Admission process	363	8.1
Covering tuition expenses / funding options	244	5.5
Entrance exam preparation	321	7.2
Special admissions programmes	210	4.7
Checking application form	212	4.7
Choice of which college to enrol in if selected in more than one	200	4.5
Organise a visit to the college/university	207	4.6
Advice on accommodation)	230	5.1
Advice about college/university facilities, activities, and provisions	285	6.4
Campus safety	286	6.4
Employability prospects	354	7.9
Good academic functioning	285	6.4
Transport facilities	185	4.1
Other	28	0.6
Total	**4474**	**100**

The key themes identified from FMs' responses (Table I.5.2) regarding areas where colleges and universities could offer guidance to rural students are as follows.

Out of 4,474 total responses from faculty, the most frequently mentioned areas where colleges could offer greater guidance to rural students were choice of course or subject (8.5%), advice on whether to pursue HE or other options (8.1%), and clarity about the admission process (8.1%). These were followed by advice on employability prospects (7.9%), preparation for entrance examinations (7.2%), and choice of college or university (7.2%).

Other areas of perceived need included campus safety (6.4%), academic functioning (6.4%), and information on facilities and campus activities (6.4%). Guidance on covering tuition fees and funding options (5.5%), accommodation (5.1%), special admission programmes (4.7%), and checking application forms (4.7%) appeared less frequently. Very few faculty (0.6%) suggested 'other' topics.

This pattern shows that FMs understand how important it is to guide students at every stage—from deciding whether to study further, to choosing what and where to study. The emphasis on employability also shows that FMs view that students and families want reliable information about how education connects to future opportunities.

Table I.5.3: Topics the College/University Could Provide More Guidance Across SUs and Government Colleges – Comparative Scenario

Option	State Universities		Government Colleges	
	N	%	N	%
Advice on whether to go for HE or other options	183	7.8	178	8.4
Choice of which colleges/universities to apply to	166	7.1	158	7.4
Choice of course/subject	198	8.4	181	8.5
About the admission process	197	8.4	166	7.8
About covering tuition expenses / funding options	137	5.8	107	5.0
About HE entry exams preparation	164	7.0	157	7.4
About special admissions programmes/processes, e.g., reservations	101	4.3	109	5.1
Checking application form / other documents	91	3.9	121	5.7
Choice of which colleges/universities to enrol in if selected in more than one	100	4.3	100	4.7
Organising a visit to the college/university	114	4.9	93	4.4
Advice on accommodation	132	5.6	98	4.6
About college facilities/activities/provisions	143	6.1	142	6.7
About campus safety and security	144	6.1	142	6.7
About employability prospects	212	9.0	142	6.7
About whether the college/university has good academic functioning	157	6.7	128	6.0
About transport facilities	90	3.8	95	4.5
Other	16	0.7	12	0.6
Total of Answer = Yes	**2345**	**100**	**2129**	**100**

Across the two types of institutions (Table I.5.3), faculty views are broadly similar. In SUs, top priorities were employability prospects (9.0%), course choice (8.4%), and admission process (8.4%), followed by advice on whether to pursue HE (7.8%) and entrance-exam preparation (7.0%). In government colleges, course choice (8.5%), advice on whether to pursue HE (8.4%), and admission process (7.8%) remained key concerns, but higher shares were reported for

checking application forms (5.7%), special admission or reservation procedures (5.1%), and transport facilities (4.5%).

Faculty across both types of HEI identify the same core guidance gaps, but their emphasis differs slightly by context. FMs in government colleges, who interact closely with first-generation and rural learners, focus more on the practical side of access—how to fill forms, understand reservations, or navigate admission steps. University faculty were more concerned with choice—helping students link courses to career goals and assess the academic standing of institutions. Together, they address distinct yet interconnected stages of the HE journey.

Of relevance here is the exploration of FM knowledge of existing activities provided by their HEI to aid in attracting rural students.

Table I.5.4 Faculty Responses on whether the College/University is Conducting Activities to Attract Rural Students

Options	Total Valid Responses		State Universities		Government Colleges	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Yes	350	76.6	169	67.9	181	87.0
No	107	23.4	80	32.1	27	13.0
Total	**457**	**100**	**249**	**100**	**208**	**100**

Table I.5.4 shows that 76.6% of the FMs agreed that their college/university is conducting activities to enrol students from rural areas. On the other hand, 23.4% of FMs considered that their HEIs were not conducting any activities to attract rural students. This shows that, while most institutions appear to have some form of activities, nearly a quarter still lack such initiatives (or that FMs are not aware of these).

A significant number of respondents believe that their institutions are making efforts to engage in activities to attract rural students, as indicated in Table I.5.4. Compared to SUs (67.9%), the government colleges have a larger majority of FMs (87.0%), indicating that institutions are conducting activities to attract students from rural areas. These responses indicate that the government colleges are far more engaged in outreach, reflecting their closer links with surrounding rural communities. Universities, though better resourced, appear less connected

locally, underscoring the need for stronger HE outreach-oriented strategies within larger institutions.

Interview data provides further insight into these findings. In terms of HEIs conducting activities to attract rural students, for the SUs there was some perception that awareness raising may not be required, due to the strong reputation of SU (e.g. FM, SU, Assam; FM, SU, Chhattisgarh). Other similar comments included that rural students already have a snowball effect in their communities by imparting information and influence about HE (FM, SU, Assam), and that the university does not engage in recruitment efforts as students 'come on their own' (FM, SU, Haryana). In general, there seemed to be a perception that SUs conduct limited HE outreach activities (FM, SU, Kerala), but that, in spite of a lack of formalised HE outreach culture, individual FMs engage in individual activities such as giving guidance as well as financial assistance (FM, SU, Haryana).

In terms of how SUs attract (rural) students, there were a number of strategies and activities in place, despite the views expressed above.

Firstly, there was evidence of facilitating admissions/entrance examinations. For instance, the entrance examination could be taken in different centres across different areas, meaning more prospective students could sit the exam (IL, SU, Assam). Offering entrance examination support was also mentioned (FM, GCA, Maharashtra). Finally, the fact that the admissions system had been simplified was considered beneficial for prospective students (FM, GCID, Maharashtra).

Secondly, there was a perception that SUs were designed to be attractive in various ways, though it is noteworthy that information spreading is necessary in tandem with the attractive offer of an HEI. SUs were considered financially attractive for rural students based on being affordable (FM, SU, Kerala), operating schemes such as 'Earn while you learn' (IL, SU, Maharashtra), and offering financial aid (FM, GCID, Maharashtra). SUs were also considered attractive based on hostel facilities (FM, SU, Kerala; IL and FMs, SU, Maharashtra).

In two cases, an information campaign was mentioned. In one case, there was use of social media by the public relations office (FM, SU, Kerala); in another case, posters and social media were used, including using photos of alumni on posters (FM, SU, Maharashtra).

There were several accounts where there were indirect effects of the SU operating other initiatives and this leading to a connection between the SU and the local community. For instance, the SU hosting National Cadet Corps (NCC) was seen as attractive for those aspiring to careers in military services (FM, SU, Haryana). Operating other programmes such as science exhibitions and the 'Sastrayan programme' (FM, SU, Kerala) were deemed important, as was NSS, where NSS events are conducted in the local villages where information about the HEI also spreads (IL, SU, Maharashtra). It was also mentioned that there were university-community interactions, e.g. through competitions (such as essay writing, painting), where the bond with the community was strengthened (FM, SU, Chhattisgarh; FM, SU, Maharashtra).

In terms of activities directly targeting rural students, intentions and/or current activities were mentioned, in particular in terms of engaging in school visits to inform school students about HEIs and courses (FM, SU, Assam; FM, SU, Haryana). A university open day was also mentioned (FM, SU, Maharashtra).

In comparison with the SU, ILs and FMs at government colleges expressed many different ways in which their HEIs try to attract (rural) students. Indeed, some FMs noted that specific efforts to attract rural students were not in evidence, as all students were from rural backgrounds (FM, GCA, Assam; FM, GCID, Kerala).

Again, there was some evidence of colleges facilitating enrolment and admissions. For instance, in one college, it was noted that FMs help with online registration, which is a source of issues for prospective students who otherwise face problems of inaccurate submissions from computer centres (FM, GCA, Haryana).

ILs and FMs also discussed how their colleges appear attractive. Again, as with SUs, colleges are financially attractive, through scholarship provision and fee waiver for women students as per government policy (IL and FM, GCB, Haryana), financial assistance (IL, GCA, Maharashtra), low fees (FM, GCID, Chhattisgarh), subsidised lunch (FM, GCB, Kerala), as well as a uniform dress code removing the need to afford fashionable clothing (FM, GCA, Kerala). There was also mention of the subjects offered being attractive, such as offering courses that would be practical (IL, GCA, Assam) and 'rare' courses such as journalism (FM, GCA, Kerala). Facilities were also mentioned as attractive, such as new buildings (FM, GCB, Haryana) as well as

improved connectivity such as a new bus stop being installed near the college (FM, GCB, Haryana). Enhanced security was seen as attractive, such as CCTV cameras in the campus and on the main road which are seen to make the HEI more attractive to families for enrolling their daughters (FM, GCA, Haryana).

Again, for government colleges, reference was made to information campaigns, including: a specific campaign at the time of admissions involving pamphlets, hoardings, newspapers, and social media (FM, GCID, Haryana); a poster campaign to address specific course with deficit of students (FM, GCID, Kerala); and publicity in local newspapers (IL, GCID, Maharashtra).

As with the SUs, there was substantial mention of the ways in which colleges' involvement in other initiatives may have indirect effects. A twinning programme was mentioned where school students can visit the HEI (IL, GCA, Haryana); a website was also mentioned where teachers from nearby schools can request assistance from HEIs such as training, additional classes, school students' access to labs, library, and sports facilities (FM, GCA, Assam). Colleges adopting schools and villages was discussed, including FMs interacting with school students and conducting lab visits, funded by the college (IL, GCB, Assam). NSS was mentioned again in terms of events and camps conducted in the local villages where information about the HEI is also spread (ILs, SU and GCID, Maharashtra; IL, GCA, Maharashtra; IL, GCID, Chhattisgarh) and in terms of book distribution (FM, GCID, Kerala).

Other initiatives which build the relationship with the local population included: English department offering grammar classes to school children on Saturdays and holidays (FM, GCID, Kerala); tutoring schemes where HE students tutor rural/tribal children (IL, GCA, Kerala); a college offering computer classes for women from the local surrounding area (FM, GCA, Kerala); and evening classes collaborating with tribal residential schools (FM, GCA, Kerala). Donating items to schools was mentioned as creating a bond with the community (FM, GCA, Assam). One college runs a community radio station which also disseminates information about HE and the HEI (IL, GCID, Maharashtra). Another activity mentioned was when FMs are invited to schools to give lectures and include information about HE and the HEI in the lecture (IL, GCID, Chhattisgarh). Finally, nearby schools are invited when the HEI has a function (IL, Haryana, GCA) and HEI functions (e.g. food fests) are shared on social media, which may enhance the appeal of HEIs (FM, GCB, Kerala).

In terms of activities directly targeting rural students, there was substantial mention of school visits, for instance regarding new skills-based courses (IL, GCID, Assam), raising awareness of science subjects (FM, GCID, Haryana), aiming to rectify under-enrolment in particular subjects (e.g. Commerce), where parents were also invited (IL, GCID, Haryana), discussing the facilities available at the HEI such as the 'Earn while you learn' scheme (FM, GCA, Haryana). Timing of school visits was considered important, for example just before board examinations (IL, GCID, Haryana). There was also evidence of community visits, where FMs at one college were going in groups to villages—in collaboration with the village sarpanch—to facilitate a meeting to discuss HE (including subject choice) and persuade families to enrol their daughters in the college, and going door to door (FM, GCA, Haryana). Visits to colleges were also discussed, such as visits to the HEI by school students (FM, GCA, Haryana), a 'Fun in Chemistry' programme where school students visit the lab (IL, GCID, Maharashtra), an annual science fair (IL, GCB, Maharashtra), and lab and library visits and workshops (FM, GCB, Assam).

5.2.3 Summary

In summary, analysis in this section shows that FMs believe colleges and universities can play an important role in helping rural students make informed HE choices. FMs across both institution types also overwhelmingly feel that rural students would generally be comfortable choosing their institutions.

The areas most frequently identified where SUs/colleges could provide more guidance include: guidance on course and subject choice; advice on whether to pursue HE; clarity about admission processes; employability prospects; and preparation for entrance examinations. Faculty from both SUs and government colleges identify similar areas, though their emphasis differs slightly. Government college faculty placed somewhat greater emphasis on practical aspects of access, such as checking forms, understanding reservations, and navigating admissions procedures, while university faculty focused relatively more on employability and course-related choices. Most FMs report that their institutions conduct activities to attract rural students, although these efforts do not always appear to be formally recognised or consistently visible as 'HE outreach'. Government colleges, in particular, appear more closely connected to surrounding rural communities, reflecting their local presence and engagement.

5.3 Facilitating Access to HE: ILs

5.3.1 ILs' Experiences of Guiding Prospective Students on HE Choices

Qualitative data from interviews with ILs reveals further insight into how FMs, at various levels, can and do facilitate access to their institutions. For ILs in the case study states, there was a recognition that their current leadership role limited access to potential students, but that they could direct students to colleagues more informed of pre-admission processes (IL, GCID, Haryana). Despite these challenges, there was evidence of ILs providing guidance to students, including those from rural backgrounds, both in their current and previous roles.

For example, the SU IL in Assam recognised that his current position limited direct access to students for providing guidance. Nevertheless, he discussed how he provided information on a personal level to high school students in his native village and had been organising relevant activities where he worked with friends to provide students of the village with guidance. This included an annual festival, career counselling camps, and subject specific activities. He specifically organised these events due to a recognition in their potential for empowering and enlightening students.

Some ILs had previously held positions with a focus on admissions and advice. For example, the IL at Kerala SU had a background in providing guidance to prospective students and parents and emphasised a belief in the importance of prioritising interests to aid excelling in their chosen field. He reflected that it was primarily parents who sought advice due to accessibility and perceived expertise. He also considered how students may favour subjects considered to be less demanding. On the subject of programme choice, he also acknowledged instances of HEI staff influencing student choices, sometimes to fill less popular programmes, demonstrating potential issues in relation to subject advice specifically. He noted that, despite conducting presentations, he primarily communicated through colleagues due to centralised admission processes.

For government colleges, there was also a recognition that, as their institutions were situated in rural settings, all guidance provided was for rural students (IL, GCID, Assam; IL, GCB, Assam; and IL, GCB, Maharashtra). They recognised that this also provided challenges in terms of the

economic positions of students (IL, GCA, Assam), and that this situation required continuous support (IL, GCB, Maharashtra). The IL of GCA in Maharashtra discussed a personal focus on first generation students, which had particular impact on rural populations.

Reflecting on their time as FMs and in previous roles, some ILs were able to discuss multiple initiatives and programmes that they were involved in, alongside colleagues, such as visiting rural schools, conducting awareness programmes, instructing on specific subjects, and orienting students in terms of undergraduate programmes (IL, GCA, Assam; IL, GCB, Assam; IL, GCB, Kerala). Such activities were organised as awareness programmes, career option programmes, etc., within the premise of the college and were common practice of FMs, as the college was the only HEI option in the area.

Within discussions with government college ILs, there was a theme of them leading on initiatives specific to their subjects and backgrounds (e.g. Kerala GCID IL ran language specific programmes and opportunities within humanities, and Kerala GCB IL with a background in agriculture made her an appreciated advisor to parents who often were agricultural labourers themselves).

In some institutions (e.g. Assam GCB), there were specific teams dedicated to providing guidance to students, whom ILs and FMs could direct potential students to for appropriate advice.

For some ILs, they narrated their experiences with specific reference to standout individual students. For example, the IL of the Assam GCID discussed successfully guiding an individual student to gain admission to one of the best colleges of the region, who then went on to become a high-ranking government official. Others (e.g. IL, GCB, Haryana; IL, GBC Kerala) narrated occasions where advice on options had been given to personal connections and relations. These were again framed as transformative for the individual in the case of the Kerala GCID IL, where the IL guidance led to a cousin excelling and securing an exchange programme abroad despite initial lack of direction.

5.3.2 ILs as Facilitators of FMs Guiding Prospective Students

In interviews with ILs based in SUs, it was noted by ILs that centralised admission processes meant that there was no perceived necessity to conduct specific activities facilitating access to undergraduate education (IL, SU, Kerala; IL, SU Assam). There was also mention of how discussions and strategising for increasing enrolments took place when FMs of partner colleges visited the relevant SU departments (IL, SU, Haryana), highlighting a difference in expectations between SU and government college forms of HEI.

In government colleges, there was again acknowledgement that the role of IL limited personal involvement in advising students, which was often the responsibility of other teams or committees (IL, GCID, Maharashtra) and/or an area where all FMs were engaged in offering subject-specific advice and general guidance on HE options (IL, GCA, Maharashtra).

In recent years, some government college ILs, started creating admission help desks, orientation programmes, and forming admission committees and dedicated FM teams who were active prior to admission processes (IL, GCID, Assam; IL, GCA, Assam; IL GCB, Assam). Such initiatives complemented government-level processes and included a focus on access to digital tools, which were seen as essential for rural students. For example, the Assam GCA IL had engaged staff in creating student-friendly websites, and the Assam GCID IL and the Assam GCB IL had arranged for orientation on the operation of necessary digital portals for the admission process.

Several ILs discussed a highly proactive approach, including visits, acting as guests at educational events, organising activities and workshops, guiding teachers and students, campaigning through posters, engaging with local schools and building relationships with schoolteachers, and providing mentorship (e.g. IL, GCB, Maharashtra; IL, GCID, Kerala; IL GCID, Haryana; IL, GCA, Haryana; and IL, GCB, Assam). Such approaches were considered to exemplify best practices, increasing the information and access gap for first generation and rural students, creating a strong support system well before the admission stage.

The IL for Haryana's GCA noted the challenge of having no specific financial support for pre-admission activities, but stated that despite this, FMs voluntarily pooled finances and gave time to carry out campaigns in nearby villages.

Some recognised that, although they did not specifically organise pre-admission guidance initiatives for members of their staff, they had engaged in developing related programmes such as for internal Professional Development (PD) (e.g. IL, GCA, Kerala) and encouraged general engagement and initiatives of FMs (e.g. IL, GCB, Kerala).

5.3.3 Summary

Overall, qualitative data reveals a mixed picture of IL engagement in facilitating access to HE. For some, especially those from SU institutions, there was a sense that their roles were no longer naturally inclined towards specific and active engagement in the pre-admission guidance processes, with other teams and centralised processes taking the lead. Contrastingly, there were some ILs, primarily from government colleges, who discussed in detail their proactive approach to ensuring that they and FMs were able to support and guide potential students through a wide variety of initiatives.

5.4 Facilitating Access to HE: FMs

5.4.1 FMs' Experiences of Guiding Prospective Students on HE Choice

Table I.5.5: Faculty Responses on Advising Undergraduate HE Options and Admission Processes

Options	Total Valid Responses		State Universities		Government Colleges	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Yes	424	91.4	236	92.5	188	90.0
No	40	8.6	19	7.5	21	10.0
Total	**464**	**100**	**255**	**100**	**209**	**100**

A majority of the FMs (Table I.5.5) reported advising students about HE options or admission processes, while only 40 (8.6%) said they did not. Both institution types show strong faculty involvement, though it is slightly higher in universities. Table I.5.5 reveals that in SUs, 92.5% of faculty reported giving such advice; in government colleges, 90% did so. Only 7.5% and 10% of FMs respectively, said they did not. The diary study also indicates that FMs at GCID were more frequently approached for HE-related advice (Table I.5.6).

Table I.5.6: Valid HE Outreach Advice Experiences Across HEIs (Diary Study)

HEI Type	Number of Valid Experience Entries
SUs	103
GCID	153
Total	**256**

Table I.5.7: Responses of Faculty by Social Group, Gender, Religion and Place of Residence

	Options	Involved FM	Not involved FM	Total
Gender	Female (N)	205	21	226
	Female (%)	90.7	9.3	100
	Male (N)	219	19	238
	Male (%)	92.0	8.0	100
Social Group	SC (N)	52	4	56
	SC (%)	92.9	7.1	100
	Scheduled Tribes (ST) (N)	15	2	17
	ST (%)	88.2	11.8	100
	OBC (N)	112	9	121
	OBC (%)	92.6	7.4	100
	General (N)	239	23	262
	General (%)	91.2	8.8	100
	EWS (N)	6	3	9
	EWS (%)	66.7	33.3	100
Religion	Hindu (N)	353	31	384
	Hindu (%)	91.9	8.1	100
	Muslim (N)	48	9	57
	Muslim (%)	84.2	15.8	100
	Other Religious Minorities (ORM) (N)	24	4	28
	ORM (%)	85.7	14.3	100
Place of Permanent Residence	Rural (N)	131	18	149
	Rural (%)	87.9	12.1	100
	Urban (N)	286	21	307
	Urban (%)	93.2	6.8	100

Table I.5.7 shows that the involvement of FMs in guiding students on HE options is high across all social and demographic groups. Among female faculty, involvement reaches 90.7%, while male faculty report 92.0%. Scheduled Castes (SC) and Other Backward Classes (OBC) faculty also show near universal involvement (around 93%), with slightly lower rates among Economically Weaker Section (EWS) and Muslim faculty. Urban faculty report higher involvement (93.2%) than their rural counterparts (87.9%).

Similarly to findings at IL level, qualitative data from interviews with FMs revealed varying levels of engagement with pre-admission advice practices. Indeed, some ILs indicated a significant role and others suggested that, from a professional position, their engagement with potential students was minimal, although they still provided guidance from a personal position.

At SUs, in the case study states, FMs generally considered themselves to provide hands-on support to potential students during the admission process and were able to narrate episodes of advice given.

In Haryana, the SU FMs recognised the challenges faced by rural students. Gary (FM, SU, Haryana), narrated an incident where he helped a rural student who was not able to enrol due to financial difficulties and encouraged him to develop a source of income through creative art. Vipul, Akram, and Dhiraj (FMs, SU, Haryana) discussed their own belonging to villages as a source of empathy for rural students, and Dhiraj was further able to counsel on HE through an association with an Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO), although this was not the primary activity of the NGO. Likewise, one FM from the SU in Assam advised potential students from rural areas through interactive programmes such as workshops and seminars for senior secondary school students. Gary also recognised concerns on ability to make informed choices and being constrained financially, for rural students in particular.

Similar to ILs, some FMs felt that they did not have direct access to aspiring students, although some were then able to provide an example of how and when they did (e.g. the Assam SU FM who advised senior secondary school students).

As was found in ILs, multiple FMs discussed providing guidance to family members and personal contacts. In some cases, these were rural individuals (e.g. Assam SU FM who advised a rural cousin), but not always (e.g. other Assam SU FM who provided guidance to students

taking private tuition with him within urban area; Assam SU FM who advised non-rural relative; and Assam SU FM who occasionally advised at social gatherings within semi-urban locality).

One FM (Assam SU) discussed engagement with providing guidance on choices and admission processes, in particular in the city in which she studied, through her personal network as an alumnus. This included topics such as ranking, girls' safety, and more broad choices and careers scopes. She recognised that these potential students belonged to privileged classes living in an urban area.

Within government colleges, a wider variety of engagement activities were discussed, including: organising parent-student meetings (FM, GCB, Maharashtra); participating in door-to-door campaigns as part of community outreach (FM, GCA, Haryana); twinning programmes set up by governments where school students visited partnered government colleges (FM, GCB, Haryana); mentor-mentee systems (FM, GCID, Assam); aiding subject-specific engagements with students (FM, GCID, Assam); guiding prospective students through admission processes (FM, GCID, Assam); informing communities of financial schemes (FM, GCID, Haryana); putting up visual posters (FM, GCID; Haryan); clarifying details to uncertain students (FM, GCA, Kerala); and participating in phone-based guidance (FM, GCB, Assam; FM, GCA, Kerala). There was a sense of constant guidance and advice through multiple channels and spanning various elements including programme options, college selection, process information, and much more.

Again, multiple FMs recounted specific instances of making a difference in the pre-admission process. One FM (Assam GCID) discussed how a female student had approached her to aid her in persuading her parents to allow her to pursue HE instead of getting married. The FM intervened and the student was able to proceed with her academic career, with further financial support from the FM. One FM (Assam GCA) discussed two particular cases of students she feared would discontinue their studies, so helped to improve their grade and overcome personal hardships to enrol. One student became a teacher and the other enrolled in one of the best institutions in the region. Another FM, also from Assam GCID, discussed motivating a student who was uncertain due to lack of self-confidence.

Some had specific related roles, for example one FM from Assam GCID was also a member of the admission committee, thus closely associated with students before and during the process. Another FM (Assam government college) considered themselves to be an expert in giving advice on admission processes and the use of the webpage portal. A Kerala GCB FM held a senior position in a residence association promoting programmes in government colleges as advantageous due to low fees and proximity to rural students, although she noted that early marriage expectations were still prevalent.

There were also multiple mentions of offering advice through personal positions such as neighbours (e.g. FM, GCID, Assam; FM, GCB, Kerala; FM, GCID, Maharashtra), and relatives (FM, GCA, Assam; FM, GCB, Assam; FM, GCID, Maharashtra).

Many of the discussions with FMs referred specifically to rural schools and students, with many government college FMs indicating that the majority of their students and access activities were focused on those from rural backgrounds. One (FM, GCB, Assam) considered the challenges, indicating that it was often the parents that came to him for guidance on the students' behalf, and how the students were often not interested in HE as they felt inclined towards job-oriented programmes seen to tackle economic hardship and were put off by the duration of the HE programme. Another FM from the same institution suggested that enrolment had been negatively impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, that students rarely came forward for help, and that it was typically the FM who approached them to inform them of options.

There were also examples of specifically helping female students and their families (e.g. FM, GCA, Maharashtra; FM, GCB, Maharashtra) and those with disabilities (e.g. FM, GCB, Kerala).

Overall, the data revealed many instances of ILs and FMs playing active roles in influencing enrolment through pre-admission advice both in professional and personal roles. Government colleges, in particular, showed specific focus on rural students, likely due to their location, and demonstrated a vast array of mechanisms for providing advice and highlighting options to potential students.

5.4.2 FMs' Practices of Guiding Prospective Students on HE Choice

FM experiences with pre-admission advice were further exemplified in the solicited diary entries. This section of the report offers a detailed overview of HE outreach advice offered by FMs in selected HEIs across five states during the 12-week period. The analyses presented in this report are based on 256 experiences of HE outreach advice, gathered from FMs of SU and GCID. This section also shows how the practices are reflected across the sample in the survey data.

Table I.5.8: FMs HE Outreach Advice Experiences as Personal or Professional Across HEIs (Diary Data)

Options	Total number of entries which were coded as 'personal'	% of total number of entries which were coded as 'personal'	Total number of entries which were coded as 'professional'	% of total number of entries which were coded as 'professional'	Total number of blank entries for the item	% of total number of blank entries for the item
SU	55	53.4	48	46.6	0	0.0
GCID	73	47.7	78	51.0	2	1.3
Whole sample	**128**	**50.0**	**126**	**49.2**	**2**	**0.8**

Note: entries N= 256, 103 for SUs and 153 for government colleges.

In each diary entry FMs were prompted to classify their HE outreach advice as a professional or personal experience. The majority of the HE outreach advice experiences (254) were identified by the FMs to be offered as part of either their professional or personal roles (Table I.5.8). Only two experiences from GCID did not specify how they considered their advice related to HE outreach. Overall, FMs provide HE outreach advice in equal measure in both their professional and personal roles. A slight difference could be observed between the FMs of SU and GCID. The FMs at SU were somewhat more likely to offer HE-related advice in their personal role. On the other hand, FMs from GCID were likely to be more engaged in HE-related advice as part of their professional role.

Table I.5.9: Person to Whom HE Outreach Advice was Offered (Diary Data)

Advice given to	Total Valid Responses		State Universities		Government Colleges	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Colleague	4	1.6	2	1.9	2	1.3
College Student	2	0.8	1	1.0	1	0.7
Daughter's Friend	1	0.4	0	0.0	1	0.7
Domestic help	1	0.4	0	0.0	1	0.7
Friend circle	14	5.5	7	6.8	7	4.6
Known	2	0.8	0	0.0	2	1.3
Labourer	1	0.4	1	1.0	0	0.0
Neighbour	50	19.5	17	16.5	33	21.6
Professional Artist	1	0.4	1	1.0	0	0.0
Relative	20	7.8	7	6.8	13	8.5
Retired Employee	1	0.4	1	1.0	0	0.0
School Student	154	60.2	63	61.2	91	59.5
Villagers	1	0.4	1	1.0	0	0.0
Did not mention	4	1.6	2	1.9	2	1.3
Total	**256**	**100**	**103**	**100**	**153**	**100**

From the diary study responses of the FMs (see Table I.5.9), school students transitioning to HE (60.2 % of the responses), were by far the most common recipient of advice from FMs across the five states. Neighbours of the FMs were the second group to benefit from HE-related advice offered by the FMs, with a total 19.5% of the responses. Following this, relatives of the FMs were the third category to benefit from FM HE outreach advice with a total of 7.8%. FMs also seem to help their friends, their children, and relatives in arriving at their decisions regarding HE. A total of 5.5% of the HE outreach advice was offered in FMs' friend circles. In addition to these predominant categories, FMs also provide HE-related advice to a range of people from their professional and personal circles, such as colleagues, current college students, professionals, their daughter's friend and acquaintances. Some FMs actively offer advice to prospective first-generation HE students from disadvantaged backgrounds such as domestic help, labourers, and villagers.

The survey data elaborates further across the sample on recipients of FMs' advice and guidance in terms of personal and professional settings.

Table I.5.10: Faculty Who Gave HE Advice or Guidance in their Personal Network

Option	Total Valid Responses		State Universities		Government Colleges	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Extended family (beyond nuclear)	343	28.5	199	28.6	144	28.3
Neighbours	335	27.8	180	25.9	155	30.5
Domestic staff	175	14.5	110	15.8	65	12.8
In a faith-based setting e.g. temple	54	4.5	27	3.9	27	5.3
In a community group	180	15.0	113	16.2	67	13.2
Through NGO work	33	2.7	23	3.3	10	2.0
Through local politics	18	1.5	11	1.6	7	1.4
Through your own tutoring/coaching work	59	4.9	28	4.0	31	6.1
Other	7	0.6	5	0.7	2	0.4
Total of Answer = Yes	**1204**	**100**	**696**	**100**	**508**	**100**

The data of Table I.5.10 shows that, among 1,204 reported instances, faculty most often advised extended family (28.5%) and neighbours (27.8%), followed by community groups (15.0%) and domestic staff (14.5%). Fewer mentioned tutoring (4.9%), faith-based settings (4.5%), or NGO work (2.7%). The data indicates that the advisory role of the FMs extends within their social circles, helping families and neighbours understand educational opportunities. This shows that outreach often begins informally within personal networks.

Table I.5.10 shows that mostly assistance is provided to people from the immediate vicinity of the FMs of both institutions, including extended family (28.6% in SU and 28.3% in government college), neighbours (25.9% in SU and 30.5% in government college), domestic staff (15.8% in SU and 12.8% in government college), and community groups (16.2% in SU and 13.2% in government college). In other words, both university and college faculty are most active in extended families and neighbourhood settings. Colleges show slightly higher engagement with

neighbours (30.5%) and faith-based (5.3%) or tutoring settings (6.1%), while universities report more involvement through community groups (16.2%). The findings imply that both university and college faculty appear embedded in their personal networks and localised.

Table I.5.11: Faculty Who Gave HE Advice or Guidance in their Professional Role at the College/University

Option	Total Valid Responses		State Universities		Government Colleges	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
When you went on a visit to a school	208	21.1	121	21.8	87	20.3
When you visited another community setting	134	13.6	67	12.1	67	15.6
When you met with students who were visiting your college/university	310	31.5	176	31.7	134	31.2
When you organised or assisted with an open day / official visit / taster day for students to visit your college/university	115	11.7	77	13.8	38	8.9
When you asked some current students to advise other young people in their communities	218	22.1	115	20.7	103	24.0
Total of Answer = Yes	**985**	**100**	**556**	**100**	**429**	**100**

Table I.5.11 shows that FMs also participated in a variety of institutional outreach initiatives. Among 985 instances of professional engagement, the most frequent were meeting with students visiting the college or university (31.5%), asking current students to advise others (22.1%), and school visits (21.1%). Engagement in community visits (13.6%) and open-day events (11.7%) was less common. These findings suggest that most outreach activities occur within the institution's premises or through structured academic channels, rather than in external community spaces.

Patterns are broadly similar across institution types (Table I.5.11). In SUs, the most common forms of engagement were meeting with visiting students (31.7%), school visits (21.8%), and open-day participation (13.8%). In government colleges, the top activities were also meeting visiting students (31.2%) and peer outreach through current students (24.0%), with additional involvement in community visits (15.6%). While both universities and colleges engage in outreach, their approaches reflect their institutional contexts. Universities tend to rely on formal, event-based mechanisms such as open days or official visits. Government colleges, in contrast, adopt more community-embedded forms of engagement, connecting directly with local schools and using current students to spread information within their villages and towns.

Table I.5.12. Background of the Person to Whom the HE Advice Was Offered (Diary Data)

Was the recipient from a rural or disadvantaged background?	Total Valid Responses		State Universities		Government Colleges (GCID)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Yes	136	72.7	48	62.3	88	80.0
No	51	27.3	29	37.7	22	20.0
Total	**187**	**100**	**77**	**100**	**110**	**100**

It is evident that the majority of HE outreach-related advice, an overall of 72.7% of the valid experiences (N=187) provided by the FMs and recorded in the diary study, was directed to people from rural or disadvantaged backgrounds. Table I.5.12 presents that FMs from GCID appear to be actively approached by individuals from rural and underprivileged backgrounds for HE-related advice.

Table I.5.13: Information on Rural and Disadvantaged Background (Diary Data)

Information about the person's rural and/or disadvantaged background	Total Valid Responses		State Universities		Government Colleges	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Rural location	85	69.7	30	73.2	55	67.9
Reserve category*	3	2.5	2	4.9	1	1.2
Ethnic minority region (BATD)	1	0.8	1	2.4	0	0.0
First generation HE	4	3.3	2	4.9	2	2.5
Low income	3	2.5	1	2.4	2	2.5
OBC	2	1.6	2	4.9	0	0.0
ST	2	1.6	0	0.0	2	2.5
SC	2	1.6	0	0.0	2	2.5
Slum resident	2	1.6	0	0.0	2	2.5
Below Poverty line (BPL)	1	0.8	0	0.0	1	1.2
Physically challenged	1	0.8	0	0.0	1	1.2
Woman	1	0.8	0	0.0	1	1.2
Single parent	1	0.8	0	0.0	1	1.2
Disadvantaged background	5	4.1	1	2.4	4	4.9
Rural location and low income	1	0.8	1	2.4	0	0.0
Tribal community and Rural location	1	0.8	1	2.4	0	0.0
Rural location and disadvantaged background	2	1.6	0	0.0	2	2.5
Rural location and Minority	1	0.8	0	0.0	1	1.2
Rural Location and OBC Community	2	1.6	0	0.0	2	2.5
Disadvantaged background and low income	1	0.8	0	0.0	1	1.2
First Generation Learner, BPL and Nomadic Tribe	1	0.8	0	0.0	1	1.2
Total	**122**	**100**	**41**	**100**	**81**	**100**

**social group not specified*

A majority of FMs (72.7%) specified details, in their diary entries, about the disadvantaged background of the person to whom they offered HE-related advice. Overall, Table I.5.13 shows

that most of the advice related to HE was provided to people from rural areas. Students from Socially-Economically Disadvantaged Groups (SEDGs) were the second group that benefited from HE outreach-related advice. FMs from GCID actively provided HE-related advice to a range of individuals from diverse disadvantaged backgrounds. In some instances, FMs were aware and explicit about the nature of disadvantage such as students from SEDGs, first generation HE students, slum residents, people below the poverty line, physically challenged students, women, or single parents. In five instances (1 from SU and 4 from GCID), FMs did not specify the disadvantaged background of the student to whom they offered HE-related advice. Overall, the response of FMs indicates the potential that HE outreach has to enable students from disadvantaged groups to access HE.

Table I.5.14. Types of HE Advice Given by FMs (Diary Data)

Type of Advice	Total Valid Responses		State Universities		Government Colleges	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Advice on whether to go for HE or other options	105	8.7	43	7.6	62	9.7
Choice of which college/universities to apply to	97	8.0	41	7.2	56	8.8
Choice of course/subject	106	8.8	47	8.3	59	9.3
About the admissions process	98	8.1	44	7.7	54	8.5
About covering tuition expenses / funding options	71	5.9	31	5.4	40	6.3
About HE entry exams preparation	67	5.6	34	6.0	33	5.2
About special admissions programmes/processes e.g., reservations	76	6.3	38	6.7	38	6.0
Checking application form / other documents	50	4.1	25	4.4	25	3.9
Choice of which colleges/universities to enrol in if selected in more than one	69	5.7	36	6.3	33	5.2
Organising a visit to the college/ university	39	3.2	23	4.0	16	2.5
Advice on accommodation	66	5.5	30	5.3	36	5.7
About college facilities/activities/provisions	84	7.0	40	7.0	44	6.9
About campus safety/security	67	5.6	32	5.6	35	5.5
About employability prospects	95	7.9	40	7.0	55	8.6
About whether the college/university has good academic functioning	74	6.1	42	7.4	32	5.0
About transport facilities	42	3.5	23	4.0	19	3.0
Total	**1206**	**100**	**569**	**100**	**637**	**100**

Table I.5.14 showcases the range of HE advice offered by FMs at SU and GCID across the five case study states and recorded in their diaries. The most frequently provided advice concerns the choice of course/subject (8.8% overall), followed by advice on whether to pursue HE (8.7%) and on the admissions process. Some of the FMs actively organised campus visits (3.2%) for prospective students seeking HE-related advice. FMs were also consulted on practical aspects related to accessing HEI on a day-to-day basis, such as transport facilities (3.5%). Notable differences could be observed among FMs of SU and GCID. FMs from GCID (8.6%) were more actively engaged in providing advice on employability prospects than FMs from SU (7.0%).

Table I.5.15. Other HE-related Advice Offered by FMs (Diary Data)

List of other advice specified by FMs	State Universities	Government Colleges (GCID)
Future HE options	1	0
Importance of HE	1	0
Suggestions to manage study and family	0	2
Suggestions to manage finances while studying	0	4
Environment of the HE	0	2
Preparing for qualifying examination	0	1
Help student think of HE interests and aptitude	0	1
Guiding student regarding a particular HE course(s) or programme	3	2
Guiding student to relevant affordable HEIs	0	1
Encouraging students to pursue HE	0	1
Guided women students to make informed HE choice	0	3
Guiding student to choose courses as per career prospects	1	0
Total (23)	**6**	**17**

FMs also listed other aspects of HE for which students approached them in their diaries; of these, 3 entries did not then specify what the advice had been about (all at SU). Table I.5.15 above presents the other types of advice for which FMs were consulted. FMs from GCID

recorded instances of direct involvement with prospective undergraduate students, when they were consulted for a range of HE-related advice.

The responses listed in the table demonstrate the depth of FMs' engagement. FMs facilitate students' thinking about HE by offering advice related to the overarching role of HE, such as the importance of HE and future HE options, but also practical measures, such as suggestions to manage study and family, managing finances while studying, helping students to think about their interest and aptitude, encouraging students to pursue HE, guiding student to relevant affordable HEIs, and guiding women students to make informed HE choice. Further, some instances reflect FMs' involvement in core aspects of enabling access to HE, such as preparation for qualifying examinations, guiding students regarding particular HE course(s) or programme, and guiding students to choose courses based on career prospects.

Table I.5.16: Types of Advice or Guidance Given by Faculty – Overall (Survey Data)

Options	N	%
Whether to go for HE or other options	371	13.4
Choice of which colleges/universities to apply for	342	12.4
Choice of course/subject	382	13.8
About the admissions process	319	11.5
Covering tuition expenses	191	6.9
Checking application form	244	8.8
Choice of colleges/universities if selected in more than one	224	8.1
Advice on preparing for HE entrances exams	209	7.6
Contacting college/universities on behalf of applicant	120	4.3
Accompanying for a visit to the college/universities of work	69	2.5
Accompanying for a visit to another college/universities	53	1.9
Advising via social networking	164	5.9
About special admissions programmes/processes	72	2.6
Other)	5	0.2
Total	**2765**	**100**

In terms of the survey data, Table I.5.16 reveals that mostly FMs provided guidance on whether to pursue HE or do something else (13.4%) and on which subject or course to choose for HE (13.8%). Subsequently, another common guidance was on selecting colleges or universities to apply to (12.4%), on the admission process (11.5%), checking application forms (8.8%), and supporting with entrance-exam preparation (7.6%) and funding options (6.9%). Less frequently, FMs were providing advice via social media (5.9%), contacting or visiting institutions (2–4%), or participating in special admissions programmes or processes (2.6%).

Table I.5.17: Types of Advice or Guidance Given by Faculty – Detailed by State University and Government College (Survey Data)

Option	State Universities		Government Colleges	
	N	%	N	%
Advice on whether to go for HE or other options	207	13.0	164	14.0
Choice of which college/universities to apply to	201	12.6	141	12.0
Choice of course/subject	215	13.5	167	14.2
About the admissions process	176	11.1	143	12.2
About covering tuition expenses / funding options	120	7.5	71	6.1
Checking application form / other documents	133	8.4	111	9.5
Choice of which college/university to enrol in if selected in more than one	139	8.7	85	7.2
Advice on preparing for HE entrance exam	114	7.2	95	8.1
Contacting college/university on behalf of applicants	85	5.3	35	3.0
Accompanying for a visit to the college/university where you work	36	2.3	33	2.8
Accompanying for a visit to another college/university	24	1.5	29	2.5
Advising via social networking, e.g., WhatsApp	98	6.2	66	5.6
About special admissions programmes/ processes (e.g. Reservations)	41	2.6	31	2.6
Other	3	0.2	2	0.2
Total of Answer = Yes	**1592**	**100**	**1173**	**100**

Patterns are similar across both groups (Table I.5.17). University faculty emphasise employability-linked advice such as course and institution choice (13–13.5%), while government college faculty are slightly more active in checking forms (9.5%) and explaining admissions (12.2%).

Table I.5.18: Context in Which FM Offered HE Advice (Diary Data)

Location	Total Valid Responses		State Universities		Government Colleges	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
FM Home	76	29.9	16	15.7	60	39.5
HEI	124	48.8	54	52.9	70	46.1
Student Home	1	0.4	0	0.0	1	0.7
FM Home and HEI	6	2.4	4	3.9	2	1.3
Telephonic	30	11.8	21	20.6	9	5.9
Village	2	0.8	1	1.0	1	0.7
Hometown	1	0.4	0	0.0	1	0.7
Family function	2	0.8	1	1.0	1	0.7
Friend's Home	1	0.4	0	0.0	1	0.7
FM Home and Telephonic	1	0.4	0	0.0	1	0.7
Surrounding FM Home	2	0.8	0	0.0	2	1.3
School	3	1.2	1	1.0	2	1.3
Bus stop	1	0.4	0	0.0	1	0.7
HEI and Telephonic	1	0.4	1	1.0	0	0.0
Family visit	1	0.4	1	1.0	0	0.0
HE Outreach Workshop	1	0.4	1	1.0	0	0.0
Public Place	1	0.4	1	1.0	0	0.0
Total	**254**	**100**	**102**	**100**	**152**	**100**

From FMs' responses (see Table I.5.18), HEIs were the most common setting in which HE-related advice was offered. When considering the overview of the data, FMs' home appears to be the second most common setting in which HE-related advice is provided. However, there seems to be a clear distinction in the settings in which FMs from SU and GCID offer HE outreach advice. FMs from GCID seem to offer HE-related advice at their homes. This differs in the case of FMs from SU, who provide HE-related advice telephonically. From the responses, FMs of SU and GCID seem to offer HE-related advice in a range of different contexts such as schools, villages, family functions, student homes, bus stops, friends' homes, and public places. One

participating FM from the SU was invited to deliver a keynote in an HE outreach workshop at another HE institution during the diary study period.

Table I.5.19: FMs' Motivations for Offering Advice (Diary Data)

Motivation reason	State Universities		Government Colleges (GCID)	
	N	%	N	%
Interest in advising/supporting the individual	1	1.1	2	1.3
Experience/knowledge of HEIs, processes etc.	34	37.8	18	12.1
Need/concern about the individual	2	2.2	1	0.7
Professional responsibility	30	33.3	53	35.6
Family connection	0	0.0	3	2.0
Personal connection (not family)	1	1.1	9	6.0
Social responsibility	14	15.5	34	22.8
Others, please specify (in the table given below)	8	8.9	29	19.5
Total (N = 239)	**90**	**100**	**149**	**100**

Note: Each response explaining FM motivations were open coded thus the number of responses exceed the total number of participants.

The diary study prompted FMs to reflect on their motivations for offering HE-related advice. Overall, FMs from SU and GCID considered HE outreach as their professional responsibility. Apart from this common baseline, FMs from SU (37.78%) find the reason for their motivation in their experience and knowledge of HEIs and institutional processes. Further, FMs from SU consider HE outreach as their social responsibility. The motivations of FMs are much more distributed when compared to FMs from SU. FMs from GCID recorded instances of offering HE-related advice to members of their family and people with whom they shared a personal connection.

Table I.5.20: Other Motivations for Offering Advice (Diary Data)

Other motivations *(Please list with one motivation per row)*	**State Universities**	**Government Colleges (GCID)**
Similar Educational Trajectory	2	2
Disadvantaged background	1	1
Disadvantaged background (Rural)	2	3
Disadvantaged background (Economic)	1	0
High chances of enrolment	1	0
Invited lecture	1	0
High potential student	0	8
Personal satisfaction	0	4
Social justice agenda (women student)	0	3
Rural Development	0	1
Disadvantaged background (educationally)	0	1
Persuading parents of the student	0	1
Disadvantaged background (rural, economic)	0	2
Need of the student (visual impairment)	0	1
Need of the student (Physical impairment)	0	1
Disadvantaged Background (rural, first-generation learner)	0	1
Total	**8**	**29**

FMs from SU and GCID recorded varied motivations for offering advice related to HE. Responses of FMs from GCID are more and varied than that of FMs at SU. FMs from GCID are motivated by the student's potential to whom they offer HE-related advice. Apart from this, FMs at GCID derive a sense of personal satisfaction by offering students advice related to HE. Participants from both HEI types are motivated to facilitate students with a similar education trajectory as theirs. From the FM responses, more so in the case of FMs from GCID, it is evident that they are motivated to facilitate students from disadvantaged backgrounds such as from rural places, EWS, educationally disadvantaged regions, and students with special needs. As such, the motivations of FMs reflects their commitment to facilitate equity in access to HE.

5.4.3 In-depth Profiles of FMs Who Are Active in Providing Advice

This section provides an in-depth view of the HE outreach advice offered by participating FMs during the three-month solicited diary interview study period across all five states. The diary entries of two FMs from SU and GCID, each with the highest number of HE outreach advice experiences in each state, have been presented in this section. For SU, profiles of FMs from Assam and Haryana have been presented, followed by FM profiles GCID from Assam and Kerala.

Profile 1: SU, Assam

Eco-1 (woman), an Assistant Professor from Social Sciences, recorded a total of five instances of HE outreach during the three-month solicited diary study period. Four instances related to enabling access to HE at the undergraduate level were considered valid entries. Two entries were made in the first week, and one entry each in the fourth and fifth weeks. Two instances of the participant's HE-related advice were offered to people in her personal networks, and the other two were offered to school students exploring HE pathways in her professional role as an FM. One of them was her neighbour (a woman), and the other was offered to parents, who were her acquaintances. Further, she provided advice to two students from senior secondary schools who were considering pursuing HE.

In the first instance (Week 1), Eco-1 provided information to her neighbour who happened to drop by. Eco-1 classified this advice as in her personal capacity. She advised the neighbour regarding the choice of colleges/universities to apply to and regarding the choice of courses/subjects. Since her neighbour seemed confused, Eco-1 felt motivated to help her.

The second instance (Week 1) was in her professional network; two school students sought advice by visiting Eco-1 in her department.

Since they both seemed very unsure of the process and the prospects, I felt I should help them in every possible way so that they are able to make a good decision about their college learning.

I haven't personally met them. It was only a telephonic (advice) conversation. They seemed relaxed and calmer after I answered their queries. (Week 1, Experience 2)

Her third instance (Week 4) was with two students who wanted to pursue HE; they called her up over the phone when she was at home and sought advice regarding the choice of which college/universities to apply to, about the admissions process, the HE entry exams preparation, university facilities/activities/provisions, campus safety and security, and regarding employability prospects of the course. It is not clear from the diary how Eco-1 knew these students, but she classified this experience as personal. Since both students were unsure of the process and prospects, Eco-1 felt motivated to help them so that they would be able to make a good decision about their college learning.

Her fourth experience was with a school student at a senior secondary school. Eco-1 helped her decide whether to pursue HE or other options, the choice of which college/universities to apply to, the choice of course/subject, the admissions process, about organising a visit to the college/university, about campus safety and security, and about employability prospects.

In fifth instance (Week 5), parents of senior secondary school students from the Bodoland Territorial Autonomous Districts (BTAD) region of Assam sought HE-related advice via telephone. This was in Eco-1's personal role. They sought information regarding the choice of which college/universities to apply to, about the admissions process, HE entry exams preparation, special admissions programmes/processes (e.g., reservations), campus safety and security, employability prospects, whether the college/university has good academic functioning, and about transport facilities. The student and her parents did not have information about the admission process or the changes in this process with National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. Therefore, the FM felt motivated to provide this information, considering it as her professional responsibility.

Profile 2: SU, Haryana

Gary (man), an Associate Professor in the Fine Arts department at the SU was the most active FM from Haryana in offering HE- related advice. He belongs to the OBC community. During the six-week solicited diary study, he recorded 10 instances of offering HE-related advice. From Gary's diary entries it was difficult to infer the gender of the students who benefitted from his advice. In the first week itself, he recorded two instances of guiding school students at the college and directing them for almost every aspect related to HE—i.e. whether they should opt for HE, which college they should apply to, the choice of subjects, admission process, tuition fee, entrance exam preparation, and which institute to prefer if they are selected in more than one college/institution. He also mentioned that students asked for the guidance because of his teaching background. He also recorded that he empathised with them (he belongs to similar/rural background) and considered it to be his moral duty to direct them. Gary categorised the first instance as professional and the second experience of advising school student as part of his personal role.

> *It is my moral duty as teacher and I also faced the same issues during my student days. Just because of teaching background. (Week 1, Experience 1)*

In the third instance (Week 2), he guided a school student from his neighbourhood at home. He classified this instance as part of his professional role. The student in this instance sought advice regarding whether they should opt for HE, which college they should apply to, facilities, activities and provisions available, whether the college or university has good academic functioning, the choice of subjects, admission process, tuition fee, entrance exam preparation, and which institute to prefer if they are selected in more than one college/institution.

The fourth instance (Week 3) recorded by Gary was to a neighbour from a rural background. Gary classified this experience as part of his personal role. In this instance, advice sought was regarding whether to apply for HE, choice of college or university, choice of course or subject, admission processes, entrance examinations, reservations,

checking application form / other documents, choice of which colleges/universities to enrol in if selected in more than one, and employability prospects.

The fifth instance (Week 3) concerned a neighbour at his home and college who sought Gary's advice regarding whether to apply for HE, choice of college or university, choice of course or subject, admission processes, covering tuition expenses/funding options, about HE entry exams preparations, about special admissions programme, checking application form / other documents, advice on accommodation, and about campus safety and security. He classified this experience as a part of his personal role.

Sixth experience (Week 4) recorded by Gary was to a neighbour from a rural background who sought advice regarding whether to apply for HE, choice of college or university, choice of course or subject, HE examination preparation, choice of which colleges/universities to enrol in if selected in more than one, employability prospects, and if the college or university has good academic functioning. Again, this advice was recorded as part of his personal role.

Gary classified his seventh and eighth (Week 5), ninth (Week 6), and tenth (Week 6) HE-related advice as personal. These experiences related to HE advice offered to school students, two of them were from rural backgrounds, and the advice was offered in college. In the seventh instance his advice was sought to decide whether to apply for HE, choice of college or university, choice of course or subject, admission processes, about HE entry exams preparations, checking application form / other documents, choice of which colleges/universities to enrol in if selected in more than one, safety and security concerns, employability prospects, and whether college or university has good academic functioning. He considered these as part of his duty. A similar pattern was observed in the advice he offered during his eighth, ninth, and tenth experiences related to HE outreach.

Profile 3: Assam, GCID

At GCID, Gaurav (man) a mathematics Assistant Professor, recorded a total of ten entries during the six-week diary study period. He shared two experiences of HE outreach advice during second, third, fourth, fifth, and sixth weeks of the diary study. Nine of these ten instances were offered in his personal network, and only one experience was classified by Gaurav as a part of his professional role. At least in four instances, Gaurav had been approached by prospective HE students from disadvantaged backgrounds or students who were first in their families to pursue HE.

His first HE outreach advice (Week 2) was to a school student who approached him at his home. He knew this school student personally. She sought advice and information on whether to apply for HE or other options, choice of which college/universities to apply to, choice of course/subject, the admissions process, about HE entry exams preparation, special admissions programmes/processes (e.g., reservations), college facilities/activities/provisions, campus safety and security, employability prospects, whether the college/university has good academic functioning, about transport facilities, about covering tuition expenses / funding options, checking application form / other documents, choice of which colleges/universities to enrol in if selected in more than one, organise a visit to the college/university, and advice on accommodation. Gaurav felt motivated to help the student as part of his social responsibility.

Gaurav's second experience (Week 2) was offered to a neighbour who visited his home. Here again, he was consulted for a range of information such as whether to apply for HE or other options, choice of which college/universities to apply to, choice of course/subject, the admissions process, about HE entry exams preparation, special admissions programmes/processes (e.g., reservations), college facilities/activities/provisions, campus safety and security, employability prospects, whether the college/university has good academic functioning, about transport facilities, about covering tuition expenses / funding options, checking application form / other

documents, and choice of which colleges/universities to enrol in if selected in more than one. He also organised a visit to his college/university and offered advice regarding accommodation. Gaurav considered this advice as his social responsibility as the person was a first-generation HE student from a rural background.

In the third week, Gaurav shared two experiences of advising prospective HE students. The third entry was of a school student who first came to his house and later to his college for advice. He happened to know this student personally. She consulted Gaurav to make decisions regarding whether to apply for HE or other options, choice of which college/universities to apply to, choice of course/subject, the admissions process, about HE entry exams preparation, special admissions programmes/processes (e.g., reservations), college facilities/activities/provisions, campus safety and security, employability prospects, whether the college/university has good academic functioning, about transport facilities, about covering tuition expenses / funding options, checking application form / other documents, and choice of which colleges/universities to enrol in if selected in more than one. He organised a visit to the college/university and offered advice on accommodation. Gaurav felt motivated to advise, given her disadvantaged background (residing in a slum area). He was convinced that she would benefit from his advice. Again, in the same week (fourth instance), Gaurav was consulted by his neighbour for a range of advice to facilitate HE decision-making. This was also at Gaurav's home. His motivation was fuelled by being useful to his neighbour.

In the fourth week, Gaurav recorded two instances of HE outreach advice. In this fifth experience, Gaurav's neighbour visited him at his college. During the same week, Gaurav also offered HE-related advice to another student (sixth experience) at his home. In both instances, Gaurav's advice was rooted in being beneficial to his neighbour and the student.

A similar pattern of Gaurav offering HE-related advice to a school student, and a neighbour could be seen in the fifth and sixth week of the diary study period. In the seventh entry, Gaurav mentioned a school student who visited him at his home; however, Gaurav considered this advice to be in his professional role, even though he recorded offering a

considered this advice to be in his professional role, even though he recorded offering a full range of HE-related advice presented in this study. The eighth instance was of a neighbour who visited Gaurav at his home. The ninth and tenth experiences recorded by Gaurav concerned two school students who visited him at his home seeking HE-related advice. His motivation lies in his advice being beneficial to his neighbour and student.

Profile 4: GCID, Kerala

In the case of GCID, Mithra (woman), Assistant Professor from the department of Malayalam from Kerala, recorded the most instances of offering HE-related advice amongst FMs who participated in the diary study from Kerala. She belongs to the OBC community. She recorded five experiences of offering HE-related advice to students. The first instance was to a school student from a rural background (Week 1, Experience 1) from the OBC community who reached out to Mithra at her home seeking advice. However, Mithra classified this experience as part of her professional role. The student sought advice regarding whether to apply for HE or other options, choice of which college/universities, choice of course/subject, tuition expenses / funding options, special admissions programmes/processes (e.g., reservations), application form / other documents, choice of which colleges/universities to enrol in if selected in more than one, college facilities/activities/provisions, employability prospects, and the academic functioning of the college.

The second experience recorded by Mithra (Week 1) also related to a rural student from the OBC community; she was confused about the course choice and scope of the course. She sought Mithra's help in this regard. Mithra classified this experience as part of her personal role. She offered her advice regarding whether to apply for HE or other options, choice of which college/universities, choice of course/subject, tuition expenses / funding options, special admissions programmes/processes (e.g., reservations),

checking application form / other documents, choice of which colleges/universities to enrol in if selected in more than one, organising a visit to college or university, advice on accommodation, college facilities/activities/provisions, about campus safety and security, employability prospects, the academic functioning of the college, and about transport facilities. Her family members were very confused regarding the course and the scope of the course. They trusted Mithra to guide them regarding her HE.

Two experiences of HE outreach were recorded by Mithra in the second week of the solicited diary study period. The third experience recorded by Mithra was also related to HE advice offered to a rural school student. She was confused about the choice of subject and sought her advice in this regard. She also approached her at her home. Mithra considers this to be part of her professional role. Apart from helping her with the choice of subject, she also encouraged her to pursue HE. She sought her advice regarding choice of college/universities, tuition expenses / funding options, special admissions programmes/processes (e.g., reservations), and college facilities/activities/provisions.

> *I am very happy to give advice when someone approaches me (Week 2, Experience 1)*

Mithra was happy to guide students who approached her as they trust her advice regarding HE. The fourth experience shared by Mithra was to a neighbour (Week 2) in her personal connections. The student approached her at her home. The advice offered related to the choice of college/universities, admission process, special admissions programmes/processes (e.g., reservations), checking application form / other documents, choice of which colleges/universities to enrol in if selected in more than one, college facilities/activities/provisions, about campus safety and security, employability prospects, and academic functioning of the college. The last experience related to HE outreach was recorded in the fifth week of the solicited diary study. Here, she recorded advice offered to her neighbour from a rural background. She classified this as part of her personal network. Her advice was related to whether to apply for HE or other options, choice of which college/universities, choice of course/subject, tuition expenses / funding

options, special admissions programmes/processes (e.g., reservations), checking application form / other documents, choice of which colleges/universities to enrol in if selected in more than one, organising a visit to college or university, college facilities/activities/provisions, and employability prospects.

The four sample profiles of FMs elaborated above illustrate the range of aspects where FMs offer advice to prospective students on a regular basis. Apart from the workplace, FMs are also approached at their homes for HE-related advice. FMs classify most of their experience related to HE advice to be in their personal capacities and networks, but they consider offering HE-related advice as an inherent part of their professional responsibility related to their job.

5.4.4 ILs' and FMs' Awareness of Other Colleagues within the HEI Conducting HE Outreach

When asked about the engagement of others in facilitating access, responses by ILs were again mixed. Within the SUs, ILs were generally limited in their awareness of whether FMs were guiding students in organised ways, but there was a general assumption that they did (SU, Assam; SU, Haryana). They also noted that staff from related Centres in their university may provide such information through different seminars and individual interactions with the students. It was also noted by the IL at Assam SU that the NEP Co-ordination Centre may provide guidance to the students as they frequently conduct such activities. The IL of the Kerala SU acknowledged instances where teachers and nodal officers influenced student choices, sometimes to fill less popular programmes.

In government colleges, there was more awareness of instances of other staff guiding potential students. In Haryana, the IL of GCID praised the involvement of four to five FMs who interact with school students and guide them for HE. He also mentioned that certain non-teaching staff members who live in village settings are involved in such counselling, recognising that FMs are not the only staff members involved in guiding students. Likewise, in Assam GCA, the IL discussed how FMs are regularly entrusted with responsibilities at helpdesks, to assist the students directly during admission time. He noted that the FMs and administrative staff also reply to the messages and calls from the admission helpline numbers of the HEI. He stated that

two to three FMs from each department of his institution are deputed for HE outreaches activities, visiting rural schools to provide guidance, and that it is a common practice for the FMs of the college to inform the students about HE as there is no HEI within 25 km radius of this HEI.

In Haryana, the IL of GCA revealed that all FMs were fully involved in widening access to HE, particularly as it was a girls' college. Likewise, the IL of GCB suggested that the majority of FMs were involved in counselling school students, with varying levels of intensity. The IL of Haryana GCA discussed enthusiastically the formation of FMs pre-admission committees where they visit schools to encourage rural students towards HE enrolments. They also mentioned how the institution motivated the FMs of the college to carry out door-to-door campaign in nearby villages, despite having no financial support for such activities, and that the FMs of the college are voluntarily pooling up finances to carry out such campaigns. They, in association with non-teaching staff members of the college, campaigned in nearby villages to enhance enrolment in the college, involving the local community to encourage parental agreement to allow girls to continue in education.

Other ILs had more general knowledge of the guidance offered by other staff members. In Assam, the ILs of both GCID and GCB were aware that many FMs of their colleges were engaged in guiding students, with the IL of GCID also aware that some FMs at their institution also provided financial assistance. Likewise, the IL of Maharashtra GCA reported that faculty across departments actively participate in pre-admission guidance, offering subject-specific advice and mentoring to prospective students. He also mentioned that all FMs from different departments were engaged in such activities, to guide these students through HE options.

When asked the same question, FMs showed further insight. In the case study for SUs, there was again the assumption of guidance. In Haryana SU, it is noted that the majority of FMs (except one) in SU presumed that other FMs in their respective departments must be involved in counselling for HE choices. The majority of them suggested that the guidance is regarding course selection and career opportunities. Likewise, in Assam SU, four of the five FMs of the SU interviewed for this study assumed that the other FMs of the SU were also engaged in such activities as they are resourceful, kind, cooperative, and approachable. One of the FM remembered directly seeing some of his colleagues providing information to the students. Such advice is presumed to be provided on individual basis.

There was also mention of non-academic staff engaging in guidance activities. In Assam SU, the picture for this was slightly mixed. Four FMs stated that the non-academic staff are not directly engaged in counselling the students, believing that when the non-teaching staff in the department are approached, the students are observed to be redirected to the FMs of the department. Whereas one of the FM was sure that the administrative staff did provide information and guidance to students enrolling in HE, because she herself as a student approached the administrative and office staff as they had vast knowledge regarding the university's activities along with the programmes. It was noted that these opinions are very specific to the department to which the FMs belonged, hence the divergence.

In government colleges, there was more discussion of how colleagues were offering guidance to students. The FMs of Assam GCID were aware and observed the FMs of the college providing information and guidance to students on enrolling in HE. According to four FMs interviewed in this study, the senior FMs are more engaged in such activities and one of their FM plays a very significant role in helping the rural students, consistently supporting them over the last few years. It was noted again that a few of them also provide financial support to the students. One of the Assam GCID FM interviewed stated that he was not aware of such activity as he is new to GCID. It was noted that most of the guidance in GCID, though intensive, is given in an individual capacity.

In contrast, with FMs of GCA and GCB of Assam, there was more discussion of institutional mechanisms for guidance. The FMs of GCA mentioned the institutional approach of guiding students in enrolling in HE in the HEI through the Career Guidance Cell which organises workshops and provides advice to students as well as to their guardian. FMs from GCB stated that the other FMs of the college are also actively engaged in advising the students through day-long pre-admission workshops organised by the Career Guidance Cell of the HEI. The FMs of Assam GCA also mentioned another institutional approach, the TARANG project, through which they visit rural schools and orient pupils about HE and HEIs. Large number of FMs and office staff were recognised as being engaged in the TARANG project. Likewise, in Haryana GCID, one FM indicated that the counselling work is conducted in an organised way, where the FMs have been assigned duties of counselling by the IL.

According to the FMs (GCA, Assam; GCID, Haryana), almost all the FMs of the HEI are engaged in such activities. One of the FMs mentioned that alumnus were also engaged (GCA, Assam). Also in GCA Assam, one of the FMs mentioned that because of the practice of a student-centric approach, almost all the FMs in the college are actively engaged in guiding students in enrolling in HE in the HEI. Furthermore, two of the FMs mentioned that since some of the FMs are originally from that area, they feel it is their responsibility to advise the students and are more actively involved and engaged.

There was again mention of specific individuals who were noteworthy in their efforts. Two of the FMs (GCD, Assam) mentioned two notable FM of the institution who were very actively engaged with the students and motivated them, leading to the enrolment rate going up significantly in those departments in the recent years. It was mentioned that one of these FM was like a role model for the students because of his unique, informal, and friendly interaction with the students. Likewise, an FM from Haryana GCID discussed one FM who was particularly sensitive to poor students with financial hardships and demonstrated a convincing capacity in encouraging them to enrol in HE. There was also mention of subject-specific activities, such as FMs in Sciences-related disciplines demonstrating science experiments to school students to arouse interest among them to opt for science courses in HE (GCB, Haryana).

The FMs were also aware of the office staff providing advice on admission procedures and requirements, such as providing information regarding the admission process, quotas, fee structure, fellowships, and providing help with processing documents (GCA, Assam; GCB, Assam). A Haryana FM in GCA described in detail that not only the FMs but also the non-teaching staff members participated in HE widening choices. He mentioned that they are involved in making announcements during house-to-house campaign in villages to increase enrolments.

5.4.5 Summary

In summary, this section illustrates the active involvement of FMs in advising students about HE options and admission processes. Across both universities and government colleges, a very large majority of FMs reported their engagement in some form of guidance enabling access to HE as part of their professional or personal role. Involvement of FMs in guiding students was high across all social and demographic groups.

Across both qualitative and quantitative data, family members and neighbours featured as the most common seekers of advice when it came to personal networks as sites of guidance. Faculty most commonly advised students on whether to pursue HE, which course or subject to choose, which colleges or universities to apply to, and how to navigate admission processes and application forms. Guidance related to funding options, entrance exam preparation, and college choices also appears regularly. More direct forms of support—such as contacting institutions on behalf of applicants or accompanying students on visits—are reported less frequently.

While outreach activities were also reported as part of professional roles—particularly through meeting students visiting the HEI, school visits, and encouraging current students to guide others in their communities—the findings show that faculty engagement is rooted more strongly in personalised and local social networks, especially in the case of FMs from government colleges. Overall, the patterns suggest that support for HE access is occurring largely through informal, relationship-based, and localised interactions rather than through formally structured outreach systems.

5.5 HE Outreach: Current Challenges and Future Opportunities

In addition to reflecting on experiences of facilitating access to HE, especially for rural students, through both their personal and professional positions, it was also relevant to consider IL and FM perspectives on what the current challenges were and what future opportunities may be available to further encourage enrolment.

5.5.1 HE Outreach: Current Challenges

The survey posed questions relating to current challenges of outreach in aiding potential students. The purpose was to elicit insights into the extent to which ILs and FMs felt that they and their institutions faced barriers in their ambitions to encourage enrolment. This was further expanded on in interviews to gain an understanding of their lived experiences (discussed later in this section).

Table I.5.21: Challenges to the College/University in Providing more Guidance and Advice About HE

Option	Total Valid Responses		State Universities		Government College	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
There is not enough funding availability for extra activities	316	40.5	182	40.0	134	41.1
Staff workload means that people do not have time	228	29.2	141	31.0	87	26.7
FMs are not aware of the issue that young people are facing in accessing HE	91	11.7	49	10.8	42	12.9
FMs do not live near the college so do not know the local community	54	6.9	18	3.9	36	11.0
This is not a priority for this college/university	60	7.7	40	8.8	20	6.1
Other	32	4.1	25	5.5	7	2.1
Total of Answer = Yes	**781**	**100**	**455**	**100**	**326**	**100**

Table I.5.21 shows that the main challenge faced by institutions regarding outreach is insufficient funding. 40.5% of faculty reported that limited resources hinder their ability to engage in outreach activities. Additionally, 29.2% of faculty face challenges such as staff workload, which prevents participation in community outreach. There is a gap between FMs and the community, as 11.7% of FMs are unaware of the issues faced by prospective students. This may be due to their locations, as 6.9% reported not living near the college or university. Lastly, 7.7% of FMs stated that their institution does not prioritise initiatives to guide students prior to enrolment.

The data of Table I.5.21 suggest that both types of institutions face similar challenges, such as insufficient funding for organising extensive HE outreach activities for prospective students (40.0% in SUs and 41.1% in government colleges). Another major issue is the workload of FMs, who already carry significant responsibilities, including clerical and academic tasks. This leaves little or no time for organising HE outreach activities. 31.0% of SUs and 26.7% government

colleges' FMs have reported institutional workload as a hindrance to participating in HE outreach. Additionally, 10.8% of SUs and 12.9% of government colleges faculty reported a disconnect between HEIs and the young generation. This highlights the need for a platform to conduct awareness programmes that foster student and faculty engagement and bridge communication gaps, which may be caused by faculty living far from the institutions. 11.0% of government colleges FM and 4.0% of SUs faculty have indicated that they live far from their institutions, making community engagement difficult. Surprisingly, a notable proportion, 8.8% of faculty from SUs and 6.1% from government colleges, consider HE outreach and pre-admission guidance not to be priorities of the institutions.

These challenges were further expanded upon in interviews, where ILs and FMs were encouraged to share their perspectives on obstacles and possible solutions.

A reported barrier to successful pre-admission guidance was the lack of an existing structural mechanism (IL, SU, Assam), which required FMs and administrative staff to perform the task as a personal and moral duty. They noted that although designated offices existed for other areas, such as academic affairs and student welfare once enrolled, there was no specific attention to rural students, which the IL felt was essential. The need for such an office was implied across the data in discussions of how systems are complicated and may be especially challenging to navigate for students from rural backgrounds and first-generation applicants. The IL for the SU in Kerala had a similar suggestion that there was no dedicated office, but had a different attitude towards this, stating 'since we have not felt the need for that [HE outreach], we don't have an initiative in that line'. In terms of resolving these issues, as well as the suggestion for a dedicated team to strategise and organise HE outreach more methodically, there was also a desire articulated for a ready-made module provided that could be implemented at an institutional level (IL, SU, Assam).

In the interview with the SU IL of Chhattisgarh, they shared how to secure admission; potential students are confronted with a range of systematic challenges that shape preparedness, confidence, and success in enrolling. They discussed infrastructure issues such as insufficient computers and technological challenges but also personnel challenges, highlighting that FMs in colleges were not just transmitters of knowledge but also mentors, guides, and role models, therefore overstretched or underqualified FMs risked leading to students feeling neglected and

disillusioned. They highlighted that there was a risk of inequalities deepening where students from privileged backgrounds able to access private coaching or digital resources would contrast those from economically weaker backgrounds who would struggle disproportionately. Returning to the suggestion of a dedicated office proposed by the Assam SU IL, there is potential that such a centre may be able to formally identify and aim to alleviate these issues that would be felt by all students, but mainly students from rural or underprivileged backgrounds.

The IL at the SU in Haryana had a differing opinion, considering the biggest challenge to be the appeal of foreign universities considered to have better opportunities than more local SUs. Similar to the Chhattisgarh SU IL, they also brought up the subject of laboratories and infrastructure, suggesting that low spending in public universities in comparison to private universities was impacting the appeal of facilities and influencing affluent students to opt for private institutions. The SU IL in Maharashtra suggested that larger mindset shifts were needed to attract students, who they suggested were not overly interested in HE, and this was unlikely to change without efforts to shift their attitude.

For the ILs of government colleges, there were suggestions that more active efforts were needed to encourage enrolment. The GCID IL of Maharashtra argued that the most important challenge was the lack of awareness by other ILs in the need to guide students from early stages of schooling. This was mirrored by the GCB IL of the same region who suggested that efforts were not being made to bring children of rural areas into the mainstream and try to find answers to their questions and concerns early on. There was an impression of concern that rural students risked being overlooked therefore making access a bigger challenge. The IL from GCID suggested:

> [W]here those [rural] children are in primary education, from primary to secondary and from secondary to junior college, we have to keep in touch with them and counsel them at every stage, depending on their intelligence, step by step, they should go for counselling and I think it will definitely have a long term effect.

This suggestion of a long-term approach leading to increased enrolment suggests that current pre-admission practices do not go far enough back in the journey for rural students to be

successfully engaged. Likewise, ILs of GCA and GCB in Haryana suggested that a more robust campaign of 'Know Your College' need to be carried out in the surrounding villages.

It was also recognised by the IL of GCID in Assam that the rural student population provided challenges, in particular to the education of female students, as the conservative outlook of the community and economic background of parents impacted both enrolment and dropout rates. Dropout rates due to socioeconomic circumstances were also mentioned by the IL of GCA in Assam, who noted that if family hardships arose it was common that responsibilities transferred to students.

The physical location of the college was discussed by the IL of GCID in Haryana as a challenge, due to being physically difficult to access from surrounding areas due to limited public transport connectivity. This was also highlighted by other government college ILs (e.g. IL, GCB, Haryana).

Similar to the Haryana SU IL, there was suggestion by the Haryana GCID IL that there is a fascination with foreign study and a belief this is a guarantee of employment/work opportunities and quality of life. This was also felt by FMs in the institution, suggesting it was a widely believed area of concern. There was also a concern felt in government colleges that students preferred urban institutions due to perceived better exposure to matters relating to personality development (IL, GCID, Haryana; IL, GCB, Haryana). Relatedly, the IL of GCID in Assam suggested that aspiring students relatively local to the institution were increasingly being reached by other HEIs offering attractive incentives. Thus there was a concern that the siphoning out of local students to mainly private HEIs was an increasing challenge.

There were concerns shared with the ILs of SUs. The risk of a digital divide was shared by many (ILs of both GCA and GCB in Haryana; and ILs of GCA and GCID in Assam), who identified the online centralised admission requirement as a barrier. The IL of GCID in Assam discussed how students were not aware of changes in admission brought in by the NEP 2020 (i.e. the introduction of a mandatory online admission portal), which caused challenges and led to many students missing deadlines. Relatedly, the IL of GCA in Assam discussed how the lack of smartphones and charging made communication difficult.

Subject preferences were suggested as potentially limiting enrolment, as low enrolment in certain subjects at school level leads to difficulties in recruiting for related subjects at HE level

(IL, GCB, Haryana). The Assam GCID IL also discussed differences in enrolment across programmes. Scarcity of qualified teaching faculty was also identified by the IL of Haryana GCA, mirroring concerns of the SU IL of Chhattisgarh.

Questions relating to challenges and how they may be overcome were also posed to FMs, resulting in discussions of similar themes with some further insights.

FMs were largely aligned with the challenges identified by ILs. In the SU of Assam, the non-existence of counselling centres was highlighted by FMs, who noted that there were FMs who provided counselling on a personal basis to fill the gap and that the Students' Union set up centres during the peak admission time. Nevertheless, there was a sentiment that the SU should be carrying out their own formal centres rather than relying on others. Making visits to rural colleges and schools in a formalised way was considered as a central approach for overcoming challenges (SU, Assam; SU Haryana).

Financial constraints felt especially by rural students were also noted (e.g. SU, Assam; SU, Maharashtra). In particular, an FM of Assam SU noted that the cost of living in proximity to the institution was higher and suggested that regular transactions of financial assistance to economically weaker rural students may aid in overcoming these constraints.

The digital divide was also strongly felt by the FMs, with two FMs at Haryana SU highlighting concern that online admission processes were more challenging for rural students. Indeed, Common Service Centres (CSCs) could fill incorrect information, especially in terms of contact information, posing disproportionate challenges to rural students as they face a double challenge: (i) a lack of digital infrastructure (i.e. internet facility and access to personal computer); and (ii) a lack of a knowledgeable person to help. As was found in IL interviews, some FMs (e.g. SU, Assam) noted that the introduction of the NEP 2020 had created issues, as information received by students was vague and, in some cases, even students with good grades lacked the digital literacy to overcome admission processes. It was noted that, although it was recognised that the barrier for rural students due to digitalisation was wider than for urban counterparts, expectations for FMs to overcome the divide through dedicated guidance was a challenge. This was due to the shortage in numbers and time availability of FMs who were already stretched with teaching, research, and administrative responsibilities in a time of few

permanent FMs employed. The challenge of overstretched FMs was felt across regions, with a further recommendation of providing faculty training on career options and integrating outreach activities by adjusting tutorial hours (Kerala SU).

There were some areas in which FMs of SUs painted a contrasting picture to wider trends. Of note, is the statement by one FM at the SU in Kerala, who highlighted '[a] major challenge is we are not going to schools. We have to plan how we can reach schools, how we can give career guidance to school students so they can properly select a course without any biases'. This contrasts with the discussions of ILs and FMs of government colleges where references to school visits / visits from school students was a primary source of pre-admission guidance. Likewise, an FM of the SU in Assam noted that the lack of visits to rural areas and absence of organising counselling sessions in rural villages is another barrier. This aligns with interview data from ILs where there were mentions of HE outreach not being seen as a priority for SUs.

Relatedly, one SU FM (Assam) noted that newspaper publications advertising the institution did not reach rural students and that the absence of representation in this area of the region, unlike private institutions which had established centres, created challenges as the majority of eligible students did not get notification of offers and processes. However, this was contrasted by another FM at the same institution who suggested that the SU already received too many applicants. Another FM of Assam SU suggested that attracting rural students was not a challenge. This demonstrates a conflicting picture of understandings of the state of rural enrolment at the institution.

Elsewhere, there was a suggestion of limitations in programme offering and career orientation, with one FM (SU, Kerala) suggesting '[p]rogrammes that the University is offering today is minimal…there are no job opportunities'. This seems to align with the impression discussed earlier that some students were not engaged in HE as they did not see further study as enhancing their socioeconomic futures. Likewise, an FM from Maharashtra noted that the outdated educational systems may not meet the current needs of students. Relatedly and as was suggested by ILs, a mismatch between the subjects at school and college was mentioned by an FM at Haryana SU. One suggestion from an FM in Haryana SU was that there should be more visibility in terms of professional courses on offer.

One FM (SU, Assam) suggested that engaging in HE outreach should not be a challenge as student bodies were already conducting it, and that the focus should be on considering how and what advice is provided. There was a suggestion that strengthening the alumni network could help in reaching different kinds of students and potentially lessen the burden on FMs. It was proposed that one of the ways of reaching out through the alumni is by uploading the alumnus personal IDs and emails in the institution's website or that a separate webpage can be created only for this purpose. Through this, the aspiring students can reach out to the alumni of the HEI for information, as the student body becomes more digitally literate and usage and access to digital devices increases. This implies a hope that the digital divide is temporary and will ultimately lead to a more digitally literate population.

There is a consensus on the need for SUs to improve publicity and dissemination of information about their programmes, extending outreach efforts beyond the immediate geographic area to other states and nations and especially rural settings. A proactive approach, involving university visits to schools for programme promotion and career guidance, was strongly advocated. Furthermore, there was a recognition of the importance of student preparedness for informed choices, improving students' digital literacy and providing technical support for application processes are highlighted as necessary steps.

As has already been highlighted—although there were a lot of shared considerations—there were also some significant differences in perceived challenges of facilitating access and pre-application guidance.

Social and cultural factors such as a lack of awareness of opportunities, a lack of parental engagement, and early marriages were also understood to reduce chances for students to pursue HE (GCA, Maharashtra; GCA, Kerala; GCA, Assam; and GCID, Assam). Limited awareness of options was emphasised (GCB, Kerala) as FMs felt that government colleges lacked advertising and promotional activities employed by self-financing colleges, and that there was a need for enhanced guidance. FMs at Chhattisgarh GCID noted that there is a widespread lack of awareness among students about important examinations like the NET (National Eligibility Test) and SET (State Eligibility Test), which are essential gateways for pursuing careers in HE and research. Overall FMs felt that many students remain uninformed about the long-term opportunities that HE can offer, and as a result, they do not prepare

adequately for these paths. Likewise, FMs at Chhattisgarh GCA raised a concern about the lack of placement opportunities which employability-focused students desire and noted that without strong industry linkages and practical exposure, students fear limited career prospects despite completing their studies.

Financial difficulties were raised as a major concern for students (GCID, Maharashtra; GCB, Maharashtra; and GCA, Kerala). They noted that many students face economic hardships that force them to focus on earning money instead of continuing education, and they suggested enhancing scholarships and financial incentives for economically weaker families may encourage prioritisation of education.

One significant factor raised was the increasing attraction of private colleges, which often lure students by offering flexible facilities such as non-attendance options, thereby presenting themselves as more convenient alternatives to government institutions that maintain stricter attendance and academic discipline. This creates a perception among students that private colleges are more student-friendly, even if the quality of education is not necessarily higher (GCID, Chhattisgarh; GCA, Chhattisgarh; GCB, Chhattisgarh; and GCID, Assam). They discussed how infrastructure poses a considerable challenge, as students today expect colleges to provide a learning environment that is not only academically supportive but also physically comfortable, with modern classrooms, functional laboratories, hostels, libraries, and digital facilities. When such infrastructure is lacking, students lose interest in government institutions and often prefer private alternatives. On a similar note, some FMs reflected a perception that government colleges may not appeal due to a lack of institutional features such as legal aids and extracurricular activities (GCID, Maharashtra), and hostel facilities, especially for girls (GCB, Maharashtra). Limited transport facilities were raised as a practical barrier, especially for rural students or those commuting significant and challenging distances (GCA, Haryana; GCID, Assam; GCA, and Assam).

In Chhattisgarh, FMs at GCID and GCA raised the issues of a medium of instruction which complicated decision-making processes. While many students complete their schooling in Hindi or regional languages, postgraduate and research-level courses are almost exclusively offered in English. Students from regional or non-English medium backgrounds struggle to cope with lectures, assignments, and examinations, which often results in poor performance, low

confidence, and in some cases, dropouts. This language barrier discourages students from aspiring towards HE, as they feel inadequately prepared to succeed in an English-medium academic environment. They emphasised that research has shown that such challenges disproportionately affect marginalised students, perpetuating educational inequalities.

Workload of FMs was also unsurprisingly brought up often, as articulated by an FM in Kerala GCID who stated: 'Time limitations prevent FMs from conducting outreach, due to university exams, internal assessments, and administrative duties'. This was expressed by multiple FMs including at the Kerala GCB, Kerala GCID, and Assam GCB. There was a suggestion that relieving administrative duties could make a difference. The low numbers of FMs were also highlighted, with several FMs noting that vacant positions impacted pre-admission guidance (GCA, Haryana; GCB, Haryana). Relatedly, the lack of funding, due to a lack of structured mechanisms for facilitation, was highlighted as a challenge for FMs' ability to encourage recruitment (GCID, Kerala; GCID, Haryana). This was stated explicitly by a Kerala GCID FM 'the main hindrance that we have is related to the funding process'.

Another articulated challenge was a perceived lack of clear linkage between education and employment, or limited work opportunities, as a reason for students to be disengaged with HE (e.g. GCA, Maharashtra; GCA, Haryana; GCB, and Assam). There was a belief that, as the courses were not clearly job-oriented, students were demotivated and parents did not encourage them to apply. Relatedly, the mismatch of subjects taught at school and offered by HEIs was mentioned as had been indicated by ILs, for example subject like Psychology, Political Science, and Public Administration were noted as not being clearly familiar to students (GCA, Haryana). Proposed solutions to this included new job-oriented courses, introductions of subjects in school (GCA, Haryana), and career counselling to make students better informed (GCID, Maharashtra). Training schoolteachers on programmes and processes was also suggested as a way of enhancing opportunities for further study, as they would be better placed to guide students (GCID, Haryana). Relatedly, one FM (GCB, Haryana) mentioned a perception that the local community was still inclined to think that colleges are places of enjoyment and nothing serious is being deliberated there or that it does not prepare them for many worldly skills. So, convincing parents (with these perceptions) was a challenge.

More robust campaigns, starting early, at institutional levels were proposed (e.g. GCID; Haryana; GCID, Kerala) although some existed already (e.g. Maharashtra GCID FMs discussed support committees aligned with national programmes). At Kerala GCA, there was also a suggestion of engaging with religious leaders and other community platforms as well as schools to motivate rural students and parents.

The general impression was that FMs desired for the admission process to be decentralised to better allow colleges' control of student admittance, and for offline options for admission to be reintroduced (GCID, Haryana; GCA, Haryana; and GCB, Haryana), as the current system was raised by multiple FMs as a challenge for pre-admission.

FMs at government colleges in rural and semi-urban areas help students access HE and make informed choices, despite challenges like low awareness, limited resources, cultural barriers, and time or knowledge gaps, especially for disadvantaged groups. FMs offer personal guidance, such as advising rural students on affordable local colleges or supporting career goals despite family opposition. They also run structured programmes, like career counselling for school students, and provide community-based support, helping remote or underrepresented students, including those with visual impairments, pursue degrees and careers. However, across the government colleges, there is a general call to adopt a more proactive role in providing career guidance, organising education events, offering faculty training, and addressing students' digital literacy as well as providing technical support for application processes.

Training for FMs, partnerships with other institutions, and outreach through different channels were raised as opportunities to increase awareness. Community programmes and local partnerships could also address cultural issues. These rural-focused efforts—personal advice, community support, and better resources—could help FMs ensure marginalised students succeed in HE but ongoing institutional support is the key to a bigger impact.

5.5.2 HE Outreach: Future Potential

Following discussions of challenges and potential solutions to providing pre-admission guidance to students, the focus in the interviews turned to specific consideration of attracting

rural students and guiding them on their HE choices. First, comments from ILs, as leaders of their respective institutions, are discussed, followed by FMs' accounts.

At SU level, ILs recognised the need to proactively engage with schools, offering guidance on various programmes and their associated career prospects. Collaboration between the university, schools, and industries were suggested as crucial to align academic programmes with current market demands and ensure students are equipped with relevant skills to enhance employability and internship opportunities (IL, SU, Haryana; IL, GCB, Maharashtra).

More broadly, there was a sense that the university should also consider organising education fairs to reach a broader audience and promote the value of HE more generally (IL, SU, Haryana).

It was noted that creation of rural centres and targeted approaches implemented by other universities could guide SU (Haryana) to expand its rural reach. The IL of Assam GCID stated that the urban HEIs are now visiting the rural areas and attracting the rural students with financial aids. They added that collaborative programmes with government organisation and NGOs are organised in urban HEI where students of rural HEIs are invited and then oriented about the educational facilities of the HEI. Likewise, the IL of the Assam GCA also mentioned about offering scholarships to selected students from rural areas to attract them to HEI. Such initiatives can also be undertaken by their own institutions, the ILs emphasised.

The IL of Assam SU felt that institutional achievements, such as improved accreditation and ranking, could be better advertised to rural students as a way of increasing enrolment. They also recognised that other institutions organised programmes such as education fairs and offered tailored scholarships to rural students to attract them to their institutions. Likewise, the IL of Maharashtra SU named other colleges who conducted activities to attract rural students and were well regarded and had strong organisational commitments. She also shared an unusual example of a college that gave students plants that were monitored throughout their studies and came to fruit after graduation.

Within government colleges, there was even more of a sense of commitment from the ILs in enhancing outreach for rural students. For example, Assam GCID IL stating that he intended to take serious measures as an HEI to resolve high dropouts. Likewise, the Assam GCA IL intended to make an existing mentoring programme stronger through expanding the programme from

rural schools to include nearby rural colleges through the consultation programme. Other areas where government college ILs intended to improve outreach included through alumni (GCA, Assam; GCB, Assam), offering more financial waivers (GCB, Assam), and better engagement with government schemes, especially those targeting girls (IL, GCA, Haryana; IL, GCB, Assam; and IL, GCID, Maharashtra)

Others (e.g. IL, GCID, Haryana) suggested focusing energies on strengthening and sustaining existing campaigns.

Some ILs suggested a bigger change was needed, with the IL of Haryana SU suggesting improvements to physical and academic infrastructures through the building of labs and offering new programmes to attract rural students.

Similar themes occurred in interviews with FMs across both SUs and government colleges, with a sense that reaching out to rural students should be done through an institutional framework (both formal and informal), and through conscious efforts of a range of stakeholders including FMs, students, administrators, and alumni if effective outcomes are to be achieved. Some FMs were aware of activities being carried out by other institutions, including specific activities and a general sense that other, private, institutions were advertising significantly through media, etc., whereas others were less aware of what was being carried out elsewhere.

In SUs, FMs emphasised that academic outreaches and extension programmes should be an essential activity of the SU (Assam, Haryana, Kerala, Maharashtra). They believed that collaborative workshops, career counselling programmes, shorts events, school visits, etc., with university, colleges, and schools can be initiated to broaden the spectrum of participants. They also thought that frequent visits by the FMs to the rural areas should be carried out and information about the courses, programmes, schemes, facilities of HEI should be disseminated among the prospective students and their family members. They also agreed with IL suggestions that active participation of the alumni for rural outreach to share positive experiences and achievements could be utilised. These extensive campaigns were mentioned as already being carried out by private universities (SU, Haryana).

Although the benefits of a rigorous campaign and variety of activities for outreach were recognised as useful, it was also noted that while reaching out to local community, the

significance of HE needs to be linked with overall personality development and interpersonal skills, which could shift the perspective of parents for HE (SU, Haryana).

Although it was recognised that tuition fees for rural students were already relatively low, FMs understood that further financial concessions or assistance may further enhance outreach, for example in the form of hostel reservations (SU, Assam). It was also noted that other institutions provide concessions such as fee exemptions on a case by case basis, which was hard to compete with (SU, Assam). Improving transport was also noted as important for supporting learning (SU, Haryana).

In terms of advertising to rural students, it was suggested by both Assam SU FMs and Maharashtra SU FMs that leveraging social media platforms (videos), mass media, and advertisement (posters and banners both physical and digital) for awareness campaigns can effectively reach a broader audience and inform prospective students and their families about the opportunities available in HEI. Meanwhile, prospectus of the HEIs should be made easily available to the students and their guardians and it should be an attractive one. It was noted that such publicity should be intensive and carried out far ahead of the admission procedure. It was also evident that this was an area where FMs perceived other, private institutions to be ahead and felt that these physical and digital advertisements including virtual tours on social media and billboards could be utilised to share course offers and achievements of SU (Assam). Likewise, an FM at Haryana SU raised concerns over the lack of visibility of the institution and noted that its ranking of professional courses was higher than at private universities and that this should be made more visible to rural students. It was also noted that widening admission processes to include offline applications could overcome the digital divide (FM, SU, Haryana). One FM from a Department of Law (SU, Assam) suggested more law colleges in rural districts could create job options and generate employability as well as attracting students.

Digital literacy was also highlighted as an area in which the SU may need to do more, with suggestions of providing training programmes at centres which play a significant role in the admission process (SU, Kerala; SU, Haryana). Relatedly, it was recognised that the official website could be simpler and more informative (SU, Assam). Accessibility to physical books was also raised as an issue, with one FM (SU, Assam) noting that time needed to buy books in certain districts was proving challenging to students and leading to dropout rates. This

sentiment was confirmed by another FM (SU, Haryana) who noted that it was important to engage students by making books accessible and developing a culture of reading books in villages by having some sort of library facility.

Within the various government colleges, FMs had further suggestions, although they also noted that their institutions were already actively engaged in HE outreach practices. As well as agreement with the suggestions raised by others, the following discussions indicate ideas for how their institutions could attract and support rural students.

Broadly, suggestions aligned regarding the need for awareness events in the communities (for both students and parents) about the importance of education (GCID, Assam; GCB, Haryana; Kerala government colleges; and Maharashtra government colleges), advertising admission processes more accurately, ideally decentralising the process and introducing physical options to lessen the digital divide (GCID, Haryana; GCB, Haryana), and counselling students about subject offerings (GCA, Haryana). There was also a suggestion of starting earlier in the educational journey to better enhance awareness and access by providing more time to consider choices (GCB, Haryana). As a means to reduce familial barriers, the importance of involving parents to better understand the importance and value of HE was noted (GCB, Haryana).

Limited work opportunities were again raised as a serious challenge in convincing parents of the benefits of HE, implying that consideration of HE and work linkages and means of guaranteeing career opportunities were essential for making HE appeal to rural students (GCB, Haryana). Part-time job opportunities and online programmes were also suggested in Kerala GCID as a means for balancing education with financial needs. Enhancing scholarships and financial incentives were also again discussed (GCA, Kerala).

In Assam, government college FMs (GCID, GCA, and GCB) recognised that the location in an agrarian society suggested a need for more agriculture-related programmes to align with local employability aims. Likewise, the rich tribal culture of the region leant itself to programmes in Performing Arts, and cultural workshops could be utilised to attract and retain students. More broadly, programmes related to life skills and practical knowledge should be introduced (Assam government colleges; GCB, Haryana). This highlights that tailoring courses according to the

needs of local students and communities was argued to be of value for attracting and supporting HE trajectories, especially for rural students.

Advertising was considered as improvable through social media and videos (GCB, Kerala), involving community leaders and platforms (GCA, Kerala), and 'Open Days' (GCID, Kerala). Alumni were again recognised as an underutilised resource for strengthening engagement with rural students (GCID, Haryana), as was a suggestion to involve influential people from the surrounding villages to combine HE outreach with community outreach (GCA, Haryana).

Financial provisions were also noted as being required to support outreach (GCA, Haryana; GCID, Kerala) and could be utilised to offer discounts to eligible students (GCID, Maharashtra; GCA, Maharashtra).

Drawing on inspiration from other institutions, FMs knew of awareness programmes and events both in the community and in HEIs (Assam, Haryana, Kerala, Maharashtra). It was noted that government colleges could learn from self-financing colleges by adopting their strategies (GCB, Kerala). There was an impression that skills-based workshops could further influence the ecosystem of HE and attract larger numbers of rural students (Assam government colleges). It was also noted that some institutions compiled databases of aspiring rural students through household surveys to inform approaches (Assam). Another initiative recognised by an FM at Haryana GCA was that of providing transport.

Overall, the FMs had a mixed level of insight into initiatives being conducted elsewhere but were largely able to suggest ways in which outreach could be improved. This emphasises their wealth of insight which can be utilised to better enhance outreach and inform future practice.

5.5.3 Summary

Data relating to HE outreach reveals that, although there is significant work being done in this area, there is still much more that could be done to achieve increased access and awareness of the benefits of HE—although it is recognised that this is hindered by already significant workloads, minimal formal guidance, and socio-cultural barriers. ILs had ideas on how they could lead their institutions into further improving their current practices, but it was apparent

that FMs, with their broad experiences and insights, were a significant resource for promoting improvement and overcoming barriers if their suggestions were able to be implemented.

5.6 Conclusion

To sum up, the findings across these sections show that both institutions and faculty play an active role in supporting rural and first-generation students in their journey to HE. FMs recognise that students often need help before the admission stage—especially in deciding whether to continue their studies, what courses to take, and how to navigate the application process. Guidance of this kind, which combines information and encouragement, is seen as essential to helping students make informed choices.

Across institutions, the priorities are broadly similar, though the focus varies slightly. Faculty in government colleges tend to emphasise practical support such as filling forms, explaining reservations, or managing the admission process. University faculty focus more on helping students think about course selection, career prospects, and institutional reputation. Together, they address different parts of the same process—one, helping students to enter HE, the other, to choose and plan within it.

Faculty involvement in advising is widespread. Most teachers reported guiding students formally or informally, and this support often extends beyond the classroom to family, neighbours, and the local community. Within institutions, faculty interact with prospective students mainly through visits to schools and communities, campus tours, and by encouraging current students to share their experiences with others, although it was recognised that more of these activities (both in terms of number and variety) could help to enhance rural engagements and enrolment.

At the same time, there are real constraints. Many faculty pointed to limited funding, heavy workloads, and a lack of time for outreach as key challenges. Government colleges face additional logistical issues, while universities are constrained by competing responsibilities. In both cases, outreach tends to depend on individual effort rather than institutional policy. Overall, the data show that faculty across both types of institutions are already contributing significantly to widening access, but their efforts remain uneven and largely informal.

Chapter 6: Who are the Students and What is Their Experience of and Perspectives on HE Outreach?

6.1 Introduction

This chapter examines who the undergraduate students in the study are and explores their backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives related to transition into Higher Education (HE) and HE outreach. It begins by describing students' demographic characteristics, residence and commute patterns, family and schooling backgrounds, and HE pathways. Through a combination of survey and interview data, insights into the education choices and perspectives relating to HE opportunities are presented. The chapter then examines how students gather information about HE, who supports and guides them in making decisions, the role played by Faculty Members (FMs), and students' views on the kinds of outreach and guidance that may help rural learners access HE. Overall, the chapter highlights the varied social, educational, and institutional contexts within which students navigate their transition into HE.

6.2 Demographic Background of Undergraduate Students

Section 6.2 provides an overview of who the undergraduate students are, by looking at their basic demographic characteristics. It includes information on their age, gender, caste, religion, and place of birth, as well as details such as disability status and marital background.

6.2.1 Demographic Background

Table I.6.1: Year of Birth

Age in years	Total Valid Responses		State Universities		Government Colleges	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Below 16	4	0.1	0	0.0	4	0.2
16	11	0.4	3	0.3	8	0.5
17	318	11.0	100	9.0	218	12.4
18	1070	37.1	382	34.2	688	39.0
19	818	28.4	310	27.8	508	28.8
20	331	11.5	139	12.4	192	10.9
21	132	4.6	65	5.8	67	3.8
22	92	3.2	45	4.0	47	2.7
23	51	1.8	29	2.6	22	1.2
24	23	0.8	17	1.5	6	0.3
More than 24	31	1.1	27	2.4	4	0.2
Total	**2881**	**100**	**1117**	**100**	**1764**	**100**

The age profile of undergraduate students shows that most respondents are in the 18–19 age range, indicating a largely uninterrupted movement from school into HE (Table I.6.1). For instance, most respondents were 18 (37.1%) or 19 (28.4%) years old, indicating that a clear majority entered HE directly after school.

The distribution by institution type shows that government colleges have a slightly younger cohort than State Universities (SUs) (Table I.6.1). Among government college students, 39.0% were 18 years old compared with 34.2% in universities, while those aged 17 were also more common in colleges (12.4% vs. 9%). This indicates that government colleges attract more students who enter immediately after schooling.

Table I.6.2: Gender

Gender	Total Valid Responses		State Universities		Government Colleges	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Women	1675	58.0	558	49.7	1117	63.3
Men	1210	41.9	563	50.2	647	36.6
Transgender	2	0.1	1	0.1	1	0.1
Other Gender	1	0.0	0	0.0	1	0.1
Total	**2888**	**100**	**1122**	**100**	**1766**	**100**

Data on gender show that women students form a clear majority in the sample (Table I.6.2). 58.0% of respondents identified as women and 41.9% as men, with very small shares identifying as transgender or other genders.

The gender pattern differs across the two institutional types (Table I.6.2). In SUs, we find near gender parity: 49.7% women and 50.2% men, however, in government colleges, women students are in majority (63.3%). Research suggests (Henderson et al., 2021) that young women are more likely to access nearby government colleges, reflecting gendered concerns about proximity and safety.

Table I.6.3: Caste / Social Group

Caste / Social Group	Total Valid Responses		State Universities		Government Colleges	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
SC	669	23.3	225	20.0	444	25.3
ST	239	8.3	116	10.3	123	7.0
OBC	699	24.3	296	26.4	403	23.0
General (Non-SC/ST/OBC)	1117	38.8	425	37.8	692	39.5
EWS (Non-SC/ST/OBC)	152	5.3	61	5.4	91	5.2
Total	**2876**	**100**	**1123**	**100**	**1753**	**100**

The caste distribution shows that students from the Socio-Economically Disadvantaged Groups (SEDGs) form the largest share, followed by students from the general category (Table I.6.3). Specifically, 38.8% of students belong to the General category, 24.3% to the Other Backward Classes (OBC) category, and 23.3% to the Scheduled Castes (SC) category, with 8.3% from the Scheduled Tribes (ST) category and 5.3% from the Economically Weaker Section (EWS) category. This reflects both the expansion of access and the strict implementation of reservation policies in HE enrolment.

A similar pattern in student composition is observed in both SUs and government colleges (Table I.6.3). In both types of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), students from SEDGs make up the largest share, followed by students from the General category.

Table I.6.4: Religion

Religion	Total Valid Responses		State Universities		Government Colleges	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Hindu	2070	71.8	938	83.6	1132	64.2
Muslim	614	21.3	114	10.2	500	28.4
ORM	201	7.0	70	6.2	131	7.4
Total	**2885**	**100**	**1122**	**100**	**1763**	**100**

Most students identify as Hindu, followed by a significant minority of Muslim students (Table I.6.4). Hindus make up 71.8%, Muslims 21.3%, and Other Religious Minorities (ORMs) 7.0%.

Religious distribution differs across institution types (Table I.6.4). In SUs, 83.6% of students are Hindu and 10.2% Muslim, whereas government colleges have a larger Muslim representation (28.4%) and a lower Hindu share (64.2%). Our data shows that more students from religious minorities are attending government colleges than SUs.

Table I.6.5: Differently Abled

Differently Abled	Total Valid Responses		State Universities		Government Colleges	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Yes	30	1.1	8	0.7	22	1.3
No	2801	98.9	1100	99.3	1701	98.7
Total	**2831**	**100**	**1108**	**100**	**1723**	**100**

Only a small proportion of students reported being differently abled (Table I.6.5). Just 1.1% identified as having a disability. This low figure indicates persistent barriers that may limit the enrolment of differently abled learners in HE.

Disability representation shows minor variation between institutions (Table I.6.5). The share is 1.3% in government colleges and 0.7% in universities. Although small in both, the slightly higher proportion in colleges may reflect their local accessibility and easier physical access.

Table I.6.6: LGBTQIAP+

Options	Total Valid Responses		State Universities		Government Colleges	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Yes	5	0.2	5	0.5	0	0.0
No	2645	97.5	1060	98.0	1585	97.1
Prefer not to say	64	2.4	17	1.6	47	2.9
Total	**2714**	**100**	**1082**	**100**	**1632**	**100**

The visibility of LGBTQIAP+ identities is extremely low (Table I.6.6). Only 0.2% identified as LGBTQIAP+, while 2.4% preferred not to say. This suggests limited comfort or safety in openly expressing gender and sexual diversity.

LGBTQIAP+ identification appears only in SUs (0.5%), with no self-identification reported in government colleges (Table I.6.6). This can reflect greater anonymity offered by larger

universities, while college settings may be more conservative because of their closeness to the local surrounding community.

Table I.6.7: Relationship Status

Relationship Status	Total Valid Responses		State Universities		Government Colleges	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Married	32	1.1	9	0.8	23	1.3
Unmarried	2827	98.1	1088	97.2	1739	98.6
Divorced/ Separated	2	0.1	2	0.2	0	0.0
Other	22	0.8	20	1.8	2	0.1
Total	**2883**	**100**	**1119**	**100**	**1764**	**100**

A majority of students are unmarried (Table I.6.7) with 98.1% reported being unmarried, and only 1.1% married. The marriage pattern aligns with their young age profile. Marriage is slightly more common among college students (1.3%) than university students (0.8%) (Table I.6.7). This may reflect earlier marriage patterns among young women, accessing government colleges in rural or semi-urban settings, who continue their studies.

Table I.6.8: Do You Have Any Children

Do you have any children?	Total Valid Responses		State Universities		Government Colleges	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Yes	16	0.6	5	0.5	11	0.6
No	2799	99.4	1078	99.5	1721	99.4
Total	**2815**	**100**	**1083**	**100**	**1732**	**100**

Very few students have children (Table I.6.8). Only 0.6% of participants reported having children. This again reflects the young age and early stage of life for most student respondents. Students with parental responsibilities are a very small minority across the two types of HEIs as well. The proportion is 0.5% in universities and 0.6% in colleges (Table I.6.8).

Table I.6.9: Place of Permanent Residence

Options	Total Valid Responses		State Universities		Government Colleges	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Rural	1883	67.0	547	50.0	1336	77.8
Urban	929	33.0	547	50.0	382	22.2
Total	**2812**	**100**	**1094**	**100**	**1718**	**100**

For a majority of students, their place of permanent residence was located in rural areas (Table I.6.9). 67% of respondents reported rural origins, and 33% reported urban origins. This shows that the sample of students includes a substantial number of students who have rural origins.

The rural-urban divide is sharper across institutions (Table I.6.9). For students attending government colleges, 77.8% of students were born in rural areas, compared with 50% in universities. This indicates that government colleges serve as key access points for students from rural areas.

6.2.2 Summary

In summary this section shows that undergraduate students in this study are mostly young, with the majority entering HE directly after school, and almost all students are unmarried and without children. Women form a clear majority overall, especially in government colleges, while students with permanent residence in rural areas account for around two-thirds of the sample. A small proportion identify as differently abled or LGBTQIAP+. The social composition reflects student composition in the HE system in India, with students from SEDGs most represented, followed by General category students. Religious differences between institution types are also visible in the study sample, with government colleges enrolling a larger share of Muslim students. These patterns together highlight that government colleges attract more rural, socially diverse, and locally placed students, while universities draw a more mixed and mobile student body.

6.3 Undergraduate Students: Residence and Commute Information

Section 6.3 explores where students live while attending college and how they travel to their institutions. It looks at whether they stay in one place or move between different residences, how far they travel, the time it takes to reach college, and the modes of transport they use.

6.3.1 Residence and Commute Information

Table I.6.10: Whether the Student Stays in More than One Residence on a Weekly Basis

Options	Total Valid Responses		State Universities		Government Colleges	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Yes	419	14.7	315	28.2	104	6.0
No	2440	85.3	804	71.8	1636	94.0
Total	**2859**	**100**	**1119**	**100**	**1740**	**100**

The data show that while attending college most students stay in a single residence during the week (Table I.6.10). About 85.3% reported staying in one place, while 14.7% moved between more than one residence. This indicates that only a small share of students manage split living arrangements alongside their studies.

The comparison across institutions shows far greater mobility among students in SUs than in government colleges (Table I.6.10). About 28.2% of university students stay in more than one residence, compared with only 6.0% in government colleges. This suggests that university enrolment requires weekly travel, while college students tend to study closer to home.

Table I.6.11: If Yes, Place of Residence During Working Week in Relation to Place of Study

Options	Total Valid Responses		State Universities		Government Colleges	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
On Campus	209	51.5	166	53.0	43	46.2
Same town/location	74	18.2	49	15.7	25	26.9
Same district but not same town/location	84	20.7	71	22.7	13	14.0
Same state, different district	37	9.1	27	8.6	10	10.8
In a different state	2	0.5	0	0.0	2	2.2
Total of Answer = Yes	**406**	**100**	**313**	**100**	**93**	**100**

Among students who stay in more than one residence, most live on campus (51.5%) during the working week, followed by those staying in the same district but a different town (20.7%) (Table I.6.11). Smaller shares stay in the same town (18.2%), a different district (9.1%), or in another state (0.5%). This shows that on-campus accommodation and intra-district travel are the most common patterns among mobile students.

In relation to travel and residential patterns of students who stay in more than one residence across HEIs, SU students are more likely to live on campus (53.0%) compared with government college students (46.2%) (Table I.6.11). College students are more likely to stay in the same town (26.9%) than to reside across districts. This reflects that government colleges draw more students from nearby areas, while universities have reach across towns and attract students from wider catchment areas.

Table I.6.12: Place of Residence During Weekends/Vacations in Relation to Place of Study

Options	Total Valid Responses		State Universities		Government Colleges	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
On Campus	23	5.8	13	4.2	10	11.4
Same town/location	66	16.6	34	11.0	32	36.4
Same district but not same town/location	94	23.7	74	23.9	20	22.7
Same state, different district	197	49.6	174	56.3	23	26.1
In a different state	17	4.3	14	4.5	3	3.4
Total of Answer = Yes	**397**	**100**	**309**	**100**	**88**	**100**

During weekends and vacations, most students return home or closer to their families (Table I.6.12). Nearly 49.6% stay in a different district within the same state as their HEI, while 23.7% stay in the same district but different town, and only 5.8% remain on campus. This suggests a tendency to return home when classes are not in session.

University students most often return to other districts in the same state (56.3%), while government college students are more likely to remain in the same town (36.4%) (Table I.6.12). These patterns mirror the longer-distance enrolment and wider catchment area typical of universities, and the more local enrolment in colleges. This again highlights the closer community and local reach of government colleges.

Table I.6.13: Place of Residence in Relation to Place of Study for Students Residing in Multiple Locations

Option	Total Valid Responses		State Universities		Government Colleges	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
On Campus	640	27.8	276	35.4	364	23.9
Same town/location	1232	53.5	372	47.8	860	56.4
Same district but not same town/location	296	12.8	53	6.8	243	15.9
Same state, different district	135	5.9	78	10.0	57	3.7
In a different state	1	0.0	0	0.0	1	0.1
Total of Answer = Yes	**2304**	**100**	**779**	**100**	**1525**	**100**

Among students who stay in one residence, over half live in the same town as their HEI (53.5%), and 27.8% live on campus (Table I.6.13). A further 12.8% live in the same district but a different town. This indicates that most non-mobile students either live at home nearby or use on-campus accommodation.

In relation to residential patterns across HEIs, among university students who stay in one place, 47.8% live in the same town and 35.4% on campus, while for government colleges, 56.4% live in the same town and 23.9% on campus (Table I.6.13). University students, therefore, rely more on campus housing, while college students are typically local commuters. This reinforces the more localised catchment area of government colleges.

Table I.6.14: Mean Distance from the Residence to HEI (Kilometres)

Institution Type	N	%	Mean (km)
SUs	1032	42.1	30.26
Government Colleges	1418	57.9	14.08
Total	**2450**	**100**	**20.86**

The mean distance students travel to reach their institution overall is 21 km. This differs sharply across institution types (Table I.6.14). Students from the SU travel 30.3 km on average, while government college students travel 14.1 km. This shows that students attending universities often come from more distant locations.

Table I.6.15: Mean Travel Time from Residence to HEI (Minutes)

HEI	Total Valid Responses	% of survey total sample	Mean travel time from weekly residence to HEI (minutes)
SUs	965	40.3	50.30
Government Colleges	1431	59.7	32.66
Total	**2396**	**100**	**39.76**

On average, students commute for about 40 minutes from their residences to their HEIs. Travel time varies by institution type, though less dramatically than distance (Table I.6.15). University students travel an average of 50 minutes, while college students travel 33 minutes. This suggests that university students navigate longer or more complex routes to reach campus.

Table I.6.16: Mode of Travel to College/University

Options	Total Valid Responses		State Universities		Government Colleges	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Walking	849	25.3	517	35.8	332	17.4
Cycle	369	11.0	55	3.8	314	16.4
Rickshaw/Auto	564	16.8	141	9.8	423	22.2
Bus/Minivan	735	21.9	327	22.6	408	21.4
Train	74	2.2	36	2.5	38	2.0
Bike/Scooty/Scooter	654	19.5	290	20.1	364	19.1
Carpool	7	0.2	6	0.4	1	0.1
Personal Car	82	2.4	64	4.4	18	0.9
Metro	1	0.0	1	0.1	0	0.0
Tractor	10	0.3	1	0.1	9	0.5
Other	8	0.2	6	0.4	2	0.1
Total of Answer = Yes	**3353**	**100**	**1444**	**100**	**1909**	**100**

Students use a wide mix of transport modes to travel to college (Table I.6.16). The most common are walking (25.3%), bus/minivan (21.9%), and bike/scooty/scooter (19.5%), followed by rickshaw/auto (16.8%) and cycling (11%). This pattern indicates that transportation options mainly depend on individuals' own means, with choices that may be influenced by factors such as cost, distance, and available local transport options.

Travel modes differ distinctly between universities and government colleges (Table I.6.16). A common mode of transport for university students is to walk (35.8%), while government college students rely more on rickshaws/autos (22.2%) and bus/minivan (21.4%). These differences reflect shorter walking distances in university settings, perhaps because students stay in hostels, and low-cost transport needs among government college students.

6.3.2 Summary

To sum up, section 6.3 shows that most students live in a single residence during the week, typically either at home in the same town or on campus. Students attending SUs are more likely to stay in more than one place or rely on campus accommodation, reflecting longer travel distances and wider catchment areas. Government college students on the other hand commute shorter distances and often use low-cost modes such as cycling or rickshaw/auto, while university students are more likely to walk. Across both settings, most students return home on weekends or vacations, indicating strong ties to family and local communities. Together, the residence and commute patterns emphasise the different geographic reach of the two types of institutions.

6.4 Undergraduate Students' Background

Section 6.4 looks at students' family and schooling backgrounds to understand the circumstances in which they grew up and the educational pathways that brought them into HE. It examines their parents' educational level and occupations, the types of schools they attended, and the medium and location of their schooling.

6.4.1. Educational and Family Background

Table I.6.17: Educational Background of Mother – Overall

Options	N	%
Do not know	162	5.7
Not applicable (e.g. You are from a single parent household)	15	0.5
Did not access formal schooling	89	3.1
1st to 5th class	247	8.7
6th to 8th class	297	10.4
9th to 10th class	728	25.5
11th to 12th class	545	19.1
Diploma / Industrial Training Institute (ITI) / Industrial Training Centre (ITC)	118	4.1
Degree education (e.g., Bachelor of Arts (BA), Bachelor of Science (BSc))	448	15.7
Post-graduate education (e.g., Master of Arts (MA), Master of Science (MSc))	184	6.5
Master of Philosophy (MPhil) and/or Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)	17	0.6
Total	**2850**	**100**

The schooling profile of mothers (maximum level completed) shows that many have completed only basic or middle-level schooling, with relatively few reaching senior secondary or beyond (Table I.6.17). For instance, 25.5% studied up to Class 9–10, 19.1% up to Class 11–12, and 15.7% hold a degree, while 3.1% had no formal schooling. This indicates that a large share of students are first-generation learners or come from households with modest exposure to HE.

Table I.6.18: Educational Background of Mother – By SUs and Government Colleges

Mother	State Universities		Government Colleges	
	N	%	N	%
Do not know	29	2.6	133	7.7
Not Applicable (e.g. You are from a single-parent household)	11	1.0	4	0.2
Did not access formal schooling	17	1.5	72	4.1
1st to 5th class	49	4.4	198	11.4
6th to 8th class	65	5.8	232	13.4
9th to 10th class	172	15.4	556	32.0
11th to 12th class	226	20.3	319	18.4
Diploma/ITI/ITC	49	4.4	69	4.0
Degree education (e.g., BA, BSc)	325	29.2	123	7.1
Post-Graduate education (e.g., MA, MSc)	156	14.0	28	1.6
MPhil and/or PhD	15	1.3	2	0.1
Total	**1114**	**100**	**1736**	**100**

Mothers of university students tend to have far higher educational levels than those of college students (Table I.6.18). For example, 29.2% of university students' mothers hold a degree compared with only 7.1% in government colleges, and students with postgraduate mothers are found mostly in university settings. This shows the relationship between parental education and the institutions students attend, with higher maternal education more common among students who enter universities.

Table I.6.19: Educational Background of Father – Overall

Options	N	%
Do not know	131	4.6
Not applicable (e.g. You are from a single parent household)	17	0.6
Did not access formal schooling	53	1.9
1st to 5th class	185	6.5
6th to 8th class	236	8.3
9th to 10th class	588	20.7
11th to 12th class	600	21.1
Diploma/ITI/ITC	183	6.4
Degree education (e.g., BA, BSc)	528	18.6
Post-graduate education (e.g., MA, MSc)	280	9.9
MPhil and/or PhD	40	1.4
Total	**2841**	**100**

Fathers' education (maximum level completed) shows a slightly different pattern to mothers' education, with many completing secondary or senior secondary schooling (Table I.6.19). About 21.1% finished Class 11–12, 20.7% Class 9–10, and 18.6% hold a degree, while nearly 1 in 10 fathers have postgraduate education. This indicates slightly higher educational levels among fathers than mothers, but still a wide range of schooling backgrounds.

Table I.6.20: Educational Background of Father – By SUs and Government Colleges

Options	State Universities		Government Colleges	
	N	%	N	%
Do not know	26	2.3	105	6.1
Not Applicable (e.g. You are from a single-parent household)	9	0.8	8	0.5
Did not access formal schooling	13	1.2	40	2.3
1st to 5th class	25	2.3	160	9.2
6th to 8th class	37	3.3	199	11.5
9th to 10th class	132	11.9	456	26.3
11th to 12th class	207	18.7	393	22.7
Diploma/ITI/ITC	79	7.1	104	6.0
Degree education (e.g., BA, BSc)	340	30.7	188	10.9
Post-Graduate education (e.g., MA, MSc)	207	18.7	73	4.2
MPhil and/or PhD	34	3.1	6	0.3
Total	**1109**	**100**	**1732**	**100**

University students are more likely to have fathers with higher levels of education, while students in government colleges come from households with more modest levels of schooling (Table I.6.20). For instance, 30.7% of fathers of university students are degree holders, compared with 10.9% among fathers of college students. This pattern suggests an association between parental education and the type of institution students attend, with students attending universities having fathers with higher levels of education.

Table I.6.21: Legal Guardian's Educational Background – Overall

Options	N	%
Do not know	252	40.2
Not applicable (e.g. You are from a single parent household)	14	2.2
Did not access formal schooling	13	2.1
1st to 5th class	13	2.1
6th to 8th class	21	3.3
9th to 10th class	61	9.7
11th to 12th class	50	8.0
Diploma/ITI/ITC	15	2.4
Degree education (e.g., BA, BSc)	104	16.6
Post-graduate education (e.g., MA, MSc)	67	10.7
MPhil and/or PhD	17	2.7
Total	**627**	**100**

In relation to the educational levels of students' legal guardians, educational levels vary widely, with many students unsure about their guardian's schooling (Table I.6.21). Over 40% did not know their guardian's educational background, while 16.6% reported that their guardian had a degree-level education. This reflects students' awareness of caregivers' educational levels in some families. This pattern is similar across the two types of HEIs (Table I.6.22).

Table I.6.22: Legal Guardian's Educational Background – By SUs and Government Colleges

Options	State Universities		Government Colleges	
	N	%	N	%
Do not know	117	33.7	135	48.2
Not Applicable (e.g. You are from a single-parent household)	5	1.4	9	3.2
Did not access formal schooling	3	0.9	10	3.6
1st to 5th class	5	1.4	8	2.9
6th to 8th class	2	0.6	19	6.8
9th to 10th class	21	6.1	40	14.3
11th to 12th class	32	9.2	18	6.4
Diploma/ITI/ITC	5	1.4	10	3.6
Degree education (e.g., BA, BSc)	80	23.1	24	8.6
Post-Graduate education (e.g., MA, MSc)	63	18.2	4	1.4
MPhil and/or PhD	14	4.0	3	1.1
Total	**347**	**100**	**280**	**100**

Interview data from students further illustrate a range in family backgrounds of education and provide some individual contexts of snapshots.

In SUs, both fathers and mothers were often discussed as having HE qualifications in a range of subjects and across technical and professional fields. Some parents had postgraduate level degrees, for example one student (Kerala) discussed how both their parents had Master of Business Administration (MBAs). However, this was not always the case, for example, one student discussed how their mother started a BA but could not complete it (Assam). There were likewise mentions of uncles and aunts with undergraduate and sometimes postgraduate qualifications (Kerala and Maharashtra), showing participants were often second-generation HE attendees. Siblings were also discussed, for example, all participants in Maharashtra SU had siblings with HE qualifications; a strong indication that it is a typical pathway for the current generation.

Several participants mentioned being unaware of the educational history of their grandparents (e.g. SU, Assam), but some had insights, for example, one grandmother had a BSc in Nursing, another a General BA, meanwhile some grandfathers had BAs in subjects such as History and Political Science (SU, Assam). These examples show instances of students being the third generation of their families to pursue HE. Meanwhile, there were also cases of students reporting grandparents with no formal qualifications, demonstrating the differences in educational patterns across generations.

In government colleges, there were a general sense of fewer examples of HE qualifications in previous generations, although there were exceptions to this. In discussing grandparents, many had left education in earlier stages or in some cases had no formal education (grandmothers), although again many participants were not aware (Assam). For parents, there were more instances of degree level study, but these were less common than in SUs and were more likely to be completed by fathers than mothers. Despite this, siblings were again mentioned as having studied or being currently studying HE (e.g. Kerala and Maharashtra), reinforcing survey data of improving educational levels across generations within government college student populations.

Table I.6.23: Mother's Occupation – Overall

Options	N	%
Self Employed: Agriculture	177	6.5
Self Employed: Non-agriculture	24	0.9
Wage worker	32	1.2
Salaried	320	11.8
Housewife	2152	79.4
Unemployed / No Occupation / Retired	4	0.1
Total	**2709**	**100**

Regarding parental occupation, students reported that most mothers were not formally employed, with 79.4% reported as housewives (Table I.6.23). Smaller shares of mothers were

self-employed in agriculture (6.5%) or salaried work (11.8%). This indicates that many households depend mainly on the father's earnings.

Table I.6.24: Mother's Occupation – By SUs and Government Colleges

Occupation	State Universities		Government Colleges	
	N	%	N	%
Self-Employed: Agriculture	49	4.6	128	7.8
Self-Employed: Non-agriculture	10	0.9	14	0.9
Wage worker	9	0.8	23	1.4
Salaried	204	19.2	116	7.0
Housewife	789	74.2	1363	82.8
Unemployed / No Occupation / Retired	2	0.2	2	0.1
Total	**1063**	**100**	**1646**	**100**

Regarding differences by type of institution, university students are more likely to come from households where the mother holds a salaried position. For example, 19.2% of university mothers are salaried compared with 7.0% in colleges (Table I.6.24). In college, students are more likely to come from families where the mother is a wage worker, self-employed in agriculture, or a housewife, compared to mothers of university students.

Table I.6.25: Father's Occupation – Overall

Options	N	%
Self Employed: Agriculture	870	32.5
Self Employed: Non-agriculture	266	9.9
Wage worker	316	11.8
Salaried	1202	44.9
Unemployed / No Occupation / Retired	23	0.9
Total	**2677**	**100**

Occupations of fathers of students show a mix of salaried work (44.9%), agriculture (32.5%), and self-employment (9.9%) (Table I.6.25). Only a small share is unemployed. This pattern indicates diverse economic bases but with strong representation from agricultural households.

Table I.6.26: Father's Occupation – By SUs and Government Colleges

Occupation	State Universities		Government Colleges	
	N	%	N	%
Self-Employed: Agriculture	143	13.5	727	44.8
Self-Employed: Non-agriculture	130	12.3	136	8.4
Wage worker	90	8.5	226	13.9
Salaried	684	64.8	518	32.0
Unemployed / No Occupation / Retired	9	0.9	14	0.9
Total	**1056**	**100**	**1621**	**100**

Regarding differences by types of institutions, in universities, students belong to families where their fathers are more often in salaried positions (64.8%), while in government colleges, this proportion is lower (32%) with a higher proportion occupied as agricultural workers (44.8%) (Table I.6.26). This demonstrates how economic background aligns with the type of institution that students attend. Government colleges serve more students from farming and wage-earning households.

6.4.1.1 Summary

In summary this section shows that undergraduate students come from a wide range of educational and occupational family backgrounds, though many belong to families with limited exposure to HE. Mothers' and fathers' schooling levels are concentrated around secondary and senior secondary education, with smaller proportions having degree or postgraduate qualifications. Across both parents, university students are more likely to come from families where parents have higher levels of education, while government college students more often belong to families where parents have lower or middle levels of schooling. The findings therefore point to clear differences in the educational backgrounds associated with the two types of institutions.

The section also highlights variations in family occupations and economic backgrounds. Mothers are most commonly reported as housewives, although salaried employment among mothers is more visible in families of university students. Fathers' occupations show a mix of salaried work, agriculture, self-employment, and wage labour, with agricultural livelihoods much more common among government college students. Overall, the findings suggest that government colleges draw larger numbers of students from families that are engaged in farming, wage-earning, and have a lower educational background, while universities have greater representation of students from more educationally and economically advantaged families.

6.4.2 Schooling History

This section examines students' schooling history across both stages of secondary education—9th–10th and 11th–12th classes. It examines where students went to school, whether they attended government or private institutions, the type of school they studied in, and the medium of instruction at each stage.

Table I.6.27: Place of Schooling at Secondary Level (9th–10th Class)

Options	Total Valid Responses		State Universities		Government Colleges	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Rural	1482	52.4	343	31.0	1139	66.1
Urban	1123	39.7	644	58.3	479	27.8
Semi-urban	224	7.9	118	10.7	106	6.1
Total	**2829**	**100**	**1105**	**100**	**1724**	**100**

The students in our sample reported that their secondary schooling took place mainly in rural areas, with 52.4% studying in rural schools and 39.7% in urban ones (Table I.6.27). This reflects the rural origin of a large share of respondents.

With respect to variations across types of institutions, government college students are far more likely to have studied in rural schools (66.1%) compared with university students (31.0%) (Table I.6.27). Urban schooling is much more common among university students (58.3%). This pattern

may reflect the fact that many SUs are located in urban or semi-urban areas, making it more likely for students with urban schooling backgrounds to enrol there.

Table I.6.28: Location of School at Senior Secondary Level (11th–12th Class)

Options	Total Valid Responses		State Universities		Government Colleges	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Rural	1209	42.6	279	25.2	930	53.6
Urban	1407	49.5	720	65.0	687	39.6
Semi-urban	224	7.9	107	9.7	117	6.7
Total	**2840**	**100**	**1106**	**100**	**1734**	**100**

When students in our sample were in senior secondary classes, more attended urban schools, with 49.5% studying in urban areas (Table I.6.28). Still, 42.6% remain in rural schools. This suggests that there may be a gradual shift toward more urban schooling as students move into 11th–12th class, yet a large proportion of students—especially those in government colleges—continue to come from rural schools, as we will see below. These rural schools often have limited exposure to HE information, career guidance, or counselling support.

Government college students continue to show high levels of rural schooling (53.6%), while a large majority of university students (65.0%) attended urban schools (Table I.6.28). This pattern reflects the association between place of schooling and the type of institution students later join. Importantly, students in government colleges who studied in rural schools may often have had limited exposure to HE information, career guidance, or counselling during their school years.

Table I.6.29: Type of School (11th-12th Class)

Options	Total Valid Responses		State Universities		Government Colleges	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Co-education	2292	80.8	916	83.4	1376	79.1
Single-sex	545	19.2	182	16.6	363	20.9
Total	**2837**	**100**	**1098**	**100**	**1739**	**100**

The data on type of school attended in 11th–12th class shows that most students studied in co-educational schools. About 80.8% reported attending co-ed schools, while 19.2% studied in single-sex schools. This indicates that the majority of respondents completed senior secondary schooling in mixed-gender environments (Table I.6.29).

The data on type of school in 11th–12th class shows similar patterns across institution types, with co-educational schooling being the most common. Among university students, 83.4% attended co-ed schools, compared with 79.1% of government college students, while single-sex schooling was slightly more common among college students (20.9%) than university students (16.6%). This suggests modest differences in schooling background across the two groups (Table I.6.29).

Table I.6.30: Management of the School (9th- 10th Class)

Options	Total Valid Responses		State Universities		Government Colleges	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Government	1128	39.5	318	28.5	810	46.5
Government-aided	574	20.1	136	12.2	438	25.1
Private (unaided)	1155	40.4	661	59.3	494	28.4
Total	**2857**	**100**	**1115**	**100**	**1742**	**100**

The data on school management for 9th–10th class shows that students come from a broad mix of government and private schooling backgrounds. About 39.5% attended government schools, 40.4% attended private (unaided) schools, and the rest attended government-aided schools. This indicates that the sample includes students with varied early secondary school experiences (Table I.6.30).

The data on school management for 9th–10th class shows clear differences across institution types. Among government college students, 71.6% studied in government or government-aided schools, while 59.3% of university students came from private (unaided) schools. This suggests that students from different types of schools tend to enrol in different types of HEIs, with students who have studied in government schools being more likely to attend government colleges (Table I.6.30).

Table I.6.31: Management of the School (11th-12th Class)

Options	Total Valid Responses		State Universities		Government Colleges	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Government	1133	39.9	363	32.9	770	44.3
Government-aided	689	24.2	149	13.5	540	31.0
Private (unaided)	1020	35.9	590	53.5	430	24.7
Total	**2842**	**100**	**1102**	**100**	**1740**	**100**

The data on school management for 11th–12th class shows an almost even split between government and private schooling. About 39.9% studied in government schools and 35.9% in private unaided schools, with 24.2% in government-aided schools. This indicates that students entering HE have senior secondary schooling backgrounds from a range of school management types (Table I.6.31).

The data (Table I.6.31) on school management for 11th–12th class shows a stronger presence of private schooling among university students and government or aided schooling among college students. About 53.5% of university students attended private unaided schools compared with 24.7% of government college students, while 75.3% of college students studied in government or government-aided schools. This indicates distinct schooling patterns across the two groups, with students in government colleges more often coming from government-managed schools at both the secondary and senior secondary levels.

Table I.6.32: Medium of Instruction (11th-12th Class)

Options	Total Valid Responses		State Universities		Government Colleges	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Regional Language	1066	37.6	171	15.7	895	51.4
English	1203	42.5	743	68.1	460	26.4
Hindi	563	19.9	177	16.2	386	22.2
Total	**2832**	**100**	**1091**	**100**	**1741**	**100**

The data on medium of instruction for 11th–12th class shows that students studied in a mix of English-medium and regional language schools. About 42.5% reported English medium, 37.6% regional languages, and 19.9% Hindi medium. This reflects the linguistic diversity of the students' schooling backgrounds (Table I.6.32).

The data (Table I.6.32) on medium of instruction shows notable differences between university and college students. Among university students, 68.1% studied in English-medium schools, compared with 26.4% in government colleges, while 51.4% of college students studied in regional language medium schools. This suggests that the language of schooling varies considerably across the two institutional groups.

6.4.2.1 Summary

In summary, the history of students' schooling shows that they come from a wide range of school environments across their secondary and senior secondary years. A substantial proportion of students in our sample had a rural origin, and at the secondary and senior secondary levels, they had studied in a regional language or Hindi as the medium of instruction, rather than English. Many government college students completed their schooling in rural locations and in government-managed or aided schools, while university students more often attended urban, private, and English-medium schools. These patterns highlight the diverse educational backgrounds that students bring into HE and reflect the different school pathways that feed into colleges and universities. The schooling patterns in this section suggest that many students, particularly those in government colleges, have studied in schools located in rural areas, in government schools, and have studied in regional languages. Studies show that such schools often have fewer systematic channels for sharing information about HE options, admissions, or scholarships (Sabharwal, 2024). As a result, students from such schools may reach the end of 12th class with limited exposure to college-related guidance as compared with peers from urban, private, or English-medium schools shaping their HE choices.

6.4.3. HE History

The data on students’ courses of study show that enrolment is spread across a wide range of undergraduate programmes (Table I.6.33). The largest group is enrolled in BA programmes (36.4%), followed by B.Com (17.9%), BSc (16.4%), and Integrated Programmes (12.6%), while

smaller shares are in Bachelor of Computer Applications (BCA) (8.2%), Bachelor of Technology (B.Tech) (4.6%), and Bachelor of Vocation (B.Voc) (3.9%). This indicates that undergraduate participation is concentrated in general degrees, with relatively fewer students in technical or other professional programmes.

Table I.6.33: Course of Study in which Students are Enrolled

Options	Total Valid Responses		State Universities		Government Colleges	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
BA	1031	36.4	386	34.5	645	37.7
B.Com	507	17.9	33	3.0	474	27.7
BSc	463	16.4	116	10.4	347	20.3
BCA	232	8.2	50	4.5	182	10.6
B.Tech	131	4.6	129	11.5	2	0.1
B.Voc	111	3.9	73	6.5	38	2.2
Integrated Programmes	356	12.6	331	29.6	25	1.5
Total	**2831**	**100**	**1118**	**100**	**1713**	**100**

The data (Table I.6.33) on programme enrolment across institution types shows strong differences between SUs and government colleges. In government colleges, BA (37.7%), B.Com (27.7%), and BSc (20.3%) dominate, whereas universities have much higher shares in BA (34.5%), integrated programmes (29.6%) and B.Tech (11.5%), and very low enrolment in B.Com (3%). This suggests that universities offer, and attract students into, more specialised or professional courses, while government colleges are mainly centres for general degree programmes.

Table I.6.34: Location of the University/College

Options	Total Valid Responses		State Universities		Government Colleges	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Rural	908	31.8	44	4.0	864	49.7
Urban	1601	56.1	1027	92.4	574	33.0
Semi-urban	343	12.0	41	3.7	302	17.4
Total	**2852**	**100**	**1112**	**100**	**1740**	**100**

The data (Table I.6.34) on the location of students' colleges and universities show that most of the HEIs are located in urban settings. About 56.1% are enrolled in urban HEIs, compared with 31.8% in rural institutions and 12.0% in semi-urban areas. This indicates that the majority of undergraduate opportunities in the sample are situated in urban centres.

The data on HEI location across institution types (Table I.6.34) shows notable differences. A large majority of SU students are studying in urban region (92.4%), while government colleges where students are studying are evenly distributed across rural (49.7%), urban (33.0%), and semiurban (17.4%) locations. This reflects the wider catchment and urban concentration of universities, compared with the more locally embedded nature of government colleges.

Table I.6.35: Sources of Funding for Students' Fees

Option	Total Valid Responses		State Universities		Government Colleges	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Fees paid entirely by family	2109	64.8	885	78.4	1224	57.6
Fees paid partly by family	308	9.5	60	5.3	248	11.7
Fees paid with the help of a scholarship	462	14.2	145	12.8	317	14.9
Fees paid by taking a loan	36	1.1	11	1.0	25	1.2
Fees paid by taking up a job	70	2.2	21	1.9	49	2.3
Fees paid by a freeship (tuition waiver)	237	7.3	3	0.3	234	11.0
Fees paid through funding from the Parent-Teacher Association (PTA)	23	0.7	2	0.2	21	1.0
Fees paid through the allocation of funds from the Faculty Pool (e.g., faculty / administrative staff)	8	0.2	2	0.2	6	0.3
Total of Answer = Yes	**3253**	**100**	**1129**	**100**	**2124**	**100**

The responses on students' HE funding sources (Table I.6.35) show that family support is the most common source of financing. About 64.8% report that fees are paid entirely by their family, 9.5% receive partial support from family, and 14.2% use scholarships; smaller shares mention loans (1.1%), jobs (2.2%), or freeships (7.3%). Thus, a majority of students report relying on parental income, with smaller shares using scholarships, savings, or loans. This indicates that private household income remains central to meeting the costs of undergraduate study.

The data on funding sources across institutions (Table I.6.35) show similar broad patterns, though with slight differences. Among university students, 78.4% rely entirely on family support compared with 57.6% in government colleges, while freeships are much more common in government colleges (11.0%) than in universities (0.3%). This suggests that government college students draw on a more varied mix of financial arrangements, including scholarships and fee waivers.

Table I.6.36: Availing of Reservation During Admission

Options	Total Valid Responses		State Universities		Government Colleges	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Yes	1178	41.9	439	39.8	739	43.3
No	1632	58.1	664	60.2	968	56.7
Total	**2810**	**100**	**1103**	**100**	**1707**	**100**

The data on reservation use during admission (Table I.6.36) shows that a substantial proportion of students benefited from reservation provisions. About 41.9% reported using the reservation system at the time of admission, while 58.1% did not. This indicates that reservation continues to be an important pathway for entry into HE for many students in the sample.

The data on reservation use across institution types (Table I.6.36) shows largely similar patterns in universities and government colleges. Among university students, 39.8% availed reservation system for gaining admission, compared with 43.3% in government colleges. This suggests that reservation mechanisms are used across both types of institutions with only modest variations.

Table I.6.37: Current Primary Occupation of Students

Options	Total Valid Responses		State Universities		Government Colleges	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Full time student not working	2289	73.9	1013	90.1	1276	64.6
Employed part-time	189	6.1	50	4.4	139	7.0
Helping in family business	127	4.1	18	1.6	109	5.5
Helping on farm work	162	5.2	7	0.6	155	7.9
Helping in domestic household work	206	6.6	17	1.5	189	9.6
Conducting tuition classes	125	4.0	19	1.7	106	5.4
Total	**3098**	**100**	**1124**	**100**	**1974**	**100**

The data on primary occupation of students (Table I.6.37) shows that most identify as full-time students without employment. About 73.9% report studying full-time, while smaller shares

mention part-time work (6.1%), helping in family businesses (4.1%), farm work (5.2%), domestic work (6.6%), or conducting tuition classes (4.0%). This indicates that most students are primarily studying full-time.

The data on primary occupation of students by institution type (Table I.6.37) shows clear differences between the two groups. Among university students, 90.1% report being full-time students compared with 64.6% in government colleges, while engagement in domestic work, farm work, or part-time work (family businesses) is more common among college students. This suggests that government college students more often combine study with work or household responsibilities.

Table I.6.38: Persons Who Encouraged/Motivated Students to Apply for HE – Overall

Options	N	%
Mother	2188	17.7
Father	2199	17.7
Sister	1125	9.1
Brother	812	6.6
Maternal grandmother	307	2.5
Maternal grandfather	265	2.1
Paternal grandmother	262	2.1
Paternal grandfather	218	1.8
Maternal aunt	261	2.1
Maternal uncle	270	2.2
Paternal aunt	218	1.8
Paternal uncle	248	2.0
Cousin/s	401	3.2
Schoolteacher/s	470	3.8
University/college teacher/s	294	2.4
Friends	592	4.8
Senior students	259	2.1
Neighbours	189	1.5
Coaching tutor/s	211	1.7
Yourself	1601	12.9
Total	**12390**	**100**

The data on encouragement to apply for HE (Table I.6.38) shows that most students relied on close family members for motivation. Mothers and fathers were mentioned equally often (17.7% each), followed by sisters (9.1%) and brothers (6.6%). This indicates that immediate family support played the strongest role in shaping students' initial interest in pursuing HE.

Table I.6.39: Persons Who Encouraged/Motivated Students to Apply for HE – By SUs and Government Colleges

Option	State Universities		Government Colleges	
	N	%	N	%
Mother	835	16.3	1353	18.6
Father	829	16.2	1370	18.9
Sister/s (sibling)	402	7.8	723	10.0
Brother/s (sibling)	284	5.5	528	7.3
Maternal grandmother	149	2.9	158	2.2
Maternal grandfather	114	2.2	151	2.1
Paternal grandmother	109	2.1	153	2.1
Paternal grandfather	84	1.6	134	1.8
Maternal aunt/s	118	2.3	143	2.0
Maternal uncle/s	121	2.4	149	2.1
Paternal aunt/s	100	1.9	118	1.6
Paternal uncle/s	115	2.2	133	1.8
Cousin/s	209	4.1	192	2.6
Schoolteacher/s	217	4.2	253	3.5
College/university teacher/s	125	2.4	169	2.3
Friend/s	274	5.3	318	4.4
Senior student/s	127	2.5	132	1.8
Neighbour/s	86	1.7	103	1.4
Coaching tutor/s	106	2.1	105	1.4
Yourself	726	14.2	875	12.1
Total of Answer = Yes	**5130**	**100**	**7260**	**100**

Across institution types, data on sources of motivation (Table I.6.39) show broadly similar patterns, with students from both types of institutions drawing most motivation from their parents. Among university students, 16.3% named their mothers and 16.2% their fathers, compared with 18.6% and 18.9% respectively in government colleges. This suggests that parental encouragement is a consistent influence across both institutional settings.

Table I.6.40: Involvement in Choosing Undergraduate College/University – Overall

Options	N	%
Mother	1739	20.6
Father	1850	21.9
Sister	886	10.5
Brother	550	6.5
Maternal grandmother	76	0.9
Maternal grandfather	73	0.9
Paternal grandmother	80	0.9
Paternal grandfather	79	0.9
Maternal aunt	84	1.0
Maternal uncle	105	1.2
Paternal aunt	67	0.8
Paternal uncle	104	1.2
Cousin/s	203	2.4
Schoolteacher/s	190	2.2
University/college teacher/s	146	1.7
Friends	376	4.4
Senior students	111	1.3
Neighbours	77	0.9
Coaching tutor/s	80	0.9
Yourself	1580	18.7
Total	**8456**	**100**

The data (Table I.6.40) on who helped students choose their college or university show that parents again feature prominently as decision-making supports. Fathers (21.9%) and mothers (20.6%) were most often involved, followed by sisters (10.5%) and brothers (6.5%). This suggests that family members not only motivate students to pursue HE but also actively participate in guiding their institutional choices.

Table I.6.41: Involvement in Choosing Undergraduate College/University – By SUs and Government Colleges

Option	State Universities		Government Colleges	
	N	%	N	%
Mother	675	20.7	1064	20.5
Father	714	21.9	1136	21.9
Sister/s (sibling)	311	9.5	575	11.1
Brother/s (sibling)	178	5.5	372	7.2
Maternal grandmother	20	0.6	56	1.1
Maternal grandfather	18	0.6	55	1.1
Paternal grandmother	22	0.7	58	1.1
Paternal grandfather	24	0.7	55	1.1
Maternal aunt/s	26	0.8	58	1.1
Maternal uncle/s	46	1.4	59	1.1
Paternal aunt/s	22	0.7	45	0.9
Paternal uncle/s	42	1.3	62	1.2
Cousin/s	103	3.2	100	1.9
Schoolteacher/s	78	2.4	112	2.2
College/university teacher/s	47	1.4	99	1.9
Friend/s	146	4.5	230	4.4
Senior student/s	45	1.4	66	1.3
Neighbour/s	25	0.8	52	1.0
Coaching tutor/s	34	1.0	46	0.9
Yourself	684	21.0	896	17.2
Total of Answer = Yes	**3260**	**100**	**5196**	**100**

The data (Table I.6.41) on decision-making support across institution types shows very similar involvement from parents in both settings. Mothers were involved for 20.7% of university students and 20.5% of college students, while fathers were cited by 21.9% of students in both groups. This indicates little difference between universities and colleges in terms of who supports students during the HEI selection process.

Table I.6.42: Involvement in Choosing Undergraduate Course/Subject – Overall

Options	N	%
Mother	944	15.8
Father	1056	17.7
Sister	766	12.9
Brother	445	7.5
Maternal grandmother	34	0.6
Maternal grandfather	38	0.6
Paternal grandmother	42	0.7
Paternal grandfather	41	0.7
Maternal aunt	58	1.0
Maternal uncle	68	1.1
Paternal aunt	44	0.7
Paternal uncle	65	1.1
Cousin/s	149	2.5
Schoolteacher/s	159	2.7
University/college teacher/s	120	2.0
Friends	275	4.6
Senior students	92	1.5
Neighbours	53	0.9
Coaching tutor/s	73	1.2
Yourself	1437	24.1
Total	**5959**	**100**

The data (Table I.6.42) on who was involved in choosing the subject of study shows that parents played the largest role in helping students decide their course. Fathers (17.7%) and mothers (15.8%) were most frequently mentioned, followed by sisters (12.9%) and brothers (7.5%). This indicates that subject choice, like institutional choice, is strongly shaped by immediate family members.

Table I.6.43: Involvement in Choosing Undergraduate Course/Subject – By SUs and Government Colleges

Option	State Universities		Government Colleges	
	N	%	N	%
Mother	367	15.9	577	15.8
Father	434	18.8	622	17.1
Sister/s (sibling)	261	11.3	505	13.8
Brother/s (sibling)	148	6.4	297	8.1
Maternal grandmother	7	0.3	27	0.7
Maternal grandfather	10	0.4	28	0.8
Paternal grandmother	12	0.5	30	0.8
Paternal grandfather	15	0.6	26	0.7
Maternal aunt/s	18	0.8	40	1.1
Maternal uncle/s	29	1.3	39	1.1
Paternal aunt/s	13	0.6	31	0.8
Paternal uncle/s	25	1.1	40	1.1
Cousin/s	64	2.8	85	2.3
Schoolteacher/s	54	2.3	105	2.9
College/university teacher/s	42	1.8	78	2.1
Friend/s	98	4.2	177	4.9
Senior student/s	38	1.6	54	1.5
Neighbour/s	16	0.7	37	1.0
Coaching tutor/s	24	1.0	49	1.3
Yourself	636	27.5	801	22.0
Total of Answer = Yes	**2311**	**100**	**3648**	**100**

The data (Table I.6.43) on who was involved in deciding the subject across institution types shows very similar patterns for university and government college students. Fathers were involved for 18.8% of university students and 17.1% of government colleges, while mothers were involved for 15.9% of university students and 15.8% of government college students. This suggests that, irrespective of institution type, students rely on the same close family networks

when choosing their subject of study. Thus, the data shows that subject choice is a family-influenced decision for most students, with parents playing the most consistent role. Involvement in decision-making patterns on subject choice is almost identical across universities and government colleges, indicating that family involvement in academic decision-making is widespread and not shaped by the type of institution students enter.

Student interviews provided a more detailed picture of the educational trajectories of students when asked about their journey to enrolment.

Within SU student interviews, insights aligned with the survey's emphasis on self-reliance and parental involvement in subject decisions. Students like Mia and Nieranjnn (SU, Kerala), and Rohit and Aadishri (SU, Maharashtra) confirmed choosing an SU with parental guidance and their own research. Jimin's (SU, Kerala) and Ram's (SU, Maharashtra) cases illustrated significant parental involvement, particularly given their highly educated background, combined with self-research. Dhyan (SU, Kerala) highlighted self-research alongside advice from his elder brother, and Ram (SU, Maharashtra) particularly highlighted the role of an uncle, emphasising the potential of other family members. This was especially apparent in the story of Drishti (SU, Maharashtra), who had their programme suggested to them by a sister who was studying at the same institution in which Drishti ultimately enrolled, noting,

> I had a discussion with my sister and family. My sister suggested the [recommended] course since she was also studying it. There was no opposition from home. My sister, father, and the whole family encouraged me to pursue this course.

Unni (SU, Kerala) noted self-selection based on programme interest, validated by teachers. Likewise, Adinath (SU, Maharashtra) had their programme suggested to them by teachers, and Rohit (SU, Maharashtra) noted: 'I was encouraged to choose this course by my father and a local teacher who informed me about the university and the course'. Ram also noted 'I was also informed about this course by a private class teacher, who had initially discussed it with my uncle', highlighting the involvement of multiple stakeholders in the decision. These accounts demonstrate how students' interests, aligned with career prospects and family/teacher validation, informed their subject choices, reinforcing the survey finding of high self-involvement.

There were exceptions to the general finding of support and motivation leading to smooth enrolment. One female student (SU, Assam) discussed how she was opposed by her whole family to pursue HE and shamed also for participating in National Cadet Corps (NCC) and in Scout and Guide camps. Her own father was not in support of her pursuits, although her mother supported her throughout. She persisted and selected a subject that she graded well in. She said that, later, her father too realised that she should be allowed to study. This shows that not all students are easily able to pursue subjects based on passion for the subject. Similarly, one student (SU, Assam) mentioned that she was interested in studying Women's Studies through motivation of a sibling's friend and a longstanding zeal she felt she had to do something to uplift women's position in society, but that she faced opposition as it is not a subject commonly pursued. She noted that due to her family's general support, she proceeded with the choice anyway. Aadishri (SU, Maharashtra) also experienced some uncertainty from others in their passionate pursuit of a less known subject, noting that their interest in the food industry, and a programme introducing them to food technologies, influenced them to pursue the field. They noted that their family generally supported the decision, but that others suggested they study the better-known engineering programmes instead.

There were other students who talked about initially wishing to pursue other options before landing on their current study path. One student had taken admission at another SU but could not do well in the subject, so an FM advised her to pursue a newly opened programme at Assam SU on which she was ultimately accepted. Likewise, one student (SU, Maharashtra) stated that their family initially wanted them to enter the medical field but weak English and low scores in Entrance Exams meant that they did not qualify. Another discussed initially wanting to enrol in the Merchant Navy but not being able to clear the entrance, so they took admission at Assam SU based on the suggestion of a relative as a backup option.

There were also examples of students receiving general support but limited guidance, for example, Vihan (SU, Maharashtra) discussed taking a BA 'because no one provided [them] guidance on what course to pursue', but ultimately decided their interest was not there, so looked for information on alternative courses online and found the course that they ultimately enrolled in. They highlighted: 'No one told me about this course; I found it myself through an advertisement and did some research. I found the course interesting, so I decided to enrol'. On a similar note, Adinath, also Maharashtra SU, discussed how they learned about the course

from teachers and then did their own research, noting: ‘My family supported my education from the beginning, providing information about other courses, but no one objected to my choice.’ This highlights the different layers of guidance that may be provided. Perceived employability was mentioned by students in discussion of their choices, for example Rohit (SU, Maharashtra) stated: ‘Since my family values education, they advised me to pursue a skill-development-related course’.

Interview data corroborated family funding as the primary source, with specific cases like Mia and Unni (SU, Kerala) indicating that scholarships supplemented costs for some students, aligning with the survey's finding of a minority receiving such support. During the interview, some students (e.g. S.J. and Unni, both SU, Kerala) reported availing caste-based reservations, while others (e.g. Mia, from SU, Kerala) mentioned a merit-based scholarship. Many reported not availing reservations, consistent with the survey's majority who did not. These interviews confirm that affirmative action policies and scholarships support access for a segment of SU students, although most rely on non-reservation-based entry. Finances appeared to be a factor in the decision-making process for some, for example Ram (SU, Maharashtra) noted: ‘I chose this university because the course was not available elsewhere, and the fees here were more affordable. Though private universities offered the course, they were expensive.’

Interview data strongly indicated that for many students interviewed, not progressing to HE was generally not considered a viable option. Students like Dhyan, Unni, Jimin, and Nieranjnn (all SU, Kerala) explicitly stated they did not consider alternatives, viewing HE as essential for career advancement and aligning with personal goals or family expectations. Others (e.g. S.J. and Mia, both SU, Kerala) mentioned briefly considering not progressing due to financial constraints but ultimately pursued HE with family and/or scholarship support, illustrating that while challenges exist, the default trajectory for most in this group was towards HE. This aligns with the survey data showing a vast majority focused solely on being a student.

The choice of which institution to study at, appeared to mix practical and personal reasons. Rohit (SU, Maharashtra) discussed: ‘I chose this university because it is near my home, and it offers good hostel and library facilities’. Drishti, from the same institution, alongside noting positive experiences of her sister, said: ‘Everything here is practical, with regular lectures, so I

chose this university'. Adinath, also Maharashtra SU, discussed in more detail a process of exploration and consideration of where would be a suitable place for them to study:

> I chose this university because its structure feels similar to a local institution, and its environment aligns with my rural background. I quickly adjusted and felt at home here. I also searched for information about the university, department, and course on YouTube and asked friends living nearby to visit the department.

Others discussed finding out about the institution through newspapers (SU, Assam) and through neighbours (also SU, Assam). Aadishri (SU, Maharashtra) mentioned that their mother and uncle recommended the institution due to its reputation, and that their uncle in particular 'specifically told [them] to prioritise this university…because the quality of education here is good'. Overall, a combination of a desirable course and well facilitated campus were suggested as guiding motivation.

Overall, participants cited pursuing passions alongside encouragement and family support, reinforcing the survey finding that immediate family, particularly parents, played a crucial role, even in families with varying educational backgrounds.

Discussions with students enrolled at government colleges were generally similar to findings elsewhere, with some further insights on different experiences.

Interviews indicated a clear inclination towards continuing education and generally not considering alternatives to HE (e.g. Nasim, Anna, Maeve, all from Government College In-Depth (GCID), Kerala). Students' narratives consistently highlighted HE as the expected path for career advancement and personal fulfilment, often driven by parental and societal expectations. Interviewees noted societal expectations (Vasu, from GCID, Kerala) and teacher guidance reinforcing HE as the expected route (Tomy, from GCID, Kerala) as a motivator for pursuing education, adding another layer to the influencing factors. This is exemplified by the statement of Tom (GCID, Maharashtra) who noted: 'There was an expectation and I also wanted to learn more. It was my decision, and to take admission for HE was an automatic decision'; this emphasises a taken-for-granted assumption indicated by many participants.

Students frequently cited parents (e.g. Sachu and Diya, both from GCID, Kerala), emphasising that parental encouragement focused on securing good jobs and a better life. The level of involvement varied. Harshali (GCID, Maharashtra) stated:

> All my decisions regarding my education were taken by my father. Because I came from a background where girls are not taught much. My father and my teacher were involved in choosing Science faculty… I did not go to engineering because of high fees, and also I had less interest in it.

This indicates strong parental involvement. Siblings and cousins, as mentioned by Diya and Malu (GCID, Kerala), and Rahul (GCID, Maharashtra) also provided influence and served as examples. Rahul stated: 'My brother was educated and got a good job because of his education, but he had full expectations that something would happen in his career'. Teachers were noted by Malu and Tomy (GCID, Kerala) for guiding students on the importance of HE.

Self-motivation was also prominent in interviews, with students like Nasim and L. Messi (GCID, Kerala) expressing personal ambition and a desire for fulfilment and employment.

There were some who experienced opposition, for example, a female student at Assam GCID discussed how it was her childhood passion and dream to pursue HE, and although her family were supportive, she had experience of neighbours posing opposition. Another female student at the same institution had a similar experience with neighbours.

In general, the interview data support the survey's indication of a diverse motivational landscape, where both internal drives and external support from family, educators, and peers contributed to the decision to pursue HE. This is exemplified by Yuki (GCID, Maharashtra) who stated: 'When there was a discussion at home, after class 10th, I met some teachers for guidance, according to which the family members gave me full freedom that I could take it according to my choice'. This shows how different points of guidance could come together but ultimately the final choice typically lies with the students.

In terms of subject choice, journeys were again influenced by a range of factors but largely supported the survey finding of high student autonomy, with many students citing personal interest as the primary driver. Personal passions and career ambitions were cited (e.g. Sachu,

Nasim, and Anna, all from GCID, Kerala; multiple from GCID, Assam; and Rahul, from GCID, Maharashtra).

Parental and family influence were again noted by some students. One student (GCID, Assam) had initially wanted to study Medicine but was encouraged by his father to study History. Shivansh (GCID, Maharashtra) mentioned a family employment background and noted that 'it's like an automatic selected field'. Siblings and cousins also provided input, often based on their own experiences, (e.g. Diya and Malu, both from GCID, Kerala). The interviews demonstrate how personal interest often initiated subject choice, which was then discussed or validated within a supportive network including parents, teachers, and peers, aligning with the survey's findings of self-direction alongside broader influences.

Employability and market demands were also present in discussions, sometimes in combination with recommendations from teachers (e.g. Nasim and Tomy, both from GCID, Kerala) and parents (e.g. Malu, from GCID, Kerala) based on presumed job prospects. Others utilised their own research, for example Nikki (GCID, Maharashtra) discussed how their teacher initially made them aware of opportunities and they then watched YouTube videos about the various opportunities in the field.

Again, there were instances of some level of opposition. For example, a student at Assam GCID discussed how, although his father supported his subject decision, he still received opposition from his father's friends who were considered to have a say in educational choices, although he ultimately stood by his decision and enrolled.

When selecting a location of study, interviews reinforced the key roles of parents and self in institution selection, while providing specific reasons for choosing GCID. Some made independent decisions based on research and preferences (e.g. Anna and Vasua, both from GCID, Kerala; Rahul, from GCID, Maharashtra). One student (GCID, Assam) noted being very attracted by the website, then visiting the campus before admission and liking the greenery and serenity, as well as feeling inspired by one of the FMs in his chosen subject. Convenience of location were also highlighted (GCID, Assam; GCID, Maharashtra), for example Rahul noted: 'I came across information that [GCID] has all the facilities, it is nearby, it has good teachers etc., and plus bus stand and railway station are also near'.

Parents were discussed as influencing the decision and being persuaded by status, affordability, and proximity (Sachu, Maeve, and Diya, all from GCID, Kerala). The emphasis in interviews was on parents prioritising HE for job prospects and affordability as a key factor in choosing a government college, indirectly supporting the importance of financial considerations. Teachers were influential for Nasim and Tomy, recommending Kerala GCID for its academic reputation and unique courses. Siblings and cousins, as seen with Diya and Malu (GCID, Kerala), also provided recommendations, as did uncles (e.g., Tom and Yuki, both from GCID, Maharashtra), sometimes based on their own experiences with the HEI. For example, Yuki stated: 'My uncle lives here near the college, two to three kilometers away, and his two sons were educated in [GCID]. He told me a lot of information about it', suggesting multiple information points providing insight.

As was found in SUs, some students had changed paths along the way. One student at Assam GCID discussed initially wanting to study elsewhere but receiving inadequate marks. Another student, also at Assam GCID, discussed being uncertain about what to study next, but FMs had visited his school and discussed a new subject with him, which he ultimately decided to pursue after persuading his parents. He noted that he was motivated by the presentation of the FM at his school.

The interviews underscore that, despite socio-economic backgrounds that might necessitate pursuing employment prospects, the prevailing perspective among GCID students was that HE was the primary and necessary step after senior secondary school. Decisions ultimately fell on students in the majority of cases, with multiple trusted contacts providing guidance along the way.

6.4.3.1 Summary

Overall, this section shows that students are enrolled in a diverse set of undergraduate programmes, though general degrees continue to dominate, especially in government colleges. Universities attract students into more specialised or professional programmes, including integrated courses and engineering. Most institutions in the sample are located in urban areas, particularly universities, while government college students are more evenly spread across rural, urban, and semi-urban settings, as these institutions are distributed accordingly. The analysis

suggests that many students used the reservation policy to gain admission, while a majority of students reported that their fees were entirely paid by family. These patterns highlight the varied institutional contexts and pathways through which students enter HE.

Across both qualitative and quantitative data, students were largely able to make their own decisions in their educational journeys, with the guidance of others and self-directed research (primarily online). Passions for subjects and presumed employability were cited, as were pragmatic choices relating to location and cost. There were also singular but interesting examples presented in the qualitative data, where paths have diverged or been guided specifically by events such as failure to enrol elsewhere or an inspiring individual.

This section shows that encouragement and support in decision-making regarding HE choices come primarily from students' immediate families. When guidance was offered, parents are the most frequently mentioned sources of both motivation and guidance, followed by siblings who contribute to a smaller but still visible extent. These patterns appear consistently across both SUs and government colleges. Other sources of support—such as relatives, neighbours, teachers, and friends—do appear in student responses, but only in small proportions. Their limited presence suggests that students occasionally receive help from people outside their families, but these are not the main influences. What stands out most clearly is the near absence of FMs in the decision-making pathways described by students. Very few students reported receiving encouragement, advice, or guidance from college or university teachers when applying for HE or choosing their institution or subject. Thus, these findings highlight that students mostly navigate their options and make decisions about HE with largely family-based information, rather than structured guidance from schools or HEIs. The minimal involvement of FMs underscores a gap in institutional outreach and student guidance at the pre-entry stage.

6.4.4. Involvement of FMs in HE Access

Table I.6.44: Faculty Role in Undergraduate College Choice

Options	Total Valid Responses		State Universities		Government Colleges	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Yes	404	14.1	139	12.4	265	15.2
No	2462	85.9	979	87.6	1483	84.8
Total	**2866**	**100**	**1118**	**100**	**1748**	**100**

The data on faculty involvement in students' choice of undergraduate college (Table I.6.44) show that only a small minority received any guidance from FMs. Just 14.1% of students reported that an FM played a role, compared with 85.9% who did not. This indicates that faculty involvement in pre-admission guidance is limited for most students.

Across institution types (Table I.6.44), the data show an overall pattern of low faculty involvement. Among university students, a lower proportion (12.4%) reported faculty help, compared with 15.2% in government colleges. This suggests that, while slightly more college students report such support, faculty involvement remains limited across both settings.

Table I.6.45: Connection with FMs

Option	Total Valid Responses		State Universities		Government Colleges	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Neighbour	66	12.1	16	9.5	50	13.3
Family Member	108	19.8	49	29.0	59	15.7
Family connection	71	13.0	32	18.9	39	10.4
In a faith-based setting e.g., mosque, temple	9	1.7	1	0.6	8	2.1
In a community group	17	3.1	3	1.8	14	3.7
Through Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) work	8	1.5	0	0.0	8	2.1
Through local politics	5	0.9	1	0.6	4	1.1
They were also working as a tuition teacher / in a coaching institute	30	5.5	12	7.1	18	4.8
Met them when I visited their college/university	156	28.6	43	25.4	113	30.1
Met them when they visited my school	25	4.6	5	3.0	20	5.3
Met them when they visited another community setting	9	1.7	1	0.6	8	2.1
Met them during the admissions process at their college/university	41	7.5	6	3.6	35	9.3
Total of Answer = Yes	**545**	**100**	**169**	**100**	**376**	**100**

The data (Table I.6.45) on how students came into contact with FMs before admission show that connections are infrequent and occur through a range of informal channels. The most common were visits to colleges/universities (28.6%), followed by roles of family members (19.8%) or broader family connections (13.0%). Smaller shares met faculty through neighbours, community groups, coaching, or local initiatives. This suggests that students' interactions with faculty were limited and often happened only when they visited the institution.

The data across institutions (6.45) shows some variation in how students came into contact with FMs. University students most often connected through family members (29.0%), while government college students most often met faculty during institution visits (30.6%). These differences point to varied forms of informal contact, but overall, the frequency of these connections remains low.

Table I.6.46: Stage of Involvement

Option	Total Valid Responses		State Universities		Government Colleges	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
During the process of making choices about HE	170	37.9	73	46.2	97	33.4
During admissions	278	62.1	85	53.8	193	66.6
Total of Answer = Yes	**448**	**100**	**158**	**100**	**290**	**100**

At the stage of involvement, that is, when students received help, guidance was more common at the point of admissions (62.1%) than during earlier decision-making (37.9%). This indicates that many students first receive assistance only when the application process begins, rather than during earlier stages of exploring courses and institutions (Table I.6.46).

Across institution types (Table I.6.46), the data shows some differences in timing. University students received slightly more help while making choices (46.2%) compared with college students (33.4%), whereas help during admissions was higher for college students (66.6%). This suggests that government college students rely more on support at the final stage of entry.

Table I.6.47: Nature of Involvement

Option	Total Valid Responses		State Universities		Government Colleges	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Advice on whether to go for HE or other options	134	18.3	46	16.0	88	19.9
Choice of which colleges/universities to apply to	114	15.6	42	14.6	72	16.3
Choice of course/subject	179	24.5	86	29.9	93	21.0
About the admissions process	107	14.6	46	16.0	61	13.8
About covering tuition expenses / funding options	16	2.2	6	2.1	10	2.3
About HE entry exams preparation	38	5.2	17	5.9	21	4.7
About special admissions programmes/processes e.g., reservations	31	4.2	8	2.8	23	5.2
Checking application form / other documents	38	5.2	15	5.2	23	5.2
Choice of which colleges/universities to enrol in if selected in more than one	32	4.4	11	3.8	21	4.7
Accompanying for a visit to the college/university where they worked	24	3.3	5	1.7	19	4.3
Accompanying for a visit to another college/university	18	2.5	6	2.1	12	2.7
Total of Answer = Yes	**731**	**100**	**288**	**100**	**443**	**100**

The data (Table I.6.47) on the types of help students received shows that the most common support relates to choosing a course or subject (24.5%). This is followed by advice on enrolling in HE (18.3%), choosing a college or university (15.6%), and guidance about the admissions process (14.6%). A smaller proportion of help involved exam preparation (5.2%), checking application forms (5.2%), special admission programmes (4.2%), and funding options (2.2%). This indicates that support is concentrated around decisions of choosing a course, with more specialised forms of assistance being less common.

The data on involvement across institution types (Table I.6.47) shows some differences. University students most often received help with choosing a course (29.9%), with admission process advice (16.0%), and with deciding whether to pursue HE (16.0%). For government college students, the most common areas were advice on enrolling in HE (19.9%), choosing courses (21.0%), and selecting colleges or universities (16.3%). Smaller areas—such as checking application forms, funding options, or accompanying visits—appear in low proportions across both groups. These patterns show overlapping but not identical areas of support.

Table I.6.48: Pre-enrolment Activities of Students Before Enrolling in College/University – Overall

Options	N	%
Visited the college/university	1578	30.0
Visited another college/university	794	15.1
Discussed options with other staff	311	5.9
Explored various online platforms, and your current college/university website	408	7.8
Referenced the college/university brochure	323	6.2
Watched informative videos on YouTube	472	9.0
Used social media platforms e.g., Facebook, Instagram	322	6.1
Read about college/university in newspapers	274	5.2
Listened to radio	37	0.7
Visited Common Service Centres (CSCs)	67	1.3
Consulted with NGOs	58	1.1
Visited College Fairs	177	3.4
Obtained information from the local administration	99	1.9
None of the above	332	6.3
Total	**5252**	**100**

The data (Table I.6.48) on pre-enrolment activities shows that students used a range of ways to find information before applying to college or university. The most common pre-enrolment activity undertaken by students included visiting the college or university campus (30.0%),

followed by visiting another institution to compare options (15.1%), watching informative videos on YouTube (9.0%), and exploring online platforms or institutional websites (7.8%). A smaller proportion of students consulted brochures (6.2%), administrative staff (5.9%), or social media (6.1%), while very few used traditional media such as newspapers (5.2%), radio (0.7%), or sources like NGOs (1.1%) and local administration (1.9%). Notably, 6.3% reported not engaging in any pre-enrolment activity. This suggests that early engagement is limited and often driven by students' own initiative, with campus visits and informal digital sources playing a bigger role than formal guidance channels.

Table I.6.49: Pre-enrolment Activities of Students Before Enrolling in College/University – By SUs and Government Colleges

Option	State Universities		Government Colleges	
	N	%	N	%
Visited the college/university, i.e., physically stepped to the campus you pursued	524	22.2	1054	36.4
Visited other college/universities to compare options	303	12.9	491	17.0
Discussed options for HE study with other college/university staff (e.g., administrative staff)	94	4.0	217	7.5
Explored various online platforms, such as College Dunia, as well as your current college/university website	254	10.8	154	5.3
Referenced the college/university brochures for detailed information	224	9.5	99	3.4
Watched informative videos on YouTube related to college/university	324	13.8	148	5.1
Used social media platforms (e.g., Facebook, Instagram) to gather information and insights about college/university	204	8.7	118	4.1
Read about college/university in newspapers	183	7.8	91	3.1
Listened to radio FM providing information about HEIs	13	0.6	24	0.8
Visited Common service centres (e.g., Akshaya Kendra/e-Kendras, Saral, etc.) to inquire about HE options	17	0.7	50	1.7
Consulted with representatives or designated contact persons from various NGOs for advice related to HE study	31	1.3	27	0.9
Visited College Fairs	40	1.7	137	4.7
Obtained information from the local administration, such as Gram Panchayat, Nagar Panchayat, Village Administrative Officers, Municipal Councils/ Corporations and District Administration	28	1.2	71	2.5
None of the above	117	5.0	215	7.4
Total of Answer = Yes	**2356**	**100**	**2896**	**100**

The data across institution types (6.49) shows meaningful differences in how university and college students sought pre-enrolment information. Government college students were more likely to visit their chosen campus (36.4%) than university students (22.2%), and more often visited other institutions to compare options (17.0% vs. 12.9%). University students, on the other hand, reported higher use of online platforms (10.8% vs. 5.3%), brochures (9.5% vs. 3.4%), YouTube content (13.8% vs. 5.1%), and social media (8.7% vs. 4.1%). College fair attendance was also higher among government college students (4.7% vs. 1.7%). These patterns of channels of information suggest that university students rely more heavily on digital and structured information sources, while government college students depend more on physically visiting institutions and using locally available channels.

Interviews and Focus Group Discussions (FGD) provided more detailed insights into the students' personal experiences with, and perceptions of, FM involvement in HE access, with some differences suggested between those enrolled at SUs and those at government colleges. Again, there was a diversity of experiences, with some indicating significant involvement and others suggesting minimal or no influence. The nature of the involvement ranged from direct course recommendations to general inspiration about prestigious institutions, with some students receiving no faculty guidance. This diversity reflects the uneven but potentially impactful role faculty played in guiding students toward their undergraduate programmes.

Within the SUs, some students (e.g. Mia, SJ, Jimin, and Nieranjnn, all from SU, Kerala; Ram, from SU, Maharashtra) reported faculty involvement when asked. The extent of faculty influence varied, with some students receiving personalised advice while others were inspired by general discussions about HE opportunities. Some (e.g. Dhyan and Unni, both from SU, Kerala; Shiksha, SU, Haryana; Rohit, Aadishri, Drishti and Vihan, all from SU, Maharashtra), reported no faculty involvement, instead relying on personal and familial resources.

Direct course recommendations were a key form of faculty involvement for several students. For instance, Mia was advised by an FM about a specific course at Kerala SU after expressing interest in studying abroad or pursuing a specific programme which was unavailable at the institution. The FM's advice against self-financing courses due to cost, coupled with Mia's personal research, led her to enrol in the course.

Prior to enrolling for undergraduate study, students engaged in several activities, often influenced by faculty guidance. SJ (SU, Kerala) attended tuition classes in her village and participated in Common University Entrance Test (CUET) orientation classes at various centres, which provided syllabus coverage and motivational support. Drishti (SU, Maharashtra) attended private classes where the teacher advised on programme selection.

There was also evidence of a mix of FM advice and personal research or discussions with others to inform the choice, demonstrating a multifaceted approach to decision making. Mia (SU, Kerala) conducted personal research after faculty advice; meanwhile a student at Assam SU suggested that they were guided by an FM in every step of choosing their HE options, indicating different levels of guidance when advice is given.

Family members who were also FMs were mentioned multiple times, suggesting the duality of their role as relation and HE practitioner may have made their input more significant. Priya (SU, Kerala) learned about the course through her mother, a university staff member. Likewise, a student at Assam SU stated that they were entirely guided by their uncle, who was an FM at a university, stating that they received complete guidance from them. Another student, also from Assam SU, discussed a cousin who is an FM at a college who inspired and helped them to get admission. Similarly, Rohit (SU, Maharashtra) discussed a family acquaintance who taught at another college and suggested a specific course that they felt would be beneficial, which then led to Rohit going to the university to gain further information.

Although direct engagement, such as through campus visits, were not explicitly mentioned, these activities—consulting faculty, attending orientation programmes, and gathering information from family or media—were critical in shaping students' enrolment decisions.

Interview and FGD data strongly reinforced the finding of limited direct FM involvement in influencing students' initial enrolment decisions at GCIDs. Students rarely cited FMs as primary influencers in choosing their programmes or institutions. Instead, decisions to join GCID were predominantly driven by factors such as the college's status as a government institution, the availability of specific desired courses, and logistical considerations like proximity and affordability. This is exemplified by the statement: 'When I saw that it was a government college, I thought it was a good one, so I gave the first option' (L. Messi, from GCID, Kerala), exemplifying

how institutional reputation superseded direct FM influence in the decision-making process for many. Likewise, convenience of location was also mentioned as influencing decisions (GCID, Assam).

Students rarely mentioned FMs as sources of pre-enrolment information; instead, information was typically sought from schoolteachers, family, peers, or online resources. Interviewees highlighted a lack of awareness of the programmes conducted by the college or its faculty to attract students, for example, Tomy's (GCID, Kerala) experience of locals being unaware of the college's existence until he got admission further supports the absence of proactive and visible outreach. In contrast, several students from Assam GCID were guided by FMs of their institution, particularly in terms of subject selection.

Interview and FGD data at both Kerala and Maharashtra strongly reinforced the survey finding of limited pre-enrolment activities, particularly physical college visits. Students' narratives indicated that they did not typically visit GCID before enrolling. L. Messi's (GCID, Kerala) account of using Google Maps after admission highlights the challenges and the rare occurrence of planned visits before admission. This was not the case, however, at Assam, where, for example, four students in the first FGD mentioned meeting FMs when they visited the college before admission. They added that the FMs were helpful and provided information about subject choices and admission procedure. Furthermore, some pre-enrolment activities were brought to the students through FMs, for example, a student at Assam GCID mentioned an FM visiting their senior secondary school. In contrast, during the second FGD of Assam there was limited mentioned of FM involvement, highlighting that, even within the same institutions, experiences can vary significantly.

Instead of relying on college visits or direct FM interaction, many students relied on external sources such as schoolteachers and peers for information. They also utilised online resources to research options independently, rather than through FM-led outreach. Application decisions were often based on the college's reputation as a government institution, the availability of specific courses, and affordability, rather than engagement in pre-enrolment activities or direct interaction with college FMs. This evidence collectively supports the survey's finding that GCID students engaged in significantly fewer pre-enrolment activities, often relying on external

factors and taking no action, reflecting the limited proactive outreach from the institution and its faculty.

6.4.4.1 Summary

In summary, in this section, students report limited and largely informal contact with FMs, with most interactions occurring incidentally—such as during campus visits—or through family networks. The stage of involvement shows that guidance is more common at the admissions stage than during earlier choice-making. Data shows that students use a mix of ways to gather information before applying to college, but the level of engagement varies widely. Many rely on straightforward and easily accessible options, such as visiting the campus in person, which is especially common among government college students. University students on the other hand make greater use of online sources, brochures, and digital content, suggesting they have access to a wider range of information channels. Thus, the findings indicate that most students' pre-entry efforts are modest and largely self-initiated, pointing to gaps in structured outreach and uneven access to reliable information across different settings.

The nature of involvement of FMs indicates that support focuses on helping students make major decisions, such as course choice or whether to pursue HE, with only small proportions receiving help with funding, exam preparation, or special admissions processes. Overall, the patterns suggest that students rely on a narrow set of support channels and that structured, faculty-led guidance is largely absent during the transition to HE.

6.4.5 HE Outreach: Current and Future Opportunities

Table I.6.50: Students' Views on Guidance Needed to Attract Rural Students – Overall

Options	N	%
Advice on whether to go for HE or other choices	1519	9.4
Choice of universities/colleges	1188	7.3
Choice of course/subject	1514	9.3
Admission process	1478	9.1
Covering tuition expenses / funding options	857	5.3
Entrance exam preparation	1215	7.5
Special admissions programmes	623	3.8
Checking application form	904	5.6
Choice of which college to enrol in if selected in more than one	507	3.1
Visit to college/university	785	4.8
Advice on accommodation	608	3.8
Advice about college/university facilities, activities and provisions	1150	7.1
Campus safety	1097	6.8
Employability prospects	897	5.5
Good academic functioning	972	6.0
Transport facilities	897	5.5
Total	**16211**	**100**

The data on the kinds of guidance students believe would help attract rural students (Table I.6.50) shows a strong need for clear and basic information about HE. The most frequently mentioned needs include advice on whether to pursue HE or other options (9.4%), choice of course or subject (9.3%), details about the admission process (9.1%), and guidance on choosing colleges or universities (7.3%). Students also point to the importance of entrance exam preparation (7.5%), information about facilities and campus activities (7.1%), and campus safety (6.8%).

Practical matters such as funding options (5.3%), application checking (5.6%), and transport facilities (5.5%) receive lower but still meaningful attention. Overall, these responses suggest that students believe rural applicants would benefit most from straightforward, reliable information about courses, admissions, and institutional environments.

Table I.6.51: Students' Views on Guidance Needed to Attract Rural Students – By SUs and Government Colleges

Option	State Universities		Government Colleges	
	N	%	N	%
Advice on whether to go for HE or other options	576	8.6	943	9.9
Choice of which colleges/universities to apply to	377	5.6	811	8.5
Choice of course/subject	620	9.3	894	9.4
About the admission process	535	8.0	943	9.9
About covering tuition expenses / funding options	478	7.1	379	4.0
About HE entry exams preparation	492	7.3	723	7.6
About special admissions programmes/processes e.g., reservations	279	4.2	344	3.6
Checking application form / other documents	297	4.4	607	6.4
Choice of which colleges/universities to enrol in if selected in more than one	192	2.9	315	3.3
Organising a visit to the college/university	340	5.1	445	4.7
Advice on accommodation	272	4.1	336	3.5
Advice about college/university facilities, activities, provisions	423	6.3	727	7.6
About campus safety and security	506	7.6	591	6.2
About employability prospects	440	6.6	457	4.8
About whether the college/university has good academic functioning	481	7.2	491	5.2
About transport facilities	392	5.9	505	5.3
Total of Answer = Yes	**6700**	**100**	**9511**	**100**

Student responses across institution types shows (Table I.6.51) very similar priorities, though with some differences. Government college students more often emphasise the need for advice on whether to pursue HE (9.9%), admissions information (9.9%), and guidance on choosing colleges/universities (8.5%). University students' views place slightly more emphasis on funding options (7.1%), campus safety and security (7.6%), employability prospects (6.6%), information regarding academic functioning (7.2%), HE entry-exam preparation (7.3%), and information about facilities, activities, and provisions (6.3%). Even with these differences, students from both types of institutions highlight the same broad areas of need, suggesting that rural students require clear, structured, and accessible information across multiple aspects of the HE decision-making process.

Table I.6.52: Students' Views on Rural Students' Comfort in Choosing this College/University

Options	Total Valid Responses		State Universities		Government Colleges	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Yes	2449	86.3	992	89.1	1457	84.4
No	390	13.7	121	10.9	269	15.6
Total	**2839**	**100**	**1113**	**100**	**1726**	**100**

The data on whether rural students would feel comfortable choosing their current institution (Table I.6.52) shows that most respondents believe rural students would feel comfortable in their college or university. Overall, 86.3% answered yes, while the rest said they did not feel comfortable choosing their current institution. Among university students, a slightly higher proportion (89.1%) felt rural students would be comfortable, compared with 84.4% in government colleges. The overall pattern is positive across both institution types, though a small section of students still felt that rural students may not be fully comfortable in these settings. This suggests that while many institutions are viewed as broadly welcoming, the experience of comfort may continue to vary for some rural students entering HE.

In interviews and focus groups, students demonstrated varying understandings of rural populations. For example, in Kerala SU, estimates about proportion of rural students ranged

from 20-30% to 70-80% across respondents. Mia reported that 16 out of 28 students in her class (approximately 57%) are from rural areas, many within her friend circle. SJ estimated 20–30% rural students, noting a majority from semi-urban areas. Unni corrected an earlier estimate, suggesting less than 50% are rural, while Jimin and Nieranjnn estimated 65–70% and 70–80%, respectively. These varying estimates confirm a significant rural student presence identified through personal interactions and class compositions, but with limited knowledge of the definite number at institution-level.

In Haryana SU, students were aware of a rural urban ratio of around 40:60. Some students hesitantly discussed how rural students were apparently known from their way of speaking and dressing, and considered (by the primarily urban students within the FGD) to remain quiet and hesitantly interact with urban students.

In terms of comfort of rural students at the HEIs, interviewees and FGD participants attributed high attraction to a variety of aspects at the HEIs including low fees, minimal ragging, supportive faculty, and good facilities (e.g., hostels and transportation). Rural students were considered to generally find SUs welcoming due to their affordable fee structure, supportive environment, and available facilities.

Dhyan and SJ (SU, Kerala) highlighted that rural students are comfortable with the current education system, low fees, and ample facilities. Mia (also SU, Kerala) emphasised the absence of discrimination or ragging, with a comfortable fee structure and overall positive atmosphere. Fee structures were also mentioned by multiple students at Assam SU, although one student noted that fees for longer programmes were a little higher which might be inconvenient for rural students.

In Assam, one student suggested that as the SU was a state institution, it gives ample opportunities so rural students were considered to be quite comfortable. A second student illustrated how Assam SU is making rural students comfortable, noting that students in the SU come from various socio-economic-cultural backgrounds and get to represent their own unique culture during the cultural programmes, which makes them feel included (this was also mentioned by another Assam SU student). Two students from Assam SU also noted that the

location of Assam SU, although in the state capital, has greenery and gives a rural feeling which might help rural students feel at home.

Amenities were also noted as aiding the comfort of rural students. Jimin (SU, Kerala) pointed to hostel facilities, transportation (including a bus from hostel to class), scholarships, and non-discriminatory teachers. Nieranjnn (also SU, Kerala) likewise praised hostel facilities, affordable fees, scholarships, well-equipped departments, libraries, labs, and supportive teachers and seniors. In contrast, at Haryana SU, the accommodation problem in terms of cost was highlighted by one student.

FMs were mentioned at Assam SU as aiding in the comfort of rural students, as it was noted that they were helpful and welcoming, and could repeat lessons or use vernacular mediums if needed to aid understanding. It was also noted that the alumni group helps rural students to connect to larger communities. FMs were also mentioned at Haryana SU, although again in terms of post-admission support introducing students to diverse academic and social activities.

At government colleges, estimates of rural student numbers was generally higher. At Kerala GCID, estimates ranged from 50% to 80%. Sachu and Malu estimated around 70% and 80% rural students, respectively, while Diya and Maeve noted over 50%, attributing this to the college's rural location, which attracts students from nearby areas. Vasu estimated 60-70%, and L. Messi confirmed a significant rural presence without a specific percentage. Students identified rural peers through social interactions and class demographics, noting that the college's proximity to rural areas and government status make it a natural choice for many. The high proportion reflects the college's accessibility to local rural communities.

Likewise in Haryana GCID, students unanimously indicated that rural numbers were more than 80%, suggesting again a higher percentage of rural population than was indicated in SUs. They mentioned that, as students were a large majority, it was unlikely that they were unwelcome at the institution, although they agreed on certain challenges faced by rural students, such as the centralised online admission.

As was found elsewhere in data from Institutional Leaders (ILs) and FMs, student participants noted that many students do not have access to computers and hence they go to Common Service Centres (CSCs) for admission applications which can cause issues. For example, Ritika

(GCID, Haryana) narrated her own story of taking help at a CSC and the person in-charge made a mistake and provided his own contact number on the form. She was told by some of her friends that she should inquire for her admission and she visited the college, only to find her name had been included in the admission list without her being updated by the system, due to this error. This was considered to be a common issue of interacting with CSCs, where students were not updated on details of their applications, found their forms were incomplete, or that documents were not all uploaded, causing issues. Thus, students suggested that FMs should visit the nearby schools and organise a workshop to mitigate the challenges and increase access to HE. Some students felt that offline admission is a good for students to interact with FMs and discuss in person the problems related to subject choice, etc.

It was recognised by students interviewed that rural students may find it harder to adapt to new environments, but that the GCIDs were often located in rural settings which meant they could easily connect to their environment (Assam, Kerala). Students expressed their feelings that the HEIs had calm and peaceful environments away from the hustle bustle of the town.

In Kerala, in sharp contrast to the high comfort levels perceived at SU, survey data from GCID revealed a divided perception regarding the comfort of rural students in choosing the institution; only 58.64% affirmed comfort, while a significant 41.36% responded negatively. This lower perceived comfort at GCID compared to SU suggests the presence of potential barriers that hinder rural student integration or comfort. Interview and FGD data provided detailed qualitative insights into the reasons behind this divided perception, centring on issues of awareness, infrastructure, and facilities.

Students like Sachu, Malu, Diya, and L. Messi pointed to the college's low visibility and lack of awareness, even among local residents, as factors that could make rural students hesitant to choose it. Furthermore, interviewees consistently highlighted significant infrastructure issues as negatively impacting comfort levels. Vasu, Maeve, and Anna specifically mentioned the lack of a proper college building, insufficient classrooms and labs, and the absence of hostel facilities, lack of transport facilities, as major deterrents, suggesting that rural students who may expect or require better facilities could experience discomfort. While affordability due to its government status was acknowledged as a positive draw for rural students with limited financial resources, the lack of adequate facilities and low visibility appear to undermine the

college's overall appeal and perceived comfort for this population. Another risk of discomfort for rural students was noted by a student at Assam GCID, who recounted their own experiences of coming from a village and struggling with English as the medium of instruction during the early periods of study, although they noted that the FMs were very considerate and would often explain the subject in both languages.

Likewise in Kerala, although concerns were raised, positive draws were also mentioned, for example Malu mentioned the presence of counselling psychologists at the college as comforting, especially to rural students. There was a strong sense across all locations of staff members being a positive influence on rural students' experience, similar to the SU data, highlighting the post-admission influence FMs could have.

Table I.6.53: Students' Perspectives on Activities Conducted by the College/University to Attract Rural Students

Options	Total Valid Responses		State Universities		Government Colleges	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Yes	1789	63.2	679	61.2	1110	64.5
No	1041	36.8	431	38.8	610	35.5
Total	**2830**	**100**	**1110**	**100**	**1720**	**100**

The data (Table I.6.53) on whether institutions undertake activities to attract rural students, along with responses on students' views, shows that nearly two-thirds of students felt such activities were taking place. About 63.2% reported that their college or university engaged in some form of outreach, while 36.8% said no. This suggests that although many students perceive outreach efforts, a substantial minority do not see any visible activity, pointing to unevenness in how these efforts are implemented or communicated.

The data across institution types (Table I.6.53) shows broadly similar perceptions among university and government college students. Among university students, 61.2% reported that their institution conducted activities for rural students, while 64.5% of government college students said the same. Conversely, 38.8% of university students and 35.5% of government

college students reported no such activity. These small differences suggest that both types of institutions are seen as undertaking outreach, though not uniformly or consistently.

Similarly in the qualitative data, students had mixed insights into the activities that HEIs were offering in terms of attracting rural students.

Students across all SUs noted that limited awareness about courses and facilities could hinder experiences of rural students if not addressed. One student (SU, Haryana) suggested that, in contrast to private institutions which campaign heavily, there is limited campaign from the SU directly to attract students and that proper showcasing is required for courses offered. Relatedly, Deep (SU, Haryana) mentioned the challenge of online application (filling of admission form), pattern of entrance exam, financial problems, etc. He suggested that since FMs cannot visit many schools, there must be some kind of online information, and the university must organise a workshop where students can get career counselling and know about the courses, fee structure, and financial aid available.

Shiksha (SU, Haryana) narrated that she had information lag when she was at the pre-enrolment stage but also disclosed that now (after enrolling) she witnessed the FMs visit the nearby colleges and introduce the courses offered by the university. She mentioned that the department also conducts lectures in schools and the students also accompanied FMs to nearby village for one such activity. However, she also posits that more interactions are required on behalf of HEIs. The information lag of rural students was voiced by almost all the SU students who were interviewed (Haryana). Likewise at Kerala SU, Mia suggested that the university should provide detailed course information to rural communities, especially for tribal students interested in the humanities, to uplift their communities.

Likewise in Assam, multiple students said that the university could conduct some promotional activities such as the spreading of knowledge on what is involved in a university course, what kind of scholarships are provided, and what kind of future job prospects will be available for students after pursuing various courses. They believed this would help attract more students from rural areas. This was reflected elsewhere (e.g. SU, Kerala). Several students suggested that the Assam SU should form connections with the nearby colleges and the newly opened junior colleges, and take measures to facilitate communication with rural students who are good at

their studies or interested in HE. They believed the SU should advertise more, because many students are not aware that the SU has such courses. Relatedly, Mia and Raghuvendra Pillai (SU, Kerala) suggested collaborating with local organisations like Kudumbashree (a poverty eradication and women empowerment programme implemented by the Government of Kerala) to inform parents, particularly mothers, about affordable courses. This emphasises the potential of partnerships for encouraging enrolment and spreading information.

Similarly in Kerala SU, Unni mentioned that student organisations created social media posters before admission, but these did not effectively reach rural audiences, only becoming visible post-enrolment. Mia likewise criticised the limited publicity, such as brief newspaper announcements. Social media (YouTube, Instagram, Facebook) and newspapers were frequently recommended for broader reach, with Mia suggesting Facebook for older audiences and Raghavendra advocating for full-page newspaper ads in regional languages. More broadly, Priya and Kitty stressed improving publicity for unique courses and using social media platforms.

Another suggestion was the creation of internships in rural areas for final year students, to connect the area with the university and to aid in employability (SU, Assam). Relatedly, Jimin (SU, Kerala) emphasised the lack of university-led career guidance, noting that rural students and parents often lack knowledge about HE benefits. Nieranjnn (also SU, Kerala) called for career guidance programmes to inform students about course scopes. Similarly, certifications and skill-based programmes were suggested as appealing to potential students (SU, Assam).

More general suggestions included connecting with rural schools and the NCC, and publishing advertisements across more media platforms (SU, Assam). Dhyan and Unni (SU, Kerala) advocated for outreach to schools, to share information about university schemes, facilities, and opportunities. SJ (SU, Kerala) stressed the need for more academic activities, such as seminars and talks by external experts, to enhance guidance. The primary gap is the lack of proactive university-led outreach to rural areas, leaving students reliant on external sources or personal networks.

When considering activities conducted by other institutions, mentions included: educational camps held in rural areas to bring potential students closer to the institute and its values; FM visits to schools; festivals and workshops; and financial incentives. In Kerala SU, Jimin, Unni,

Kitty, and Nieranjnn observed that private institutions use social media (Instagram and YouTube), distribute brochures, and make direct calls to students, whose contact details are often collected from schools. Raghuvendra Pillai (SU, Kerala) discussed private colleges conducting school visits, quiz competitions, and alumni talks, targeting 11th-12th class students with brochures and campus tours. One interesting example was raised in Assam SU where a sub-branch of an institution receives a percentage of admission fees that they facilitate, which is then used to fund education for other students. Another student (Priya, from SU, Kerala) discussed an institution where cultural events with celebrities take place. Related to discussions around employability, Mia (SU, Kerala) cited a college promoting placement opportunities, while SJ (also SU, Kerala) mentioned universities in the neighbouring state using placement-focused advertisements and scholarships. These strategies contrast sharply with the limited efforts of the SU, which were perceived to rely on passive methods like newspaper notices.

As was found in SU discussions, students at GCIDs across locations raised the issue that awareness is still low and an information lag exists. In order to overcome this, students at Haryana GCID argued that campaigns from HEIs are the only way, for example, in terms of putting posters at public places, organising a tour of the HEI and workshops related to subjects and the admission process. Likewise at Kerala GCID, students consistently reported being unaware of specific activities for attracting rural students. For example, Diya mentioned limited social media posts about courses, but that these are insufficient, and Malu noted that current students informally share course information, but that there are no formal college-led initiatives. General programmes like college day, sports, arts, and union events exist, but these are not specifically aimed at attracting rural students, indicating a significant gap in targeted HE outreach.

In contrast, it was noted that private and self-financing colleges employ proactive strategies to attract rural students, as reported by interviews and FGD transcripts. Sachu, Malu, Diya, and Vasu (SU, Kerala) described private institutions distributing posters, brochures, and notices at schools, often detailing courses, fees, and career prospects. L. Messi and Anna (also SU, Kerala) noted that these colleges collect student contact details from schools to send personalised messages or create WhatsApp helpdesk groups, offering scholarships and placement promises. Maeve and Nasim (SU, Kerala) highlighted social media campaigns (e.g.,

Instagram reels) and events, like college days with celebrities, to boost visibility. When asked what more Kerala GCID should do, social media and print advertisements in regional languages were frequently suggested (e.g. Malu and Vasu), as were faculty-led visits to local schools (L. Messi and Anna). Dreamy Girl and Sachu (GCID, Kerala) proposed peer-to-peer outreach where current students provide information to rural students, and faculty-led initiatives, including career guidance were also mentioned (Vasu and Nasim, both also from GCID, Kerala).

Tanvi and Gippy (GCID, Haryana) disclosed that their interaction with college students through National Service Scheme (NSS) camp was a positive contribution for access to HE. They suggested that the NSS camp has a two-way effect where participating students develop their personalities and also act as ambassadors of respective HEIs for villages, suggesting engagement with similar initiatives as a key activity for attracting rural students. Relatedly at Assam GCID, the absence of an NCC unit was noted, and it was argued that having this in place would attract more students.

Similar to in SUs, interview and FGD data from GCIDs highlighted a significant gap in the provision of career and HE guidance. Students like Sachu, Malu, and Diya (GCID, Kerala) expressed a lack of awareness about HE options, career paths, the scope of various courses, and how they align with career goals. They argued that specific guidance including detailed information on career pathways for various courses, options for postgraduate and professional courses, preparation for entrance exams, and clearer explanations of course structures and benefits, particularly for 12th class students making initial HE choices, were all needed as places of more guidance. This underscores that GCID students, likely many with rural backgrounds, require more structured and comprehensive information to navigate their HE and career decisions effectively.

In Assam GCID, sports and cultural activities were discussed as a way of engaging with rural students. One student mentioned that he was surprised to see competitions on traditional games such as banana tree climbing, pot breaking, etc., during annual sports week, reflecting that it is a matter of pride that culture and tradition is kept alive at the GCID and believing that the cultural competitions help young rural students to showcase their talent and engage. Similarly, another student (also GCID, Assam) discussed a Value-Added Course focused on training for sports and fitness, and various literary competitions and cultural programmes which

attracted rural students. Various workshops including dance and drama were suggested as something that is offered elsewhere and should be conducted, as were more technical courses, especially considering the need for technology skills for securing jobs. On the same note, Kuttu and L. Messi (SU, Kerala) cited examples of private colleges offering add-on courses (e.g., Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA) qualification and machine learning) alongside degrees, attracting students with promises of quick employability, and arguing for them to be adopted by their GCID to enhance employability.

Infrastructure was also discussed. Two students at Assam GCID mentioned a need for better Information and Communication Technology (ICT) enabled classrooms, noting that although some exist, they are not adequately arranged and classes are often impacted by electricity disturbances, failures of projectors, and temporary screens shifting. Similarly in Kerala SU, L. Messi and Anna advocated for infrastructure improvements (e.g., hostels and labs) to make the college more appealing.

Observations of days of state/national/international importance were considered to be significant for attracting rural students to Assam GCID, with one student noting that he had seen online that larger institutions go further and celebrate various important Divas days such as Science Day. He suggested celebrating some cultural days like Sankaradeva Tithi and Madhavadeva Tithi to educate the younger generation about the cultural heritage of the state, going as far as suggesting that attendance on these occasions should be made compulsory for the students.

At Assam GCID, there was discussion of how a stricter code of conduct may help with attracting students, as students noted that other colleges looked more professional due to the discipline displayed by students during district events.

One student (GCID, Assam) suggested parent-teacher meetings should be held regularly, as other parents often seek advice from those with students already studying at an institution, thus keeping parents aware and updated could be important. Other students agreed with this suggestion. Likewise in Kerala SU, Malu and Pappy stressed involving parents through community meetings or organisations like Kudumbashree to address financial concerns and highlight affordable education.

Overall, students identified a need for better guidance on HE opportunities and course details, particularly for rural students and their parents. The interview and FGD suggestions directly address the guidance gaps and comfort issues identified in the survey data, offering a clear roadmap to implement proactive, community-integrated outreach strategies aimed at enhancing visibility, improving facilities, and providing essential information to attract and better serve rural students.

6.4.5.1 Summary

To sum up, this section shows students' views on the kind of support that could help rural learners enter HE, as well as their perceptions of the outreach activities currently undertaken by their institutions. Students place the importance on simple, reliable, and easy-to-understand information—especially advice on whether to pursue HE, how to choose courses, and how the admissions process works. They also highlight the value of guidance on selecting colleges, preparing for entrance exams, and understanding campus facilities, safety, and daily life. These needs are broadly similar across SUs and government colleges, although survey data suggests that university students rely more on digital and online information, while college students emphasise basic admission-related guidance.

In surveys, when asked whether their institutions conduct activities aimed at attracting rural students to HE, around two-thirds of respondents indicated seeing such efforts, while the rest reported no visible activity. These views are similar across both types of institutions, suggesting that outreach may be present but unevenly communicated or experienced. These mixed views likely reflect a common situation across institutions: activities do take place, but they are not formally named or recognised as ‘outreach’, and therefore students may not identify them as such. As a result, outreach remains uneven in visibility and often informal or incidental. Together, the analysis suggests that while institutions are making efforts, there is scope to strengthen the clarity, identity, and communication of outreach so that rural students can more easily recognise and benefit from it.

This is further confirmed by the qualitative data coming from student interviews and FGDs. Although students could recognise various activities that may influence enrolment and experience of rural students, there was a general consensus that more could be done. It was

strongly suggested across regions that more information could be offered to students before enrolment, especially in terms of course details and employability benefits. Stronger alignment to career prospects through skills courses and career counselling were noted as being of importance to students, as was improved infrastructure and social and cultural activities. The argument therefore is that HE outreach, across both SUs and government colleges, should encompass multiple areas, including pre-enrolment information and opportunities once enrolled which would filter back to potential students.

6.5 Conclusion

Chapter 6 provides a detailed picture of the backgrounds, experiences, and decision-making processes of undergraduate students studying in SUs and government colleges. The findings show that students enter HE through very different locational, social, educational, and economic pathways. The composition of the student population reflects the widening access of historically underrepresented groups in HE, with large proportions of students who were born in rural areas, are women, and belong to OBC, SC, and other socially and economically disadvantaged backgrounds. The chapter also shows that many students are first-generation HE learners or come from households with only limited prior exposure to HE. Many students, particularly those studying in government colleges, come from such families with modest levels of parental education and from farming, wage-earning, or lower-income occupational backgrounds. University students, in comparison, are more likely to come from families with higher levels of parental education and salaried employment. Together, these patterns reflect the growing socio-economic diversity within HE access.

The findings further show that students' schooling histories differ considerably across institution types. Government college students are more likely to have studied in rural schools and government-managed institutions, while university students more often come from urban and private-school backgrounds. These differences are important because they shape the kinds of exposure students may have had to information about HE, careers, admissions, and institutional opportunities before entering college. For many students, especially those from rural and socially and economically disadvantaged backgrounds, access to such information appears limited and uneven.

A pattern seen across the chapter is that students often navigate HE choices with limited structured guidance. Decisions about whether to pursue HE, which subject to choose, and where to apply are shaped largely through family members, peers, neighbours, and personal networks. Teachers and FMs do play a role, but students' interactions with HE FMs before entering HE remain limited and are often informal rather than institutionally organised. Even where outreach activities exist, they are not always clearly recognised or experienced by students as formal 'HE outreach'.

At the same time, students clearly identify the kinds of support they believe are most useful. Across institution types, they place importance on simple and reliable guidance related to course choices, admissions procedures, entrance examinations, college facilities, safety, and career prospects. Students particularly emphasise the need for clearer information for rural learners, many of whom may be entering HE without prior exposure to colleges or universities. The findings therefore point, not only to differences in students' backgrounds, but also to differences in access to information and guidance during the transition into HE.

The chapter further highlights the important, though largely informal, role played by FMs and institutions in widening access. Faculty guidance often takes place through local and personalised relationships, including support provided to extended family members, neighbours, and nearby communities. Government colleges appear especially embedded within local social contexts, while universities rely somewhat more on formal and event-based engagement. Overall, the chapter suggests that strengthening visible, structured, and locally relevant HE outreach and guidance systems could help prospective students—particularly those from rural and socially and economically disadvantaged backgrounds and first-generation HE learners—make more informed and confident HE choices.

Chapter 7: Discussion

7.1 Introduction

The report thus far has presented the national and state-wise picture of demographics, and Higher Education (HE) access and equity (Chapter 2), given portraits of the case study institutions (Chapter 3), and presented the empirical findings from the 'Widening Access to Higher Education in India: Institutional Perspectives' (WAHEI) study (Chapters 4-6). This chapter draws out key findings from the previous chapters and presents synthesised responses to the project's Research Questions (RQs). The first section presents a response to RQ1a: Who are the Faculty Members (FMs) and Institutional Leaders (ILs)? The second section responds to RQ1b and RQ1c: What do ILs and FMs perceive to be the role of (Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in HE outreach? How much HE outreach activity is already happening? Following this, RQ1d discusses: Who are the students and what are their experiences/perceptions of HE outreach? The chapter then goes on to present a preliminary discussion of the wider project's latter RQs, which is addressed more comprehensively in subsequent outputs, as RQ2 asks: How can the potential contribution of rural and semi-urban college FMs to fair HE access and choice be consolidated and maximised? And RQ3 explores: How can a consolidated HE access/choice role for FMs be embedded at a policy level to ensure sustainable change?

This chapter departs from the national and state-wise picture of HE access and equity presented in Chapter 2. While India has progressed through the massification stage of HE expansion, and access to HE has widened to include marginalised groups, there are still disparities in both HE access and choice for rural and/or Socio-Economically Disadvantaged Groups (SEDGs). The HE system is expanding each year to encompass new HEIs and the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 has encouraged the distribution of HEIs across underserved areas. At the same time, the expansion of private HE has increased the number of HEIs but not necessarily opened up feasible HE choices for students who cannot afford private HE. In terms of widening access to HE, students may have HEIs in their purview and may be surrounded by seniors—if not members of the previous generation—who are enrolled in or have graduated from HE.

Students may be faced with an expectation to attend HE from their schoolteachers, families and friends. However, the extent to which HE choice is equitable is still a matter of concern and a focus of this report. The HE system in India relies on the formalised policies related to reservations and affirmative action in order to deliver on equity goals. However, the extent to which prospective HE students have access to reliable information about how to access the opportunities afforded by affirmative action is a different matter. More widely, for students who do not have a history of HE in the family or community—particularly those in rural areas and/or from SEDGs—making informed decisions about HEI, course, location, etc., may be a challenging and bewildering process, potentially leading to the selection of courses or institutions that are not suitable for the individual students' strengths and aspirations.

By delving into the matter of HE choice this report explores the potential for HEIs, their ILs, and their FMs to serve as HE knowledge hubs—particularly those located in rural areas and/or serving rural communities. Each of the RQs approaches this from a different angle, leading to a holistic perspective. In particular, the report explores *HE outreach*, or the extent to which HEIs, ILs, and FMs are engaging in practices to inform and guide prospective undergraduate students about HE choices. At the same time, the study recognises that the academic profession is under pressure, and that FMs are already expected to perform substantial teaching and service roles as well as cover for vacant seats in their HEIs. Expecting additional duties from FMs, such as conducing HE outreach activities, must be approached with caution and with a deep understanding of the profession. This is a novel and original area of study in the Indian context and indeed internationally this is arguably the first study to explore informal HE outreach practices. This chapter aims to highlight and synthesise the major findings of the study.

7.2 Synthesis of RQ1a: Who Are the FMs and ILs?

The first RQ sought to investigate the demographic and educational backgrounds of FMs and ILs working in rural and rural-serving SUs and government colleges across five states of India. The purpose of this question was to recognise that the designated actors of HE outreach themselves come from their own family and educational backgrounds which, in turn, shape their identification with and/or desire to support HE access and choice for the communities their employing institutions serve. Previous literature has shown a tendency for FMs, who are themselves from SEDGs, to be more engaged in HE outreach work (Demb & Wade, 2012; Lopez

& Romero, 2017). At the same time, placing the responsibility for this work solely on these FMs produces an unfair burden on them and also means that other FMs may not have access to HE outreach experiences which would enrich their understanding of the students they teach in the classroom. There are even technical questions such as the extent to which FMs and ILs reside near their HEIs, and therefore to what extent they are embedded in local communities. Chapter 4 explored the backgrounds of ILs and FMs in depth in order to sketch out the landscape of the academic profession and provide a foundation for the subsequent discussions of HE outreach.

Reflecting other studies of the Indian academic profession (Gupta & Sharma, 2003; Sabharwal et al., 2020)—and recognised issues at the global scale (Idahosa & Vincent, 2014; Xu, 2020)—our study found that the profession has rather limited representation of FMs from SEDGs. Overall, the survey revealed a dominance of men FMs and those from the non-Scheduled Castes (non-SC) / Scheduled Tribes (ST) / Other Backward Classes (OBC) groups (others). This reflects the national data as discussed in Chapter 2. This means that the FMs are or would be conducting HE outreach with no lived experience as marginalised groups, though it is important to state that lived experience is not a prerequisite for conducting HE outreach and indeed is not a guarantee of willingness to conduct HE outreach. The majority of the FMs in the WAHEI study lived in conventional family set-ups, were married, often had children, and were overwhelmingly heterosexual. In terms of ILs, their profiles largely mirrored that of FMs, though there was a tendency towards men holding this role and they were also of a more advanced age group than FMs on average. FMs tended to come from and remain residing in urban or semi-urban areas, reflecting a lack of embeddedness in rural communities. FMs based in government colleges were more likely to live nearer the HEI, though most were still commuting for at least half an hour by car, so were as such not situated in the direct location of the HEI and were not necessarily embedded in 'local knowledge' connections with the institution (Mbah, 2019).

While many students attending government colleges, in rural areas in particular, are first-generation learners and the first in family to attend HE, this was not the case for FMs. FMs tended to come from families with relatively high levels of formal educational attainment in previous generations. This was more the case for FMs' fathers, many of whom had accessed HE, than their mothers, but even so the mothers had accessed secondary education in many cases. The occupations of FMs' fathers included government service and business, with the majority of mothers being housewives. While most FMs were the first in their families to become FMs,

many FMs came from families where other members were schoolteachers, showing a bent towards the educational sector. This paints a picture of FMs coming from backgrounds where they had access to insider knowledge about education systems and choices and direct experiences to draw on when forming ambitions and aspirations. At the same time, the majority of FMs had experienced the government schooling system, with only a minority schooled in the private sector, indicating that there is a consideration that many FMs in our study have experienced the government system in line with the students they are teaching. While FMs did not necessarily live in the direct vicinity of their employing HEIs, the vast majority of FMs had completed their own HE within the same state and within the public system.

As might be expected from FMs' educational backgrounds, they reported that family members had been a major influence on their own decision-making process for HE choice. Many FMs also reported that their choices had been self-driven. Since family members were a strong influence for FMs—and family members themselves had accessed high levels of formal education—it may be difficult for FMs to imagine not being able to draw on family resources to make informed HE decisions. In our study, in terms of the role of FMs in the HE decisions taken by FMs when they were prospective undergraduate students, more of the FMs had been assisted by FMs than the undergraduate students. Where FMs had guided the FMs, they were personally connected with the FM, revealing the situatedness of FMs within higher social circles. However, patterns also emerged of more FMs from rural backgrounds and/or marginalised groups receiving guidance from FMs, potentially indicating a social justice drive motivating HE outreach from FMs. The assistance that FMs had received from FMs had tended to be at the immediate stage of applying for HE (rather than at an earlier, more exploratory phase) and had tended to revolve around key decisions such as course choice. Arguably these experiences may have influenced subsequent HE outreach behaviours of FMs once they progressed to being in the position to deliver guidance to others on HE.

Overall, the study findings do echo other studies in showing the academic profession to be comprised of FMs from relatively privileged backgrounds in terms of demographics and educational attainment of previous generations. However, there are distinctions to note between SUs and government colleges in terms of local living and levels of privilege, though it is rare to find FMs who are from the same levels of disadvantage experienced than the students they are teaching. A key finding here is that FMs may be the best placed professionally to deliver

HE outreach, but there are questions as to whether FMs have the social awareness to understand the challenges faced by prospective undergraduate students in making choices about HE (Sabharwal, 2024; Malish & Ilavarasan, 2016).

7.3 Synthesis of RQ1b and RQ1c: What Do ILs and FMs Perceive to Be the Role of HEIs in HE Outreach? How Much HE Outreach Activity Is Already Happening?

It was clear from the findings presented in Chapter 5 that ILs and FMs believe that HEIs play a major role in facilitating informed choice for prospective students, and indeed that this role is already being played by HEIs.

One of the major contributions of this study is the comprehensive mapping of existing HE outreach practices, even in the absence of a formal HE outreach culture in HEIs. Across all states and institution types, there was substantial evidence of ILs and FMs engaging in HE outreach activities. For ILs, this included guiding prospective students and their families as well as instituting practices within their HEIs, such as helpdesks and village visits. For FMs, their efforts were largely individual and within their personal networks, but the practice was widespread. As might be expected, government colleges were more directly involved in HE outreach practices than SUs, given their embeddedness in local communities and focus on undergraduate provision.

It is noteworthy that, arguably as a result of HE outreach occurring within personal networks, it is only reaching a limited cohort of prospective students. FMs tend to be guiding prospective students and their parents within their neighbourhood and wider family circles. Given FMs do not tend to reside in direct proximity to the college, it is likely that the individuals who become recipients of their guidance are not those living in rural and socio-economically disadvantaged areas. The guidance dispensed tends to revolve around the major topics of HE choice including course and institution, as well as how to navigate the admissions process.

Importantly, some HEIs were conducting institutional HE outreach activities—in particular receiving school visits to the HEIs and visiting schools themselves—and as such there is evidence of these more formalised activities already occurring within HEIs. As such, it is clear

from the findings of the study that HEIs, their ILs, and FMs, do not for the most part need to be convinced that HE outreach is a necessary practice, given they are already conducting HE outreach of their own volition. It is clear that, for those HEIs where formal HE outreach is already being conducted, HEIs can take an important role in collaboration with schools and communities to develop informed choice for prospective students. For other ILs, there may need to be clearer guidelines, as well as a resourcing and accountability structure, for them to prioritise institutionalising HE outreach within the HEIs they are leading. Institutional culture is known to be important in terms of the extent to which HE outreach is taken seriously as an institutional priority (Parker et al., 2005).

For FMs, given HE outreach has been a longstanding informal practice that is not necessarily seen as part of the professional role, it may be that institutionalising the practice is welcomed by some as recognition of the work involved and less welcomed by others who feel that they are already implicated in this work on a personal level, regardless of the professional responsibility (Johnson et al., 2019). Moreover, given the tendency for FMs to guide those in their own extended families and social circles, it is possible that the expectation to conduct outreach in more unfamiliar settings may not be welcomed. When asked about barriers to conducting HE outreach, workloads and competing pressures were raised (see also Parker et al., 2005; Johnson et al., 2019), a key reminder that adding HE outreach duties to the existing suite of professional duties may prove deleterious to the social justice mission underpinning HE outreach.

In sum, the study has found strong recognition of the need for HE outreach and evidence of the existing provision of HE outreach by HEIs and in particular individual FMs. There is clearly a robust foundation in place for a more formalised HE outreach culture that would ideally benefit more students from a wider range of backgrounds. A more formalised HE outreach strategy has the potential to empower prospective students to make choices which they value and which may lead to more fulfilling future prospects (Hannon et al., 2017). However, instituting this formalised HE outreach culture would require a culture shift and an adjustment of the professional role of FMs—and that of ILs who are implementing this culture shift. As such it would require substantial scaffolding in terms of training, resourcing, and accountability mechanisms.

7.4 Synthesis of RQ1d: Who Are the Students and What Are Their Experiences/Perceptions of HE Outreach?

Given the study's focus on HEIs and their role in enhancing informed HE choice, it was important to understand the student population in rural and rural-serving HEIs and to ascertain their experiences of and views on HE outreach. The findings relating to this RQ were presented in Chapter 6.

The analysis of the FM population of our study showed that FMs tended to be from relatively privileged social groups. The student population however was more populous in the groups spanning SC, OBC, and ST than the non-SC/ST/OBC groups, showing something of a mismatch between faculty background and student characteristics. A slightly higher proportion of the students identified with religions other than Hinduism. Slightly more students than FMs identified as persons with a disability and as having a sexual orientation other than heterosexual. As would be expected, relatively few students were married and even fewer had children. While around two thirds of FMs were from urban areas, around two thirds of students were from rural areas. This again highlights a mismatch in lived experience between FMs and students. The majority of students lived in the same town or locale as the HEI they are attending. Students enrolled at SUs were more likely to stay in campus accommodation. The vast majority of students resided within the same district as their HEI. So overall, students were residing near their HEIs, especially in the case of government colleges. Students' commute to their HEIs was longer than FMs but they were more likely to take public transport methods which are less direct than e.g. personal car.

Interestingly, students' educational backgrounds were not too far away from FMs' backgrounds. However, this represents at least one generation of separation between FMs and students, so effectively the same educational background is less prestigious for the current generation, as increased enrolment in higher levels of education arguably devalues educational attainment from one generation to the next. Around the same proportion of FM's mothers and students' mothers had attained a degree for instance. It is noteworthy that there was a stark difference between SUs and government colleges, with a higher proportion of SU students' mothers having a degree. On the other hand, there was a large disparity in educational attainment by FMs' fathers and students' fathers, with FMs' fathers having attained higher levels of formal

education than students' fathers; here the generational shift in educational access is less evident. FMs' mothers and students' mothers were similarly likely to be housewives. For fathers, students' fathers were more involved in agriculture than FMs' fathers—again showing a mismatch between FMs' lived experiences and students' experiences of growing up in rural settings. Another mismatch occurs in the location of senior secondary school attended—a large majority of FMs attended urban senior secondary schools, while a majority of students attended senior secondary school in a rural area. The generational shift towards private schooling is evident in the shift from predominantly government schooling for FMs to a higher percentage of private schooling for the students in our study. However, more FMs had studied in English than students, even in the previous generations.

In their HE choices, the majority of students were relying on their families to cover the fees. The majority of students were studying full time, with few students engaging in part-time work. These findings are an important reminder of the extent to which students are reliant on their home environment during their HE studies (Henderson & Sabharwal, 2025), as has also been shown in other contexts (Castleman & Page, 2013; Mathebula & Walker, 2025). The role of family members in guiding HE choices was similar for FMs from their own journeys and the students in our sample. However, it is noteworthy that a much higher proportion of FMs stated they were guided by FMs in their own educational trajectories than students said they had been guided in by FMs, showing more access to highly educated members of society for FMs. Similar proportions of these FMs were known to prospective students through family connections, but interestingly for the students, fewer FMs were known to them as neighbours, again highlighting potential mismatch between FMs and students in terms of residential area. The stages of admission and types of advice were similar for FMs back when they were students being advised by FMs and for current students.

Information access for prospective students based in rural areas is an internationally recognised issue and one which requires external support in the form of HE outreach (Mathebula & Masutha, 2021). Students in the WAHEI study highlighted the challenges of accessing accurate information when making HE choice and recommended that information be communicated via a range of formats, including information about the course content and potential career pathways. Contact with HEIs prior to application was also highlighted as important, including for instance attending a summer camp at an HEI as well as attending

campus visits. Assistance with the admissions process was suggested as beneficial, as this process is recognised to be challenging particularly for those with no prior experience of HE in the family (Henderson et al., 2023). Students highlighted the importance of engaging with FMs who are friendly and approachable during the pre-admission phase. It was also considered important that parents be included in HE outreach. The students who participated in the study ventured many ideas for effective HE outreach strategies and also had substantial knowledge of other HEIs' activities which could be classed as HE outreach. This highlights the importance of gathering information and perspectives from students when designing HE outreach strategies.

7.5 Preliminary Views on RQ2: How Can the Potential Contribution of Rural and Semi-urban College FMs to Fair HE Access and Choice Be Consolidated and Maximised?

This chapter has thus far argued that HE outreach, even if not a familiar concept in name, is a familiar notion in practice. As such, there is a launch pad in place for an HE outreach agenda to be embedded formally in HEIs' practice (Stewart et al., 2024). However, it is clear that HE outreach as a formal institutional agenda would need to be embedded with care to avoid it becoming burdensome and accomplished as a 'tick-box' activity (Rainford, 2020).

In order for HE outreach to be adopted as an agenda in spirit as well as name, FMs and ILs need to internalise HE outreach as part of the social justice mission of the profession and of HEIs (Idahosa & Vincent, 2018; Walker, 2012). This requires exposure to professional learning which imparts not just the 'how' of HE outreach, but also the 'why'. FMs can be brought on board to the HE outreach agenda by naming and recognising the efforts that most FMs already bring to enhancing the informed choice of prospective students. Arguably, 'informality plays an important role' (Andersson, 2013, p. 179). However, moving towards a more formal agenda may be met with more resistance, particularly for FMs from privileged backgrounds where they may not have a full understanding of the obstacles that students from disadvantaged backgrounds face when accessing HE (Kumar, 2023). Moreover, where HEIs are fully subscribed, it may be more difficult to convince ILs and FMs that HE outreach is valuable nonetheless, as it is not restricted to recruitment for the HEI itself but, as with other social causes, has a wider purpose of supporting the social mobility of disadvantaged communities.

7.6 Preliminary Views on RQ3: How Can a Consolidated HE Access/Choice Role for FMs Be Embedded at a Policy Level to Ensure Sustainable Change?

It was clear from the study that many ILs were already implementing HE outreach activities within the HEIs they were leading, while a common refrain during the project has been that there needs to be a formal mandate and accountability mechanisms, as well as funding streams for HEIs to enact HE outreach. It is clear that some ILs feel they have the agency to adopt an HE outreach agenda of their own accord—either from personal conviction or for recruitment purposes—while others need a more formal structure to prioritise HE outreach among the many other institutional priorities.

In order for HE outreach to be standardised across the (publicly funded) HE sector, there would need to be allocated funding, priorities, and recognition for HE outreach. This could include embedding professional learning on HE outreach into the mandated Professional Development (PD) for FMs. It could also include institutional recognition for HE outreach activities in the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) exercise, individual recognition in the Academic Performance Indicator (API) and Career Advancement Scheme, as well as in hiring criteria for FMs.

7.7 Conclusion

This chapter has presented a multi-faceted discussion of the potential for HEIs, ILs, and FMs to serve as key players in enhancing informed choice for prospective students, particularly those from SEDGs and/or rural areas. There are clearly many challenges to standardising HE outreach practice, including institutional and individual commitment and competing pressures, as well as the need for an understanding of the importance of HE outreach. At the same time, there is much scope for building on the initial foundations of HE outreach which HEIs, ILs, and FMs are enacting, often of their own accord and in their personal networks. This study has served to provide rich empirical evidence to map current practices, identify potential challenges, and sketch out the scope for a future vision for HE outreach to be more formalised across the HE sector in India.

Chapter 8: Conclusion

8.1 Conclusions

The National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration (NIEPA)-University of Warwick collaborative research project entitled 'Widening Access to Higher Education in India: Institutional Perspectives' (WAHEI) took place from 2022-2026. The primary aim of this project was to understand the role of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs)—universities and colleges—in enhancing informed choice for young people accessing Higher Education (HE). Drawing on a mixed-method design (see Chapter 1), this study investigated HE outreach practices from rural and rural-serving State Universities (SUs) and government colleges in five different states in India. This concluding chapter presents key insights from the study and offers a range of recommendations to strengthen HE outreach practices in the Indian HE context.

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 in India has a specific aim of increasing the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in HE to 50% by 2035 (MHRD 2020). In addition to achieving this enrolment target, the policy also emphasises equitable access for Socially-Economically Disadvantaged Groups (SEDGs) through affirmative action, while encouraging state-level policy initiatives and institutional support. Nevertheless, structured HE outreach has yet to become a prominent feature of institutional practice across many HEIs.

This study found that, although HE outreach activities are evident across many HEIs, they are rarely framed as initiatives aimed at supporting informed access to HE. Existing outreach practices in HEIs are often conducted through the National Service Scheme (NSS), *Unnat Bharat Abhiyaan* (UBA) (MoE, 2026a), and National Cadet Corps (NCC), which seek to address issues including gender equality, girls' education, health awareness, social responsibility, local culture awareness, but do not focus on *HE outreach* as such. Moreover, where HE outreach activities are in evidence, they tend to focus on filling vacant seats within departments and meeting enrolment targets, rather than enhancing HE access and choice for students from SEDGs and rural areas. At an individual level, Faculty Members (FMs) primarily provide guidance to prospective students informally through personal networks rather than institutional systems.

The study highlights the potentially significant role that FMs can play in providing support and guidance to students seeking access to HE and information about different HE options. FMs reported an enhanced understanding of HE access and outreach issues and discussed that they were engaging intensively in student guidance, but all these activities were occurring without a name. The term 'HE outreach' is thus a useful way of naming and recognising—and strategising—for HEIs to engage more actively in the domain of HE choice. Through structured training that raises awareness of the systemic inequalities affecting access to HE, and with institutional support, arguably FMs can realise their potential roles and responsibilities in their institution's outreach efforts.

While FMs have the potential to support students' HE decision-making, the findings indicate that students face systematic challenges in accessing HE and making informed HE choices. Current national policy frameworks primarily provide financial assistance, such as scholarships, to SEDG students. Thus, they continue to rely heavily on self-directed information-seeking or family networks to overcome structural barriers of applying to HE; undergraduate students enrolled in the publicly funded HEIs in our study report minimal exposure to institution-led awareness programmes. Students' motivation to pursue HE is often shaped by geographic proximity, institution reputation, affordability, and family encouragement, particularly from parents who emphasise employment outcomes. There is much scope for structured HE outreach programmes to make a significant contribution to young people's lives.

In light of these findings, the following section provides recommendations for HE outreach implementation on policy, institutional, and faculty level.

8.2 Recommendations

Drawing on the project findings and considerations provided by the state research teams, a series of recommendations are proposed targeting policy, institution, and faculty levels.

8.2.1 Recommendations Set 1: Policy Level

This set of recommendations are directed towards specific policy measures to formalise HE outreach and provide financial and operational resources.

1.1 Given recent policy aims (NEP 2020) to increase HE enrolment, there is scope for existing policy frameworks to more explicitly recognise HE outreach, and to **develop clearer objectives and expectations for HE outreach**.

1.2 Policy provision should include **dedicated funding for HE outreach activities**.

1.3 All HEIs should establish an **HE Outreach Cell** and develop a corresponding **HE Outreach Action Plan**.

1.4 **Collaboration between HE policy and school-level policy is required** at national and state levels in order to facilitate cooperation on delivering HE outreach.

1.5 Mechanisms for documenting and reporting HE outreach activities could be strengthened to provide greater visibility of outreach efforts across the HE system and support the monitoring of progress over time.

1.6 **Include HE outreach efforts in HE evaluation and audit mechanisms**, such as the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) accreditation process.

1.7 **Integrate formal faculty training on HE outreach** within existing Professional Development (PD) frameworks.

1.8 **Recognise and accredit FMs' participation in HE outreach activities** in recruitment, promotion, as well as workload frameworks.

8.2.2 Recommendations Set 2: Institutional Level

HEIs are considered the key actors in implementing HE outreach practices. It is recognised that publicly funded HEIs may depend on higher level guidelines to change practice. However, the WAHEI study identified several HEIs where HE outreach initiatives were being spearheaded at the institutional level.

2.1 **State universities with affiliating colleges can take leadership in stewarding HE outreach efforts** across their affiliating colleges.

2.2 HEIs (universities, colleges, and other HEI types) can strengthen their HE outreach efforts through the development of **institutional HE outreach strategies**. This may include:

2.2.a **Founding HE outreach cells** in all HEIs.

2.2.b Supporting the cells' work with **administrative personnel**.

2.2.c **Allocating funding** to cells to disburse for HE outreach activities.

2.2.d **Collecting data from the student population** to guide priorities for HE outreach.

2.2.e Developing **HE Outreach Action Plans** that are reviewed annually and which include an **evaluative mechanism** for HE outreach activities.

2.3 HEIs can **strengthen their capacity for HE outreach** through:

2.3.a Integrating **PD on HE outreach** for cell members, as well as any FMs who are engaged in the delivery of HE outreach.

2.3.b **Recognising FMs' participation in HE outreach activities** in promotion applications, hiring criteria, as well as workload provisioning.

2.3.c Developing students' capacity to serve as **student ambassadors for HE outreach**, who work with FMs in delivering the HE outreach strategy.

2.4 HE outreach efforts can be strengthened through strategic partnerships, including:

2.4.a Form **partnerships between the HEI and local schools** in order to leverage schoolteachers' influence and encourage participation in HEIs' HE outreach activities.

2.4.b Seek **partnerships with Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), local groups, and industries** in order to enhance both the reach and relevance of HE outreach initiatives.

2.4.c Group together with **other HEIs in the same region** to facilitate HE outreach activities such as HE fairs or collective resource sharing.

2.5 HE outreach can be delivered through a range of activities, including:

2.5.a Organise **outreach activities where FMs (and potentially HE students) visit other sites** (e.g. schools and community events) in order to promote informed HE choice.

2.5.b Host **inreach activities** where prospective students and their families are invited to visit HEIs.

2.5.c Ensure that HE outreach activities are organised both in terms of **physical presence** but also using **virtual means** such as virtual tours and webinars.

2.5.d Explore HE outreach activities for **school students of any age and discipline** (including younger ages).

2.5.e Embed **HE outreach in other relevant mechanisms** such as NSS camps and NCC activities.

2.6 Develop **awareness of HE outreach priorities in existing relevant areas** of HEIs' practice.

2.6.a HEIs may benefit from **reassessing the effectiveness of their HE information dissemination practices** and developing more **inclusive communication approaches** for prospective students, including checking that **publicly available information is accurate and accessible via a range of means** (e.g. social media, radio, banners, and digital and hard copy prospectus).

2.6.b HEIs should consider how to **enhance their visibility and appeal**, particularly for students where HE is not encouraged in their families. This includes general publicity of the institution's courses and initiatives.

2.6.c Current **admission practices can be reviewed and updated** to include opportunities for HE guidance to be provided to prospective students (online and offline).

8.2.3 Recommendations Set 3: Faculty Member Level

Within HEIs, FMs are the key actors in HE outreach activities. Therefore, to enhance their level of engagement, this third set of recommendations is targeted at FMs.

3.1 **Encourage HEI leadership to consider HE outreach** as a strategic priority and **work with other colleagues to promote understanding** of the importance of HE outreach.

3.2 **Volunteer for HE outreach leadership positions** (e.g. in a cell) and lead HE outreach strategy formation.

3.3 **Initiate the HEI's participation in HE outreach PD** and/or **participate in HE outreach PD** when invited/requested.

3.4 Help to **train student ambassadors for HE outreach** and **work with student ambassadors** on delivering HE outreach activities.

3.5 **Seek out and develop partnerships for HE outreach with local schools, NGOs, other groups, industries, and other HEIs**—partnerships are most likely to succeed if based on strong foundational relationships.

3.6 **Volunteer to lead/contribute to HE outreach activities** organised by the HEI.

3.7 For **FMs who are responsible for other relevant initiatives** such as NSS and NCC, consider **how to embed HE outreach** into these initiatives.

3.8 **Help to develop relevant areas of the HEI's work** such as HE information dissemination, visibility of the HEI, and admissions support for prospective students.

As India seeks to expand and democratise HE, strengthening HE outreach offers an important opportunity to support more informed and equitable participation in HE. The findings of the WAHEI project suggest that HEIs, FMs, and schools, all have a role to play in improving awareness of HE opportunities and pathways, particularly for students from socially and economically disadvantaged backgrounds. Greater recognition of HE outreach, supported by institutional structures, partnerships, and capacity-building, can help position HEIs as active contributors to widening access and informed HE choice.

PART II

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

Part II of the 'Widening Access to Higher Education in India: Institutional Approaches' (WAHEI) project report focuses on the impact-oriented phase of the project. Part I reported the findings of the methodologically rigorous empirical research which established the role that Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and their Faculty Members (FMs) presently play in providing guidance on Higher Education (HE) access/choice in the communities they serve. The impact-oriented phase, discussed here, translates what has been learned from the research phase into the endeavours needed to support change.

One key research finding of the empirical study was that, while individual FMs may and often do provide advice informally to family or community members, few HE outreach activities are provided formally by their institutions. Building institutional awareness of and support for such activities is essential to the realisation of the equity goals of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 (see Part I, section 1.2). This project worked with the belief that the capacity for FMs to become champions for change can be built through participation in Continuing Professional Learning (CPL). Increased capacity builds institutional readiness. A key component of the second phase of the WAHEI project was therefore the design, piloting and evaluation of an HE outreach CPL module for FMs. Part II of the report presents the process followed in designing, piloting and evaluating the CPL module, as well as findings from an International Discussion Meet that was hosted by the National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration (NIEPA) as the concluding event of the project. This chapter provides: the background for the impact-oriented phase of WAHEI; the objectives and Research Questions (RQs) of the impact-oriented phase; the methodology followed; and the chapter scheme of Part II of the report.

1.2 Background and Rationale

Given the continuing national emphasis on strengthening the quality of teaching and research in HEIs, the provision of training opportunities for teaching staff has been given significant attention, with orientation programmes, refresher courses, seminars, conferences and exchange programmes being some of the most favoured mechanisms for enhancing standards. In fact, the Scheme of Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya National Mission on Teachers and Training, 2015 (MHRD, 2015), envisioned an elaborate structure of 87 new institutions, comprising 30 schools of education, 50 centres of excellence for curriculum and pedagogy, five institutes of academic leadership and education management and two inter-university centres for HE teachers' education, in order to provide thorough training in pedagogical skills, as well as to undertake research in different aspects of teaching such as curriculum development and evaluation methods. The NEP 2020 (MHRD, 2020) identifies in section 13 (pp. 40-41) that even more efforts are needed at the institutional level to strategically plan for the Professional Development (PD) of FMs (13.6).

Each state in the study includes universities with designated Malaviya Mission Teacher Training Centres (MMTTCs). MMTTCs, introduced in September 2023, replaced Human Resource Development Centres (HRDCs) (Narendar, 2022; PIB, 2023). These centres deliver PD training courses for FMs which are essential for accruing Academic Performance Indicator (API) points, but the opportunities to attend these are unequally distributed between more and less privileged FMs (in terms of gender, social group status and contract type). For example, some academics with caring responsibilities face greater obstacles in attending since they may have family members who cannot be left unattended (Menon, 2020). Training is mandatory for new permanent FMs, (Menon, 2020). Specifically, Orientation Programmes are designed for newly appointed Assistant Professors and are aimed at enhancing teaching and researching skills. The course consists of more than 140 hours over four weeks. Refresher Courses are also mandatory but delivered by Academic Staff Colleges for serving HE teachers. The goals of these courses are to enrich the knowledge and skills of FMs, as well as to inspire them through exposure to innovative teaching methodologies and discussions among colleagues. The duration of the course is three weeks and consists of approximately 100 training hours (Narendar, 2022).

Participation in the Orientation Programmes is a prerequisite for the admission to the Refresher Courses.

It is against this backdrop of mandated PD provision that the WAHEI project's CPL module sits, with the idea that the module should be integrated into relevant mandated PD courses. There is also the parallel possibility that individual HEIs may take up the module and deliver it within their walls, as part of Internal Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC) activities, for instance. Surrounding the CPL module in the WAHEI project is the notion of 'HE Outreach Champion', referring to FMs who develop expertise in HE outreach and take the initiative to develop the HE outreach agenda in their HEIs. The CPL module aims to inspire FMs to become HE Outreach Champions, and also relies on these Champions to initiate the inclusion of the module in faculty development activities. Part II of the report includes discussion of the development of HE Outreach Champions through the WAHEI project, as well as the development of the CPL module.

1.3 Part II Objectives and Research Questions

The core aims and objectives for the impact-oriented phase of the WAHEI project were as follows:

> *Aim: To develop and evaluate the success of PD activities for FMs that have the purpose of developing their capacity and motivation to engage in gender-equitable, socially-just HE outreach activities in their local communities.*
>
> *Objective: To design and collaboratively host a state-level PD module for FMs, based on the findings from the exploratory research, to develop FMs' capacity and motivation to engage in gender-equitable, socially-just HE outreach activities in their local communities. To evaluate this pilot module both at and after the event, in order to determine the impact of the module and to develop the design of the module.*
>
> *Aim: To develop and evaluate the potential for institutional, state and national policy impact via interactive consultations.*

Objective: To design and collaboratively host state-level and national-level interactive policy consultations with relevant institutions, policymakers and other important organisations, including the findings from the exploratory stage and the PD module stage. To evaluate these consultations both at and after the events, in order to determine the impact of the consultations and to develop valuable knowledge of how to achieve policy impact.

The RQs for the impact-oriented phase were as follows:

RQ2: How can the potential contribution of rural and semi-urban FMs to fair HE access and choice be consolidated and maximised? How can CPL assist with developing the capacity and motivation of FMs and Institutional Leaders (ILs) to engage in gender-equitable and socially-just HE outreach practices?

RQ3: How can a consolidated HE access/choice role for FMs and ILs be embedded at a policy level to ensure sustainable change? How can interactive policy consultations contribute to policy change?

1.4 Methodology and Sources of Information

The impact-oriented phase of the report incorporated several elements which are laid out in more detail in Part II of the report. A summary is presented here for ease of reference.

- **CPL module development process (including UK visit for WAHEI team members):**
    - a **narrative account** of the process followed.
- **Impact assessment of the UK visit in terms of forming HE Outreach Champions:**
    - a synthesis of **impact-tracking notes** produced during the visit, and
    - synthesis of the **written visit evaluation questionnaire** by the 10 State Research Team (SRT) members who attended the visit.
- **CPL module piloting process:**

- a **narrative account** of the process followed to pilot the module with 12 FMs from 12 HEIs in Haryana, including **reflections** from the pilot module facilitators.

- **Evaluation of the CPL module pilot:**
  - a basic analysis of the **pre-module questionnaires**,
  - findings from the **module observation notes**,
  - basic analysis of the **post-module questionnaire**, and
  - presentation of analysis from the **post-module diaries** completed on a monthly basis for three months after the module, with analysis of the **post-diary interviews**.

- **Learning assessment of the International Discussion Meet on HE outreach:**
  - thematic presentation of themes discussed based on **event notes**.

1.5 Chapter Scheme of the Report (Part II)

Part II of the WAHEI project report is structured as follows. **Chapter 2** provides details of the CPL module development process during the SRTs UK visit, including the preparation process before the UK residential workshop, the UK workshop arrangements, and the process following the visit, during which the module was drafted and refined. The chapter then tracks the impact of the module development process, covering impact notes taken from observing the SRTs UK visit activities, and a visit evaluation summarised through SRT members' reflections during the visit. **Chapter 3** documents the module piloting process, starting with the pilot organisation and set-up, followed by an account of the module piloting experience by module tutors, and ending with reflections on the pilot module delivery, alongside possible amendments suggested. The chapter then comprehensively evaluates the module pilot, first explaining the evaluation process, then presenting findings from pre-module questionnaires, module observation, post-module questionnaires, diaries and post-diary interviews, and concluding with a summary of findings. **Chapter 4** presents the thematic analysis from the International Discussion Meet event notes. **Chapter 5** concludes the report.

Chapter 2: UK Visit and Module Development

2.1 Introduction

A major activity for the 'Widening Access to Higher Education in India: Institutional Approaches' (WAHEI) project was designing and implementing a UK visit for the WAHEI State Research Teams (SRTs). This chapter provides details of the SRTs UK visit and the development of the Continuing Professional Learning (CPL) module. The aim of the UK visit was to co-design and produce content for the CPL module. To achieve this aim, the visit programme was designed to equip SRT members with the professional confidence and capacity required to act as CPL module designers and tutors, while also fostering a strong sense of identity as Higher Education (HE) Outreach Champions. This aim was achieved through the active engagement of all participants, including the core research team and SRT members, which generated significant levels of collective learning among those involved.

This chapter presents the *preparation process* for the UK residential workshop (Section 2.2), the *module development process* (Section 2.3), the *learning from the visit activities* (Section 2.4), and the *impact of the UK visit on HE Outreach Champion development* (Section 2.5). To better demonstrate the learning process during the visit, notetakers (Susan Deeb, S. Arokia Mary, Evan Zheng) were recruited to observe the entire module development workshop and other visit activities and to document evidence of participants' learning. The notes from each session were subsequently compiled and synthesised to capture the learning process. In addition, SRT members were requested to complete evaluations for each activity they attended and reflect on the key areas of new knowledge and understanding they gained regarding widening participation and HE outreach. Their responses were also summarised to explore alongside the learning outcomes identified in the impact notes. Overall, the chapter presents a detailed account of the UK visit and module development process in order to provide concrete experiences for others wishing to engage in a similar process.

The resources for the module are included in the 'About this Report' section at the start of the report, but for ease of reference they are also repeated here:

Module tutor guide:

Sabharwal, N. S., Stewart, A., Henderson, E. F., Gafoor K., A., Mahajan, D. J., Rajeshwari, Singh, L. G., Vauquline, P., Ashkarali P., Banjare, D., Borah, B., Gayan, C., Khandare, K. V., Kumar, S., Patil, V. W., Praveen G., M., Virdi, K., Chandrika, Mary, S. A., & Sejjal. (2026). Higher education outreach: What it means and why is it important (1): Module tutor guide. Doctoral Education and Academia Research Centre (DEAR), University of Warwick. Available at: https://wrap.warwick.ac.uk/id/eprint/201081/; https://www.niepa.ac.in/WAHEI_HE_outreach_module

Module manual:

Sabharwal, N. S., Stewart, A., Henderson, E. F., Gafoor K., A., Mahajan, D. J., Rajeshwari, Singh, L. G., Vauquline, P., Ashkarali P., Banjare, D., Borah, B., Gayan, C., Khandare, K. V., Kumar, S., Patil, V. W., Praveen G., M., Virdi, K., Chandrika, Mary, S. A., & Sejjal. (2026). Higher education outreach: What it means and why it is important (2): Module manual. Doctoral Education and Academia Research Centre (DEAR), University of Warwick. Available at: https://wrap.warwick.ac.uk/id/eprint/201081/; https://www.niepa.ac.in/WAHEI_HE_outreach_module

PowerPoint slides:

Sabharwal, N. S., Stewart, A., Henderson, E. F., Gafoor K., A., Mahajan, D. J., Rajeshwari, Singh, L. G., Vauquline, P., Ashkarali P., Banjare, D., Borah, B., Gayan, C., Khandare, K. V., Kumar, S., Patil, V. W., Praveen G., M., Virdi, K., Chandrika, Mary, S. A., & Sejjal. (2026). Higher education outreach: What it means and why is it important (3): Module PowerPoint. Doctoral Education and Academia Research Centre (DEAR), University of Warwick. Available at: https://wrap.warwick.ac.uk/id/eprint/201081/; https://www.niepa.ac.in/WAHEI_HE_outreach_module

2.2 Preparation Process for UK Residential Workshop

The design and drafting of the content for the module was planned to take place at an *intensive residential workshop at Warwick University* between 13–22 June 2025.

Dr Nidhi Sabharwal (National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration (NIEPA)), the WAHEI project co-lead, joined the Warwick-based team members, Professor Ann Stewart and Professor Emily Henderson, to conduct the workshop and to take part in the other visit activities. Research assistance for the visit was provided by Susan Deeb, S. Arokia Mary and Evan Zheng (all Doctoral Education and Academia Research (DEAR) Centre Doctoral Group Members). Matt Phillips, WAHEI Project Coordinator, provided administrative support.

The WAHEI empirical research phase (see Part I of the report) was conducted in each state by a three-person team: a team leader who was a State University (SU) Faculty Member (FM), one further SU FM (or FM from another Higher Education Institution (HEI) if needed), and one FM based at a college. The research process was designed not only to harness SRT member knowledge of their contexts and academic expertise but also to build an identity as HE Outreach Champions by becoming experts in this area of practice. The understanding of HE outreach that SRT FMs developed over the research phase underpinned the module development strategy. This development strategy itself was designed to further develop their identity and motivation to act as champions through building capacity as CPL module developers and eventual module tutors. Thus, the module was to be co-designed by SRTs and Warwick research team members at a residential workshop at the University of Warwick. Originally, funding for SRTs was restricted to team leaders based on initial budgeting but, as set out below, additional funding was secured to enable the opportunity to be offered to all SRT members.

The preparation phase included the following steps:

- **Confirming location.** The location outside India was justified as follows: to enable SRT members to focus entirely on the task without other commitments; to further enhance the group identity developed through Phase 1 activities; and to introduce SRTs to how HE outreach (and Widening Participation (WP) more broadly) was conducted in the UK.

- **Obtaining additional funding.** Initially, the project funding restricted the invitation to team leaders only. As the project developed, this became obvious as a serious limitation to the achievement of our objectives. In particular, it excluded the invaluable contextual knowledge and experience of the college-based FMs who were serving on SRTs and undermined their potential role as HE Outreach Champions. The team were able to

secure additional funding from the University of Warwick's 'ESRC Impact Acceleration Award' and the 'SELCS REF Fund' to extend the invitation to all other team members. 10 SRT members from four SRTs were able to accept our invitation, obtain visas and travel to the UK.

- **Visit programme development.** The visit programme (see Appendix C) was designed to incorporate two related but distinct activities: SRTs capacity building and preparation of the CPL module. Capacity building activities aim to engage SRTs with those responsible for WP policy and implementation and for observation and assessment of the conduct of specific HE outreach activities. To fulfil this objective, a series of activities was arranged, including briefings from specialised WP officers and student ambassadors, visit to Fircroft College in Birmingham and attendance/observation of a University of Warwick Open Day. Meanwhile, module development sessions were arranged to employ SRTs' accumulated research knowledge and contextual experience in CPL module design. These module development activities were interspersed throughout the course of the visit to encourage cross fertilisation of insights.

- **SRTs preparation.** Visit preparation for visiting SRT members' activities included: encouraging reflection on the pedagogical issues associated with adult learning for FMs; familiarising themselves with a key literature source for the module; starting to familiarise themselves with UK WP policies and practices; and preparing for an academic presentation of SRTs' research through completion and submission prior to departure from India of a number of short tasks, including a) identifying a Professional Development (PD) / learning / training event / module they have experienced and reflecting on their learning, b) listing up to four relevant topics they consider to be key to the module, and c) familiarising themselves with examples of WP in UK (see Appendix D).

Intricate and thoughtful preparation was engaged in—including a pre-trip briefing, in order to ensure that SRT members were intellectually as well as logistically prepared for the visit. The next section details the process that was followed in developing the CPL module.

2.3 Module Development Process, Impact and Evaluation

2.3.1 Module Development Process

Each workshop session for the CPL Module development process was designed to produce an agreed outcome for the draft module: to meet the overall objective of producing an agreed co-designed draft of the CPL module by the end of the visit. Thus, the objectives for each session were clearly pre-delineated, but the content and mode of delivery were left open. The initial sessions established the length, format and pedagogical foundations for the module. Then each session concentrated on producing the content and mode of delivery (e.g. delivered by tutor; through practical exercises) for each element within the module. The team often worked in smaller groups to enhance the sharing of knowledge and expertise alongside the preparation of the specific content. The sessions were designed to demonstrate the value of adult learning techniques, by using these within the workshop itself, with the aim of enhancing the capacity of the SRTs as potential module tutors—learning through doing.

This process was divided across the visit days as summarised below.

Module Development Session 1 was structured to cover: the aims and objectives for the workshop; the framework for the module and how it was to be designed; and the presentation / learning points for module design from a review of the SRTs pre-visit tasks (see Appendix E). By the end of Session 1, some significant targets has been achieved: a workable draft for the module structure that contained five sessions conducted over 3h15—two sessions conducted over the first 90 minutes, a 15-minute break, three sessions (including a short concluding session) conducted over the second 90 minutes; an agreement on the module delivery method that should be as participative as possible and be built around practical exercises while also providing the participants with substantive knowledge relating to the topic, including insights drawn from WAHEI research; and an agreement that SRTs would work in smaller groups to produce specific content, enabling team members from different states to work together and to recognise the issues that related to context-specific content, while also contributing toward building a collective identity as HE Outreach Champions and module tutors.

Figure II.2.1: Dr Bornali Borah, Dr Devadas Banjare, Dr Kanwaljeet Virdi and Professor Abdul Gafoor Presenting Inputs for the HE Outreach Module



Module Development Session 2 continued to work on the framework for the module, specifically the tutor guide and module brochure. By the end of the morning session, the format had developed further. The module would provide tutors with a comprehensive guide to the material and conduct of the module (the 'Module Guide'); it would be accompanied by a 'Module Manual' containing key information and sources to enhance tutors' understanding of HE outreach. An outline sketch was produced of what would be covered in each session of the module, providing the building blocks for achieving the target outcomes.

In **Module Development Session 3**, team members reflected on visit activities thus far (see Section 2.4). The session then focused on the production of content and mode of delivery of specific module sessions. By the end of the session, content had been produced for the pre-delivery stage of the module in the form of a flyer to be sent to all participants (see 'Module Guide') and the introductory session of the module.

In **Module Development Sessions 4 and 5**, wide ranging, intellectually intense and stimulating discussions unfolded on the best ways of meeting the objectives of the module, through the most appropriate methods of learning for adult professional learners. Some key questions driving the discussion included: how to build understanding of the concept HE outreach and its

role in the pursuit of social justice within HE?; how to encourage participants to reflect on assumptions that they hold relating to the suitability for HE for potential students and provide the academic evidence and policy framework which supports wider inclusion and informed choice?; and how to shift the focus from reliance on individual FMs offering informal advice to families, friends and community members, to formal institution-based initiatives? By the end of session 4 and 5, a format had been selected which would blend tutor-led sessions to introduce the key concepts and knowledge to provide the case for HE access to achieve social justice and to set out the possible institutional initiatives, with exercises based upon case studies built around individual student experiences. Much collective learning had taken place by harnessing the range of academic skills shared with the whole group.

The focus of **Module Development Session 6** was on the creation of the checklist for the development and conduct of specific institution-based HE outreach initiatives, which would then be included in the module. The specific question this session sought to address was: How does the module contribute to the development of institutional readiness for HE outreach? The process benefitted greatly from the knowledge and experience of SRT members who were able to provide understandings of 'how things work' in state-specific contexts. Colleagues raised the importance of developing online as well as in-person delivery of these initiatives. The outcome of this discussion was a recognised need to develop online formats, but that this would need to be a second stage development. By the end of the session the formats were in place for the planning and delivery of three specific institutional HE outreach activities.

Figure II.2.2: Evan Zheng, Dr Nidhi Sabharwal, Professor Rajeshwari, Dr Shailendra Kumar and Dr Ashkarali in a Group Discussion for Module Development



Module Development Session 7 was the overall review of the draft module produced in previous sessions and the identification of further development needed prior to piloting. This session reviewed all the content that had been gradually accumulated over the course of the previous sessions. By the end of the session, it was agreed that the module tutor guide was in place in draft form and content was identified for the accompanying module manual. There was still more work to be done to turn these drafts into final forms for piloting. It was collectively agreed that Professor Ann Stewart, with the assistance of the project core team, would undertake the further developments/refinements to the agreed draft module co-produced during the visit, to prepare the CPL module in a form that could be used for the pilot.

This further draft was prepared in July 2025 and then circulated to all SRTs (including those who had not been able to attend the visit) for comment.

A final form of the module was prepared and then sent to the NIEPA-based team members at the end of August 2025 for final preparation for the pilot. This final draft was presented to all SRT members at the third SRTs Workshop which was held at NIEPA (New Delhi) on 12th September 2025, one week before the conduct of the pilot. See Figure II.2.3 for an overview of the basics of the module.

Figure II.2.3: Basic Information About the Module

Target audience and rationale：

- FMs in rural-serving state universities and college teachers in rural/semi-urban areas who, based upon our research findings, can act as *champions for change*. The aim is to deepen the potential for their institutions to become *HE knowledge hubs*.

Module content based on empirical research findings:

- The module content and modes of learning are products of the WAHEI empirical phase findings which revealed the extent to which FMs in colleges and State Universities (SUs): (i) understood – or did not yet understand – the concept of HE outreach; (ii) exercised agency to undertake informal outreach activities; and (iii) offered advice and to whom they offered this advice and support. It confirmed the importance of the interaction between academic identity and societal positioning in the exercise of this agency.

Module objectives:

- Builds capacity while recognising FMs as already holding key knowledge about, and educators of, socially and economically disadvantaged groups located in rural and semi-urban areas;
- Assumes and addresses limited or confused understanding of 'HE outreach';
- Emphasises the social justice mission of HE and distinguishes it from the 'business case' for inclusive HE access and choice;
- Counters the potential for HE outreach practices to replicate rather than address the prevalent societal assumptions (based upon FMs' socio-economic and cultural identities);
- Recognises the obstacles that FMs face in exercising agency resulting from their academic positioning within severely resource constrained institutions, often serving geographically remote and disadvantaged communities.

Module pedagogy:

- Adopts adult learning techniques; includes highly participatory learning; uses practical exercises which are adaptable to specific contexts; and is structured around achievable take away 'deliverables'.

2.3.2 Module Development Impact Notes

This section is based on a thematic synthesis of the impact tracking notes taken during the module development sessions (see Section 2.1). Throughout the module development sessions, across the entire visiting period, team members underwent an iterative process of developing the HE outreach CPL Module for FMs in India. There was also evidence of team members incorporating new insights gained from other visit activities (e.g. presentations from the Warwick WP team, see Section 2.4) into the module development. **Group members developed greater confidence and a stronger sense of ownership of the module as the sessions progressed**.

2.3.2.1 Definition of HE Outreach

One key concern that the team repeatedly returned to was the definition of 'outreach'. In order to teach this vital concept in the module, the group engaged in constant debates, discussions and reflections throughout the sessions. In the first session, the lack of a defined concept of 'HE outreach' in the Indian context triggered intense debate as the team sought to identify the necessary components to include in the module content. In subsequent sessions, discussion took place of how 'HE outreach' should be introduced in the module, and when it should be introduced, for example at the beginning to frame the module, or embedded progressively through participant activities.

Visit activities (see Section 2.4), such as presentations delivered by Warwick WP professionals and student ambassadors, turned out to be valuable resources for the project team to understand nuances in HE outreach. For instance, the team developed greater consensus on the meaning of 'HE outreach' and its social justice implications after direct engagement with WP officers. Subsequently, they identified a central theme of addressing the assumptions that FMs may bring to the module based on their own learning process, such as questioning why HE outreach is needed if student numbers are already high. The team suggested that the module should function as a 'sensitisation tool' to move FMs from such assumptions towards a social justice-oriented perspective.

To achieve this learning outcome in the module, the team framed 'HE outreach' through two competing lenses: the 'business case', highlighting potential financial and reputational gains

for the institution, and the 'social justice case', addressing structural exclusion and inequality. This tactical design was to ensure this concept can be easily understood and accepted by various potential participants who may hold diverse positionalities and motivations.

2.3.2.2 Pedagogical Dimensions of the Module

The team gave considerable attention to the pedagogical dimensions of the module, with a clear learning outcome centred on shifting faculty values rather than merely transmitting information about HE outreach. This distinction shaped subsequent design decisions. Initial discussions addressed module format, target audience, managing expectations, and the scope of what the module could realistically achieve. The team was deliberate in resisting the temptation to be comprehensive, recognising that a module oriented toward changing values requires depth over breadth. Through extended discussion and exchange of ideas, the team settled on a five-session structure: three tutor-led sessions on HE outreach; a fourth devoted to HE outreach activity design; and a fifth for evaluation and reflection.

To enact the focus on value change, the group reached consensus on seeking participatory and arts-based approaches, including storytelling, rapport-building and role play. Underlying this choice was the team's shared assumption that faculty are unlikely to champion HE outreach that they have not personally experienced in a meaningful way. The team also recognised that the tutor is central to module delivery, concluding that effective facilitation requires the tutor to model the values the module seeks to instil. A qualified tutor should be able to safeguard participants, ensure their voices are valued throughout, and keep sight of the practical realities participants face, prioritising activities that can be realistically applied within their own institutions.

To embed the participatory approach further, the team proposed allowing each participant or group to define their own HE outreach target audience and design activities accordingly. This decision reflected a deliberate enactment of the module's core principle that HE outreach must be locally owned to be meaningful. With the ultimate aim of positioning FMs as ambassadors of HE outreach and WP, the team invested significant effort in designing the outreach activity session, ensuring participants have accessible materials to begin with. The wider project group

divided into smaller sub-groups during workshops to develop different activity types, before reconvening for whole-group discussion to share and refine ideas.

2.3.2.3 Contextualisation of HE Outreach Within the Indian HE Context

The group confirmed the importance of contextualising HE outreach within the Indian HE context and therefore placed it at the heart of the module design. The forms of HE outreach activity, delivery models, perceived constraints, social structures, and institutional and regional variation were all discussed and negotiated throughout the design process. Central to this contextualisation was the team's sharpened understanding of what HE outreach actually means. The team was deliberate in distinguishing HE outreach from recruitment, concluding that genuine HE outreach is about reaching students who are unlikely to apply without targeted intervention, not simply increasing enrolment numbers. This distinction carried evaluative weight: the team noted that institutional practices in certain regions face pressure to prioritise urban-facing recruitment over equity-focused HE outreach and named this as a tension the module must help faculty recognise and navigate. To make the social justice focus explicit, the team identified rural and tribal students with limited access to resources as a primary target audience for HE outreach, while also acknowledging the need to allow future module tutors and participants to define more specific target groups based on the nuanced realities of their own contexts.

The module design further reflects the team's collective understanding of the structural constraints shaping HE outreach in India. Parental and family involvement was identified as a decisive factor, particularly in relation to women's access to HE, where decisions are often made at the family level rather than by students themselves. This insight led the team to conclude that HE outreach activities must engage families, not just students, and that the design of activities should reflect this from the beginning. Community-based fairs held in neutral venues were proposed as one mechanism for achieving this, offering a setting less formally tied to schools or HEIs and therefore more accessible to families who might otherwise feel distanced from HE. Other constraints identified by the team include transport, resourcing, relationship-building with schools, and the role of local languages and dialects in effective communication. Rather than treating these as peripheral concerns, the team embedded responses to them directly into the module, through recommendations in the activity design

template, practical checklists and illustrative examples drawn from the WAHEI project. One example that generated productive discussion came from the Haryana team members, who described a Twinning Programme linking HEIs with local schools. This prompted wider reflection on the inclusivity of structured partnership models.

Drawing on this newly deepened understanding of HE outreach and local diversity, the team agreed on four formats of HE outreach activity suitable for the Indian context: outreach to schools; inreach to HEIs; community-based outreach; and virtual outreach. To support participants in translating these frameworks into concrete plans, the team designed semi-structured templates within the module materials, enabling each participant to develop contextually grounded HE outreach activity designs within their own institutional setting.

Beyond the design of HE outreach activities themselves, the team also drew on their own professional experience to anticipate how the module might be received at the faculty level. Recognising that HE outreach is not yet an established concept across much of the Indian HE environment, the team reflected carefully on the risk of contestation, particularly from FMs with little prior exposure to equity-focused agendas or from those who perceive WP programmes as advantaging underrepresented groups at the expense of others. This awareness led the team to think strategically about how the module was framed and justified. Rather than presenting WP and HE outreach as external or ideological impositions, the team explored linking the module to existing policy frameworks already recognised within India, including Quality Assurance processes, National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 workshops, Faculty Induction Programmes (FIP) and Faculty Development Programmes (FDP). This alignment was seen not as a compromise of the module's values, but as a considered strategy to build legitimacy, lower resistance and provide FMs with a clearer institutional rationale for engagement.

As can be seen from this thematic synthesis of the impact notes from the module workshop sessions, a great deal of collective learning occurred which was entirely based on the discursive nature of the workshop pedagogy and the wide range of team members involved.

2.3.3 Module Development Session Evaluation

In the written evaluation of the visit which SRT members were asked to complete at the end of the visit, team members were asked about any key points of new knowledge/understanding

about WP and HE outreach they had gained from the workshop development sessions throughout the week. This section presents a synthesis of this part of the written evaluation, taking care to anonymise team members' responses.

2.3.3.1 Knowledge Gains – HE Outreach and WP

The week-long workshop development sessions provided a critical space for all team members to synthesise their observations into actionable knowledge. A primary takeaway for the group was the shift towards viewing HEIs as proactive agents of social change. FM1 noted that 'WP is not much about filling seats; it is about social equity and reaching the 'unreached"', a perspective echoed by FM10, who learned to differentiate between the 'business' and 'social justice' angles of HE outreach. The complexity of implementing these ideals into practical design was a recurring theme. FM3 observed that designing effective HE outreach is a 'highly complex endeavour' that requires 'systematic long-term planning' rather than brief interventions. Institutions experiencing strong demand are particularly well placed to demonstrate leadership by extending their social responsibility and outreach to students and communities that remain underrepresented in HE. Similarly, FM8 reflected on the importance of high-ranking institutions balancing considerations of institutional growth and competitiveness with their wider commitments to social inclusion and public purpose. FM5 noted that the team learned 'new dimensions of social and community outreach'. By the end of the sessions, the 10 participants had moved beyond general definitions to a nuanced understanding of the planning, collaboration and context-specific strategies required for effective HE outreach.

A significant portion of the learning resulted from peer-to-peer exchange and critical reflection on the Indian HE context. FM2 gained insight into the 'decentralised and professional approach' to WP in the UK, which prompted them to reflect on how 'context-specific models' might be developed within India's unique policy frameworks. This comparative learning was a highlight for FM6, who discovered that regional Indian initiatives such as the 'Poshak Vidyalaya Scheme' (Feeder Schools Scheme) operate through peer interaction, leading them to conclude that 'existing clubs and societies' in HEIs can be used to effectively kickstart WP efforts where formal structures are missing. FM10 supported this by stating that the sessions made them aware of 'HE barriers and practices in different parts of [their] own country'.

2.3.3.2 Knowledge Gains – Professional Development Design

With little to no previous experience in designing a CPL module for FMs, all ten team members presented in-depth accounts on how they acquired various understandings of module development though the workshop discussions.

The team gained specific technical knowledge regarding curriculum and workshop design. FM4 praised the module development sessions as a 'practical model of collaborative and participatory learning', gaining clarity on how faculty can act as 'change agents' through school visits and virtual outreach. This was supported by FM9, who appreciated the 'hidden sequence' of the curriculum design, and FM7, who emphasised that 'critical thinking' and 'coordination among all participants' are essential when preparing a CPL module. FM10 concluded that the greatest value lay in learning how to 'amalgamate different perspectives' into a 'unified framework which is practical and implementable'.

A distinct area of learning was the collaborative nature of curriculum design. The team appreciated that module development is not a solitary task but a democratic process requiring vigorous debate. FM3 emphasised the importance of 'systematic planning' and 'democratic, collaborative' effort, noting that successful design requires 'meticulously recording all details' generated during group work. FM1 gained the insight that different or even conflicting views are essential, stating that 'arguments and counterarguments help to bring clarity' during brainstorming. FM10 validated this approach, observing that working in small, mixed-state groups to reach a 'consensus idea' allowed the team to discuss issues until they are 'threadbare', ensuring the final module was robust and representative of diverse perspectives.

The team acquired technical knowledge regarding the structural frameworks and sequencing required for a CPL module. FM5 reported learning how to 'sequence learning stages based on concepts' and organise activities within a specific timeframe. FM7 broke this down further, identifying the essential components of a module framework: 'rapport establishment', 'content of sessions', and dedicated 'space for activity and feedback'. FM6 added that a successful structure must move beyond information delivery to include 'clear learning outcomes' and specific 'interactive elements', ensuring the training feels collaborative rather than imposed.

The team members developed skills in translating research and context into module content. FM8 identified a clear outcome: learning 'how to transform the findings of our research into a module', bridging the gap between academic literature and teaching material. FM9 adopted a practical pedagogical view of 'experience not theory', arguing that modules must be built on 'fieldwork' and observation rather than abstract concepts. FM4 applied this specifically to the Indian HE context, noting that he learned to design 'simple, engaging modules' that fit the 'rural context', incorporating practical tools rather than generic advice.

Finally, the team learned critical facilitation and engagement strategies by observing the workshop leaders. FM2 highlighted the importance of 'role modelling', noting that they learned how to 'meaningfully engage participants' and, crucially, how to 'address existing prejudices and misconceptions' to demystify complex topics. FM4 supported this, noting the effectiveness of using 'stories and group activities' to help faculty understand outreach. FM6 and FM10 both concluded that the 'guidance and patience' demonstrated by the project team leaders showed them that effective training requires creating a 'space for reflection' where participants feel supported rather than instructed.

As can be seen from the synthesis of the team members' evaluation of the module development workshops, significant learning took place at both a substantive level as well as in terms of the process of designing a CPL module.

2.4 UK Visit Activities Contributing to HE Outreach Champion Capacity Development

This section includes information and evaluation synthesis from the written evaluations about the three other principal components of the UK visit, other than the module development workshops (Section 2.3): a visit to Fircroft College, WP briefings and a visit to an Open Day at the University of Warwick.

2.4.1 Visit to Fircroft College

2.4.1.1 About the Visit

The team members were briefed prior to departure by Professor Henderson on the role of Fircroft College as a residential adult education provider with an explicit social justice focus, located in Birmingham. On arrival, the Principal of the College, Dr Mel Lenehan, outlined the history and purposes of the college and Dr Holly Henderson, a tutor at the college with responsibility for Access to HE, delivered a presentation. Team members were then introduced to the students and heard more about their educational journeys and shared their own experiences with the students.

During the initial discussions with Mel and Holly, the SRT members actively discussed various aspects of support offered by Fircroft in enabling access to HE for adult learners. Some of the state team members found this approach to ensuring social justice novel and drew comparisons from Indian structures, such as the National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS). They then discussed the differences, illustrating the holistic support that Fircroft's residential programmes offered to facilitate access. During the small group discussions with the students at Fircroft, the team members discussed the inter-institutional linkages between Fircroft and social support organisations. By the end of the visit the team members had gained many insights into how the institution facilitated access to HE and supported their students through the process of learning.

2.4.1.2 Learnings from Fircroft Visit

Team members were asked about any key points of new knowledge/understanding about WP and HE outreach they had gained from the talks and activities at Fircroft College.

All team members appreciated Fircroft College's commitment to HE outreach and WP, and noted that the visit deepened their understanding of the practical dimensions of WP. Team members stated that they gained insights from the College's sustained efforts with HE outreach. They commented that 'efforts made by the College management for WP and HE outreach through counselling and guidance are commendable' (FM5), and they recognised that 'it needs a dedicated team of people with big heart to uplift and help people who got lost in their academic

pathway due to various reasons beyond their control' (FM1). By witnessing the staff and efforts behind WP, the team learned that sustained commitment from across the institution is essential for impactful HE outreach.

The team also highlighted several key aspects of Fircroft's WP practices that had deepened their understanding of WP. Both FM4 and FM2 were impressed by the College's proactive engagement in building 'trust and accessibility within underserved communities' (FM4), which they believed 'plays a crucial role in WP' (FM2). FM4 noted that 'the importance of faculty engaging directly with local communities to demystify HE' can effectively address students' concerns about HE.

FM3, FM6, and FM10 emphasised Fircroft's dedicated initiatives to provide inclusive environments that support a 'dignified life' (FM10) for non-traditional learners. FM6 noted that the inclusiveness is fostered by 'addressing wider barriers such as mental health, housing, etc. and works on building their confidence, and not just their academic readiness'. In addition to learning spaces, they noted that the College provides a 'safe and nurturing residential environment' for adult learners, enabling students to 'build deep trust and emotional bonds' with the College and its faculty (FM3). They believed these efforts 'demonstrate the inclusiveness of HE outreach to [those who are] vulnerable [in] various life circumstances' (FM10).

Figure II.2.4: Fircroft Visit Including WAHEI Team Members and Fircroft Staff and Students



Moreover, as a group of experts in HE and teaching, the team observed innovative teaching methods designed to cater to diverse learning needs. Both FM8 and FM10 commented on the learning experiences for adult learners, believing that 'innovative pedagogy' (FM8) effectively supports adult education and that inclusive learning spaces offer invaluable opportunities for students from non-conventional backgrounds.

Most team members also stated that they gained 'deeper understanding of…HE outreach' (FM6). Observing the diversity of disadvantaged groups represented at Fircroft, FM8 developed a 'clear and broader understanding of the different categories of people who can fall under the categories of HE outreach', while FM3 observed the College's effort to empower 'all individuals, especially those from educationally disadvantaged backgrounds, offering encouragement at every point to build confidence and facilitate their progression into HE'.

Lastly, FM1 and FM3 expressed that these HE outreach and WP practices had brought new hope and opportunities to adult learners, positively transforming their educational journeys and life prospects. Furthermore, they discussed the 'ethical value' of HE (FM8) and recognised the vital learning point that the 'HE outreach is about social justice' (FM1).

2.4.2 WP Briefings

2.4.2.1 About the Briefings

Over the course of the visit, team members heard from WP professionals and student ambassadors to gain practical knowledge about WP and HE outreach practices at the University of Warwick and beyond.

The first presentation, which addressed WP, was by Katie Berlin and Victoria Hill, two of Warwick's faculty WP engagement officers. The presentation included: an overview of the institutional arrangements for WP in the UK context; an explanation of the University of Warwick's eligibility criteria and the Access and Participation Plan (AAP); and a description of WP teams, sub-teams and their working mechanisms, including programmes across the student life cycle (e.g., Academic Taster Days, Sutton Trust Summer School, Post-16 programmes).

The second presentation was given by Dr Anjali Thomas, the University of East Anglia's WP Evaluation Officer (and PhD alumna of the project preceding WAHEI), who focused on the UK policy context and the role of evaluation. The presentation included: an overview of the types of evaluation and the development of Theories of Change (ToC); an explanation of the AAP as a formal agreement with the Office for Students; and an introduction to key data tools and indicators and associated evaluation methods.

Figure II.2.5: Dr Anjali Thomas Sharing UK WP Policy Context and Role of Evaluation



The speakers of the third presentation were Kike Famuyima, Warwick's student recruitment regional manager on outreach programmes, and Dr Helen Toner, Coordinator for Warwick Law School's Open Day programmes. The presentations included: an overview of UK student recruitment strategy and its alignment with broader university goals; an explanation of the recruitment cycle, student recruitment activities, and on-campus events, including Open Days and Offer Holder Days; and insights into the organisational structure of Open Days, including collaboration with departmental staff, student ambassadors, and admissions officers.

The last presentation was a case study of WP in Warwick Law School, delivered by Aqsa Aktar, Warwick Law School WP officer, and two student ambassadors. The presentation included: the strategic framework and structure of Warwick Law School WP, a combination of the university's APP with departmental targets supported by both academic staff and WP officers; a variety of WP initiatives, such as Writing Wrongs, Pathways to Law, and the Sutton Trust Summer School; and contextual admissions and participation goals.

Figure II.2.6: Student Ambassadors and WP Officer Aqsa Aktar Interacting with SRTs



By the end of the briefings, team members had gained insights into how WP policy and practice is conducted in English universities and an appreciation of the differing contributions from Warwick FMs and WP/outreach professionals. They also recognised that professional expertise in WP is still very limited in India, thus requiring FMs to cover this activity into their existing workloads.

2.4.2.2 Learnings from WP Briefings

As documented by the impact notes, during the presentations, team members displayed clear evidence of developing their understanding of the nuances of WP and HE outreach by asking detailed questions. The nature of the questions showed that the team members were developing a comparative picture of the UK and Indian contexts and working out how UK practices could work in the Indian context.

In terms of **developing an understanding of the UK WP policy context**, one team member asked about the extent to which WP programmes are ubiquitous in the UK context, which revealed that different institutions of different sizes operate WP programmes at different scales. There was also a question as to whether there is a national-level mapping of WP, which revealed that there are national systems and data repositories tracking WP. Further questions were

raised against admission process for WP students and contextual offers. It was revealed that WP applicants' UCAS fees will be reimbursed through identifying their postcode and schools and that the contextual offers made to WP applicants are seen as affirming, not lowering standards, with most contextual offer holders still meeting the standard offer requirement.

Team members also showed strong interest in understanding the **WP support structure** at Warwick. One team member asked about how the WP structure has changed over time, which revealed that WP function has grown significantly since 2019, from part-time representatives in the Student Union to a team of 20+ full-time WP officers. There were also questions about departmental level WP support. It was revealed that each department acts independently, with guidance, coordination and school contacts provided by the central WP team.

As a result of this active engagement in WP briefing, the visit evaluation showed that all team members gained 'a deeper perspective on' (FM4) how WP and HE outreach are happening at Warwick, as reflected by team members through the module evaluation. Nine team members shared their insights after following Anjali Thomas's presentation, which was regarded as 'a comprehensive evaluation of WP strategies' (FM2) and one that 'provided a future roadmap of HE outreach evaluation'. Consequently, team members reported gaining 'valuable insights into the evolving landscape' of WP.

FM6 and FM3 highlighted the critical role of data in assessing the effectiveness of WP initiatives, noting that 'using evidence not only helps refine outreach strategies but also demonstrates impact to stakeholders' (FM6). Other team members similarly recognised the significance of evaluation within WP and outreach practices. For example, FM2 stated that 'identification of risk indicators, to the formulation of targeted objectives, and the design of intervention strategies with clearly defined activities' could greatly inform HE outreach strategy.

Team members demonstrated during the session that they were **thinking through the pipeline from school to HE**. One team member asked how potential HE students were identified for WP in schools, which revealed that schoolteachers play a role in identifying students with HE potential and aspirations.

There was also evidence that team members were **mapping the prevalence of 'WP students' (i.e. those who have had access to WP support) within institutions**, and it was revealed that some disciplines (e.g. Economics) have a lower representation.

Team members demonstrated strong interest in **understanding HE outreach activities and practices in UK for the purpose of evaluating its local adaption in India**; one example is the Open Day. The team inquired about the organisation process, the targeted audience and typical activities included in an Open Day. The team members raised a few questions about WP students and their families' presence during Open Day, including how they are included in the activities and how their questions about HE are addressed. It was revealed that targeted invitations are made through schools and teachers to WP background students, with sometimes travel expenses and meals reimbursed by the university. Visits were scheduled to take place during quieter times to provide support to these students who may worry about how they are perceived. In the module evaluation, participants showed awareness and concerns around applying learning to the Indian context. For example, in the visit evaluation, FM2 observed that behind Warwick's 'well-structured institutional approach' lies a 'supportive policy framework at the national level'. Reflecting on the Indian context, they admitted that while many models may not be directly transferable, they nevertheless 'provide valuable insights on the importance of evidence-based and strategic planning in HE outreach practices'.

Another example is student ambassadors' role and peer support in HE outreach. The team asked how WP ambassadors are trained and the answer revealed that they would receive a concise information pack and guidance on redirecting questions, and as WP students themselves, they typically are more knowledgeable than staff about WP programmes and eligibility. A further question from the team on peer support also revealed that WP alumni are involved in mentoring others at events.

In the module evaluation, six team members were particularly impressed by Warwick WP student ambassadors, describing the initiative as 'crucial' (FM7). They observed that prospective WP students could more easily 'relate and connect in a significant manner with already enrolled students' (FM6), as the shared WP backgrounds enable them to 'open up with student volunteers' (FM10). By involving student ambassadors within the WP landscape, the

Open Day events became sites where ambassadors and volunteers 'instil faith in underserved students' (FM1), and 'motivate other students' (FM7).

The team further reflected on the impact of WP activities after listening to the student ambassadors' presentations. FM4 believed that WP helped 'students to overcome socio-economic cultural barriers', while FM6 found 'prospective students' confidence, aspirations, and sense of belonging' were direct outcomes of WP.

Given the focus of the WAHEI project on the involvement of FMs in HE outreach, several nuanced questions were asked about **how HE outreach is configured in UK HEIs and the role of FMs**. For instance, team members asked about the personnel allocated to WP and realised that large teams of staff members work on WP within HEIs as their professional roles. The notion of a 'WP lead'—an academic in a department who has responsibility for coordinating WP—was introduced and team members asked if this role was voluntary, showing they were thinking through how WP institutional work is incentivised. Further questions revealed that earlier career academics (Assistant Professors) are often involved in WP work, as are academics who are passionate about this area of practice.

FM involvement in HE outreach activities was a key area of interest within the team. Several questions on faculty involvement in outreach activities revealed that faculty attend school visits with WP officers, and in some cases student ambassadors, and their engagement significantly shapes Open Day activities offered. Moreover, their involvement is often ensured through a mix of workload credit and structured engagement strategies.

One of the presentations focused on the evaluation of WP practice, and again questions emerged which showed that team members were **exploring how WP evaluation practices would operate in their own institutional contexts**. It was asked if FMs are involved in WP evaluation and it was revealed that post-graduate students and/or staff members may be involved as a form of PD. Teaching hours / credited involvement were mentioned.

There were questions pertaining to **different stakeholders who may be involved in WP and the information/support they may need**, which showed an awareness of the different actors involved beyond individual students. For instance, a team member asked if there are sessions for **schoolteachers** about WP—the answer was that, yes, there is such an initiative. Another

team member asked how parents are involved, and it was revealed that parents are included in HE outreach activities e.g. Open Days.

After the entire WP briefing session, team members in the module evaluation considered how WP is supported systematically at both institutional and national levels. Three members noted the unique position of WP officers within HE system. FM6 stated they had 'never come across any such dedicated position meant exclusively for the purpose of widening participation' and described it as 'a novel learning experience to observe the significant role that the WP officer plays in bringing more people under the ambit of higher education'. WP was recognised as 'a systematic team effort' (FM1) in HEIs, which can 'function as active access and participation catalysts' (FM3).

2.4.3 Visit to University of Warwick Open Day

2.4.3.1 About the Visit to the University of Warwick Open Day

Team members were able to observe a Saturday Open Day. They divided into two groups which attended different sessions in the overall programme. One group also observed the specific activities provided by Education Studies; the other observed those offered by the Law School. The sessions attended by the groups included: Welcome to Warwick; Accommodation Talk; Student Experience; Admissions Panel and Q&A; 'Your Money at Warwick' (Finance Session); Careers and Employability; Parents and Supporters: Wellbeing and Student Support; Library Drop-in; Visit to the Student Union; Introduction to BA Education and a Taster Lecture; and Law Talk and Law Drop-in. At the end of the Open Day, team members gathered for a debrief, to analyse and reflect on their experiences of the event. It was clear that visiting the Open Day was an enlightening experience for all concerned, and that it had brought to life some of the ideas that had been discussed during the visit week.

Figure II.2.7: Team Members Attending an Open Day Session at the Law School



2.4.3.2 Learnings from the Visit to the Open Day

Active participation in the Open Day provided the team with a clear demonstration of an HE outreach activity. Their observations and reflections showed **clear evidence of developing understanding and critical evaluation of outreach practice**.

The **team reflected on their overall experience**, which they found fruitful, informative, engaging and well-coordinated. From their observations, the Open Day focused on what the university can offer, such as facilities, success stories and strong job outcomes. A wide range of structured sessions, including talks, taster lectures and finance sessions, provided a full picture of university life. They particularly appreciated the clear link between study and career, demonstrated through course pathways.

On Saturday in the module evaluation, when team members were asked about any key points of new knowledge/understanding about WP and HE outreach they had gained from Open Day sessions, they recognised that the Open Day event had served as a live observation site for the project team to experience the university-wide effort in WP and HE outreach. All team members

actively participated in a diverse range of activities, from the Welcome Lecture to department-specific seminars.

The sheer scale and logistical implementation of the event were the first points of observation for the 10 team members. In the evaluation, FM1 described it as a 'big event' requiring 'great planning, orchestration, and coordination skills', a view shared by FM7, who focused on the necessity of understanding exactly 'whose participation is required' to coordinate such a complex operation. FM5 and FM10 both attributed this success to the 'meticulous' preparation and the 'unparallel[ed]' commitment of the faculty.

The team engaged deeply with the academic components of the day. FM2 found the Education Studies presentation and the interactive academic taster sessions particularly insightful, noting that experiencing the structure of these sessions was 'crucial' before recommending similar practices in India. FM10, who attended the Law School session, observed significant diversity among the attendees. Seeing that WP enrolment in Law was around 30%, they concluded that the 'efforts of WP are working', with the session serving as proof that WP students act as real-time ambassadors within their communities. Moreover, the team investigated the support systems that enable HE access. Both FM9 and FM10 highlighted the Financial Aid session as a critical learning moment. FM9 was moved by the loan system and repayment structures, wishing for similar 'financial steps' to aid rural students in Indian universities, while FM10 viewed the loan waiver and repayment flexibility discussed in the session as a concrete 'WP case' catering to students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

FM4 and FM5 observed the campus tours, student ambassador experience sharing and faculty-led Q&A sessions. FM3 noted that these interactions help prospective students to 'visualise' their future and address the misconception that HE is 'only for elite students'. FM6 expanded on this, observing how parents and carers engaged with these sessions. They learned that effective outreach must go beyond information sharing to 'inspire confidence' and foster a genuine sense of belonging.

However, according to the impact notes, **the team critically analysed the apparent absence of WP students at the Open Day** and reflected on the question: 'Would I feel that I belong here if I came from a working-class background?' They observed that most attendees were white and

that people arrived mostly by car, with fewer using public transport. Some team members felt that efforts towards inclusivity appeared tokenistic, with only one Black student speaking at the Welcome Session.

Figure II.2.8: Team Briefing After Attending Open Day at Warwick



Given the focus of the WAHEI project, **the team analysed the experience of WP students attending an Open Day, thinking about how HE outreach activities can fulfil a social justice mission**. Although academic expectations and potential career pathways were clearly presented, the team questioned how many WP students would be aware of the event or feel confident enough to attend. For students or parents attending such an event for the first time, or those with limited educational experience, the day could feel intense and overwhelming. While the finance session covered useful information on loans and budgeting, it also raised concerns about the financial burden for students without additional support at home.

The event also prompted critical reflection regarding the gaps in current WP practices, as highlighted in the module evaluation. FM8 acknowledged the necessary 'marketing agenda' in the Open Day but critiqued the lack of 'virtual media' usage, arguing that digital access is essential for student families who cannot be physically present. FM3 offered a profound realisation regarding the limits of such events. They noted that even well-resourced attempts 'may still fall short… of effectively reaching the most underprivileged populations'.

The impact notes also documented how **Open Day observations also informed the team's module development**. Two key takeaways were the value of taster lectures and the variety of session types, alongside the strong emphasis on support and clear guidance throughout the day. To adapt these practices to the Indian context, the team proposed **incorporating parent sessions in Open Day design** and **providing step-by-step guidance on designing HE outreach activities within the HE outreach module**.

Overall, the Open Day was an inspiring experience for the team, as identified in the module evaluation. They had a deepened understanding that successful outreach requires a 'whole-institution' approach where finance, faculty, and current students align to make the university an accessible option for all.

From the above accounts of learnings from the three additional activities that were incorporated into the visit schedule, it was clear that all three activities brought HE outreach to life and gave team members a sense of their own potential as HE Outreach Champions.

2.5 Impact of the UK Visit on HE Outreach Champion Development

This section draws on evaluation feedback from SRT members during the visit to explore how the UK visit motivated their development as HE Outreach Champions.

2.5.1 Overall Impact of the Visit

The week-long visit triggered some fundamental changes in the team members, moving beyond skill acquisition to a deeper conceptual realignment regarding the purpose of WP and HE outreach. FM1 identified a 'change in the way of looking at WP', understanding now that it is 'more about social equity than filling the seats'. This reflection was reinforced by FM7, who reported a 'change in perception, way of working and way of thinking about WP', and FM4, for whom the experience helped 'correct the misconception' that top-tier universities are only for the elite, demonstrating instead that these universities utilise HE outreach for 'inclusiveness and equity'. For many, this view shift manifested as a 'renewed and clearer sense of purpose'. FM6 stated they were returning to India as a 'champion—someone who initiates, advocates, and helps build sustainable pathways' for students. They described the visit as 'energising', leaving them 'motivated and hopeful' that 'even small actions can make a significant difference'. FM10

expressed a similar conviction, stating they firmly believes FMs are the ‘harbinger of social transformation’ whose role in creating a just society ‘extends beyond the traditional role of imparting subject knowledge’; a realisation that triggered personal ‘reflections on self’.

This week-long immersive experience and workshop design equipped the team members with practical frameworks for action. FM2 highlighted how the exposure to ‘structured, research-informed, and policy-supported’ practices helped them ‘think critically’ about adapting these models to the Indian context. FM8 gained technical training, specifically learning ‘how modules are designed from research findings’ and ‘how action-oriented research is implemented’, which made their belief in ‘participatory learning more stronger’. FM9 adopted a rigorous new process approach to increasing access, summarising their takeaway as a cycle of being ‘involved in each and every process’, specifically defined as ‘do-learn-do-learn-spread-monitoring-assessment’.

In addition to the activities arranged in the visit programme, eight team members reflected deeply on the organisational culture and schedule design that underpinned the week’s success. These soft learning outcomes were frequently discussed as just as transformative as the formal curriculum. The considerate arrangement of events and activities were highlighted by participants. FM7 was particularly struck by the ‘acceptance of all participants without any prejudice’. They noted the value of creating ‘equal space for all voices’. FM8 and FM10 also had a similar observation, both emphasising the inclusive team dynamics. FM8 noted the ‘lack of class and gender barriers’ and the ‘patience to listen’ modelled by the project leaders, while FM10 was deeply touched by how the moderation encouraged diverse viewpoints, allowing them to feel the ‘deep commitment of the central team to social justice’.

Finally, the physical and strategic environment of the university left an enduring mark on the participants’ professional standards. FM1 observed how the campus design, specifically the ‘open spaces’ effectively facilitate ‘group talks and idea exchange’, while FM4 noted that the ‘thoroughly planned’ infrastructure and ‘informal interactions’ with other SRTs provided a blueprint for world-class educational environments. FM3 described the impact of experiencing the campus environment as ‘profound and multifaceted’, noting that witnessing the ‘democratic and intercultural transactions’ and the ‘strong sense of collegiality, care, and mutual support’ influenced their understanding of an ‘ideal academic environment’. FM5 focused on the ‘punctuality and seriousness towards work’ observed throughout the week,

stating a commitment to ‘implement this in [their] life’. FM6 connected these physical and practical elements to the wider mission, appreciating how the week’s specific workshops fit into a ‘much larger, strategic effort’ to make HE truly ‘more inclusive and accessible’.

Overall, this visit had a fundamental impact on participants by equipping them with a deeper understanding of the social justice purpose of WP and HE outreach, as well as practical examples of how to conduct HE outreach activities. The immersive experience at Warwick not only provided practical knowledge of the collective efforts involved in HE outreach, but also helped participants to realise that the institutional environment is essential for supporting HE outreach and WP actions.

2.5.2 HE Outreach Champions and Action Plans

A key aim of the UK visit was to equip SRT members with the capacity to act as HE Outreach Champions, enabling them to develop CPL modules and serve as module tutors in future. Therefore, SRT members were invited, in the written evaluation, to reflect on their action plans for conducting HE outreach and share their understanding of the HE Outreach Champion identity at the end of the visit.

2.5.2.1 Plan to Conduct HE Outreach and/or Make Suggestions on HE Outreach

Team members were asked if, as a result of this visit, they were now planning to conduct HE outreach and/or make suggestions about HE outreach at their HEI. They were also encouraged to give as much detail as possible on these plans and intentions (including timescale).

This visit not only equipped the project team with more nuanced understanding of WP and HE Outreach, it also motivated the project team to take action in their own institutions and other HEIs in their region. When asked if they intended to conduct HE outreach upon their return, all 10 participants confirmed their intention to implement changes, with two members providing highly detailed, month-by-month roadmaps for the coming academic year.

Notably, two team members prepared detailed timelines and logistics for their initiatives. FM4 provided a very comprehensive blueprint for institutionalising outreach, proposing a phased rollout from August 2025 to June 2026:

- August 2025: Present the business case for HE outreach to the Principal and appoint an Outreach Officer.
- September 2025: Conduct faculty training workshops using a 'diary system' to track contributions.
- December 2025: Formalise the Student Ambassador role, crucially noting that they intend to obtain consent to recognise this work as an 'Internship' to fulfil student credits.
- January 2026: Launch school visits and community outreach with Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) partners.
- June 2026: Organise a short Open Day.

FM1 similarly constructed a precise timeline, focusing on visual aids and taster sessions:

- July 2025: Initiate discussions with the Internal Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC) director regarding WP interventions.
- August 2025: Create and distribute ‘graphical flowcharts of academic and career pathways’ to schools.
- September 2025: Organise small ‘taster sessions’ within the department for prospective students.

Other team members acknowledged that higher levels of advocacy in the HEI would be needed to secure necessary permissions and resources. FM8 planned to target the highest levels of governance, scheduling meetings with the Vice Chancellor and Registrar to initiate ‘institutional HE outreach and WP’ and share the study materials for documentation. FM2 intended to utilise the framework developed in Session 4 of the module (Outreach, In-reach, Community reach) to engage with Career and Guidance Cells. They also noted that their SRT would work collaboratively to propose a ‘feasible pilot activity’ as a trial initiative in their respective institutions. FM6 adopted a resourceful approach, planning to assign HE outreach activities to ‘existing committees, societies, and clubs’ within the college to bypass the need for new administrative structures immediately.

Three members focused on immediate pedagogical changes and resource production to 'sensitise' their institution. FM3 distinguished between long-term attitudinal shifts and immediate actions. They planned to sensitise colleagues to create 'informative flyers and booklets' (print and digital) that demystify student support schemes, financial aid, and mental health services. FM5 has already begun integrating 'Social Outreach' topics into their lectures for the FIP, while FM9 aimed to establish a 'strong bridge' between schools and universities through existing WP structures, such as National Service Scheme (NSS) public lectures and science exhibitions specifically targeting 11th and 12th grade students. FM7 noted a commitment to changing the 'execution' of community outreach to align more closely with WP goals.

Although the team members were motivated to contribute to HE outreach, there was recognition that there are still existing systematic barriers in Indian HE. It is vital to note the realistic assessment provided by FM10. While they feel personally 'empowered' to act as a resource person for HE outreach, they highlighted that the HE setup in their state is 'rigid' with a 'top-down approach'. They honestly expressed that implementation often relies on the personal priorities and vision of institutional leaders. However, they remain committed to advocating for HE outreach activities, such as Open Days, should the opportunity arise, demonstrating that the visit has equipped the team members with the resilience to navigate even challenging policy environments.

These suggestions, recommendations and concerns demonstrate participants' enhanced capacity to translate their learning outcomes into plans for practical HE outreach initiatives, as well as their motivation to further WP efforts within their institutional and national contexts.

2.5.2.2 Feeling like an 'HE Outreach Champion'

Team members were asked whether they feel like an HE Outreach Champion as a result of the visit. If so, they were asked to share what this means for them. Nine of the ten group members firmly believed they are qualified as HE Outreach Champions.

FM3 provided a comprehensive definition of their understanding, stating that being a champion means 'internalising and acting upon the responsibility' to make education genuinely accessible. Based on their observation at Fircroft College, they argued that this role demands a shift where HEIs act as 'catalytic agents', providing a 'safe, nurturing, and judgment-free

environment' that validates all learners. For many, the role is defined by empowering underprivileged communities. FM1 identified the role as a commitment to reaching the 'underserved', specifically Scheduled Tribe (ST) students whose reserved quotas often remain unfilled. For FM1, a Champion's duty is to provide data-driven facts to students who believe formal education offers no rewards. FM7 echoed this, defining the role simply as doing work in a 'good manner' specifically for the 'socio-economically weaker section of the society'.

A significant emotional aspect was observed in how team members see this role's close relation with students. FM9 offered a powerful personal reflection, noting: 'This workshop taught me to think about the student as a student, not as an FM.' They feel they are now 'part of this' process rather than just an external resource person. FM8 shared this sense of responsibility, stating they feel 'more responsible now to work for the cause of WP'. FM5 described themselves as a 'partial champion', viewing their past experience as an NSS officer combined with this new understanding as a 'real stepping stone' toward fully embodying the role.

As the only member who was hesitant to call themselves a Champion yet, FM2 linked this identity to the necessity of tangible action. They offered a rigorous standard for themselves, stating they will only truly consider themselves a Champion 'if [they] can contribute to creating tangible change—no matter how small or significant' within the institution. FM10 and FM6 expressed that they now feel ready to make an impact. FM10 felt they were now a 'potential FM with knowledge and workable ideas', while FM6 noted the visit gave them a 'clearer, more practical understanding' of how to bring the role to life. FM4 concluded that the skills and confidence gained at Warwick were the final ingredients needed to lead these changes.

Overall, the visit evaluations demonstrated a strong impact of the visit on team members' identification with the role of HE Outreach Champion. Time is needed to explore whether the plans and intentions come to fruition, but it is certainly the case that the visit had provided motivation and inspiration towards both concrete actions and value-based aspirations.

2.6 Conclusion

This chapter has documented the entire UK visit, starting with the preparation process, followed by the details and outcomes of the visit. The chapter brought together notes on the impact of the visit with reflective evaluations from SRT members themselves, presenting a holistic

account of the visit learnings and team members' identity development as HE Outreach Champions.

The UK visit programme was developed by the core project team to harness SRT members' knowledge of their contexts and academic expertise, while also supporting the development of their identity as HE Outreach Champions. During the one-week visit, SRT participants successfully drafted a CPL module for FMs on HE Outreach in India, drawing on learnings from the visit to Fircroft College, WP briefings delivered by WP officers and student ambassadors, and the visit to a Warwick Open Day.

In addition to the tangible outcome of the CPL module, SRT members reflected on the fundamental changes resulting from the residential workshop. The visit deepened their knowledge of HE outreach and WP, empowered them with practical tools to design CPL modules and conduct HE outreach activities, and strengthened their collective identity as HE Outreach Champions who are motivated to further WP efforts within their institutions and national context.

Chapter 3: Module Piloting Process and Evaluation

3.1 Introduction

This chapter provides details of the Continuing Professional Learning (CPL) module piloting process and evaluation, including: the module preparation process and participant information; the implementation of the module pilot; the evaluation of the module pilot; and the longer-term learning from the module. The co-designed CPL module (see Chapter 2) was piloted with participants from one of the 'Widening Access to Higher Education in India: Institutional Approaches' (WAHEI) project states (Haryana) to enable some of the State Research Team (SRT) members who had designed the module at Warwick to be the module tutors. For practical and logistical reasons, it was decided to conduct the pilot at the National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration (NIEPA) and invite Faculty Members (FMs) from appropriate colleges in Haryana to be participants. The pilot module tutors were Professor Rajeshwari and Dr Kanwaljeet Virdi from the Haryana SRT. The preparation process is discussed in Section 3.2, along with demographic and other relevant information about module participants.

This CPL module was designed to be a half-day module (3h15)—to align with the format already adopted within Higher Education (HE) CPL schemes. The pilot day replicated this format, though extra time was added to the beginning and end of the module session to undertake research into the process of piloting the module (see Section 3.4). The implementation of the module is documented through tutor reflections and a summary of module observation notes in Section 3.3.

The process followed for evaluating the CPL module is discussed further in Section 3.4. It was developed to provide robust evidence of the effectiveness of the module, both to (i) make improvements to the module content before finalising the documents for publication, and (ii) explore from a research perspective how participating in the module impacted upon FMs' thinking about HE outreach and their practice. Changes to the module were made as a result of this evaluation study.

Lastly, the section on the longer-term learning from the module (Section 3.5) draws on a diary interview study following on from the HE outreach module. All 12 module pilot participants kept

a semi-structured format diary each month for three consecutive months to capture reflections, learnings, experiences and initiatives regarding HE outreach. After the three-month diary, they were interviewed individually to gain further clarity and contextual comprehension of the HE outreach engagements. Section 3.5 is based on a comprehensive consolidation of the data gathered through solicited diary entries and post-diary interviews with the 12 participants.

Overall, the chapter showcases the careful preparation, conduct and evaluation of the module, and includes a rich discussion of the impact of the module on the participants.

3.2 Module Preparation

The module pilot was to take place in September 2025. Preparation involved inviting FMs as participants of this module and completing other logistical arrangements. Dr Nidhi Sabharwal, assisted by Ms. Sejjal and Ms. Chandrika, worked with Professor Rajeshwari, the SRT team leader in Haryana, to undertake all the necessary arrangements for the conduct of the pilot, including finalising the pilot date and arranging accommodation at NIEPA. Professor Rajeshwari identified and facilitated the invitation of 12 FMs from colleges serving different areas and communities across Haryana (names are excluded for anonymisation as per the project's ethical code); she subsequently confirmed attendance.

Professor Rajeshwari and Dr Virdi undertook the necessary preparation (to meet the requirements of module tutors for the module) including preparation of tutor materials, assistance with organising the layout of the room and preparation of the pack of materials for each participant along with the NIEPA-based team members (see Figures II.3.1 and II.3.2). Professor Rajeshwari, as model tutor, sent out to all participants the pre-module task required to be completed in advance. Professors Henderson and Stewart travelled to Delhi to assist with the preparation of the pilot, observe the conduct of the module, and to undertake the research element associated with the module pilot.

Figure II.3.1: Professor Rajeshwari and Dr Virdi with Professor Stewart Preparing for the Module Pilot



Figure II.3.2: Professor Rajeshwari and Dr Virdi Preparing for the Module Pilot



3.3 Implementing the Module Pilot

This section presents the experiences of the tutors in the implementation of the module pilot and resultant questions to be considered for the final amendments of the module (including reflections from the module observation, see Sub-section 3.4.1). As indicated in the tutor assessment (Figure II.3.3) and combined with participants' feedback (see Section 3.4), the overall design of the module worked well in practice. It was possible to deliver the content within the time allocated and the tutors were able to follow and implement its design across the course of its delivery. The participants clearly appreciated the opportunity to learn by doing—i.e. through the practical exercises—and worked well in their groups. At the end of the module, participants were able to identify the key learning points—i.e. their role and that of their colleges in HE access and, in particular, that HE outreach activities contributed to the pursuit of social justice as identified in the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020.

Figure II.3.3: Reflection by Lead Tutor: Module Piloting Day – 18 September 2025, NIEPA

Professor Rajeshwari provides the following assessment of her experiences as module tutor.

The warm welcome of the participants and an energised host team set the stage for the day. The initial activity designed for "getting know each other" worked to open up the participants as we witnessed them mingling together.

As the module is designed to be participatory, the tutor could fully engage with the participant FMs all the time. Their involvement was encouraging. The tutor was able to convey to the participants the significance of HE outreach and the difference between HE outreach and community outreach and to highlight the significance of HE outreach. This information was well taken by the participants. Similarly, the social justice and business case of HE enrolments was distinguished. These elements of the module worked well but I felt that it was repetitive at one or two occasions. The presentation could be tighter (using strong bullet points with information).

These elements were followed by a practical exercise conducted in smaller groups. These proved to be engaging: all the participants actively participated and they were busy discussing all the time. The module guide provided a reporting table (for feedback from the groups) but the technology was not available to display on the screen. Rather one participant from each group was asked to read out the collective thinking on the issue.

We were able to observe their [participants'] enthusiasm as they kept discussing the issue during 15 minute tea time (half way through the module delivery time).

After the break the next session focussed on the role of FMs. My reflection is that here, the tutor constantly needs to keep the discussion focused on the role of FMs in HE access. The participants assimilated themselves with story situations provided in module guide. However, if the overall number of participants was larger, all the smaller groups would not be able to present their feedback, as time is limited in this session.

The final substantive session involved the participants in planning a practical HE access activity. We learned that there is a strong need to explain in more depth what these activities are (open day, taster day etc.) before they plan the activity for their respective HEIs and some visuals might be of great significance in [assisting participants'] visualisation of open day and taster day.

Figure II.3.4: Implementation of the HE Outreach Module Pilot



Based on tutor feedback and wider team reflection, a few areas were identified for further refinement and consideration.

The first concern was about the significance of the module tutor, bearing in mind future replication of the module. In this pilot, the module was conducted by highly motivated, very knowledgeable and skilled tutors—effectively HE Outreach Champions. This can be replicated among the core group of SRT champions from other states who co-designed the module, but reflection is needed on whether the module, as it stands, would work as well with tutors who do not share this experience. A potential solution and a further refinement to the module is to add more structured content to support tutors—e.g. content in the PowerPoint presentations for use in tutor led sessions, clearer display of exercises associated with each session in the module tutor guide, and also, in the longer term, the preparation of supporting video/podcasts for tutors. SRT members from other states have suggested that they may be able to provide tutor support material in local languages.

Figure II.3.5: Professor Rajeshwari and Dr Kanwaljeet Virdi Conducting the HE Outreach Module Pilot



The second concern regarded participant number and group allocation. The pilot was delivered to a relatively small number of participants which facilitated ease of delivery. It was possible for participants to split into smaller groups to work on exercises within one room, enabling tutors to observe group dynamics and intervene if/when necessary, to assist or give a steer to discussions. It was observed that some of the FMs were struggling in understanding the instructions and written content in English, which at times affected their engagement, but which could be addressed in this set-up of one room with small groups working on tasks. Reflection is needed on the implications of scaling up and its impact on delivery methods, but it was clear that the module in its current form would present significant challenges with a very large group.

Figure II.3.6: Dr Kanwaljeet Virdi Conducting a Session of the HE Outreach Module Pilot



The third concern was regarding the contextual knowledge shared by module tutor and participants. The module was delivered to participants, all of whom were working in one state and therefore brought, to a large extent, similar contextual experiences. The tutors were also from the same state and shared the local language. The module has been designed to enable tutors to adapt the exercises to meet local contexts, but in future scenarios, there may be more disparate groups of participants in the module. Consideration is therefore required as to how the materials can support tutors to adapt to conducting the module with more disparate groups of participants.

Figure II.3.7: HE Outreach Module Pilot: Group Discussions



In addition to the aforementioned concerns, module tutors also suggested micro-level adjustments to the module design to improve the time allocated to each session, the clarity of the PowerPoint presentation and the instructional tools available to tutors, which were addressed.

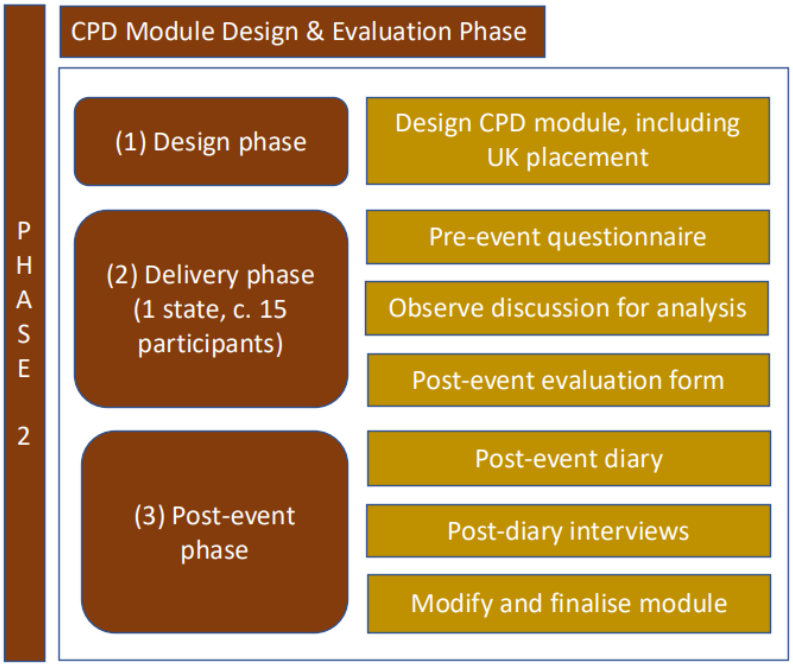
Lastly, the tutors called for greater localisation of the module. Having observed some participants' struggles in understanding the course content, they raised the need to amend the current module content by incorporating language and resources that are suitable for delivery in rural and semi-rural colleges across diverse regions. While these important issues cannot be incorporated into the current module, they will be addressed in any future design.

3.4 Evaluation of the Module Pilot

3.4.1 Introduction of Module Evaluation Method

The evaluation of the module pilot was designed to explore the impact of the module using multiple methods and techniques, in order to provide a holistic picture. This section sets out the process followed for evaluating the module pilot. As shown in Figure II.3.8, the evaluation of the module occurred during and after the module pilot. It was not possible to pilot the instruments due to the one-off nature of the module session, but the instruments were designed using the team's experience of the previous phase of the research and other projects using the same methods for similar scenarios. The evaluation study received ethical approval from the relevant committee at the University of Warwick.

Figure II.3.8: The Design and Evaluation Process for the CPL Module



The evaluation study comprised: a pre-module questionnaire; a non-participant observation of the module implementation; a post-module questionnaire; a three-month diary study; and post-diary interviews. Before embarking on the first stage of the study, module participants received a briefing on the evaluation study and signed consent forms for their participation in the study.

The **pre-module questionnaire** was implemented as a paper-based questionnaire at the start of the in-person module pilot session. The first section of the questionnaire comprised demographic information. The second section comprised professional information, so that the project team could explore if the reaction to the module differed according to, for example, career stage. The third section included questions on educational background in order to see whether there was a higher tendency to relate to the topic of HE outreach for FMs from less privileged backgrounds. Similarly, section four focused on FMs' own experiences of HE choice to explore whether they themselves had experienced HE outreach. Section five included questions on their current HE outreach practices, so that the project team could discern if new practices emerged from attending the module. These aspects of the questionnaire are reported on in Sub-section 3.4.2. The final section focused on the module participants' understanding of HE outreach, so that the before and after knowledge could be explored (reported on in Sub-section 3.4.4). With the exception of the final section, the questionnaire only included closed questions or simple open questions. The final section included space for participants to write more extended responses to the questions. The paper questionnaires were entered into SPSS by the project team and analysed descriptively; the longer open questions were coded and synthesised.

The **module observation process** was a *non-participant observation*, meaning that the observers were not also taking part in delivering or attending the module. The three observers were Emily Henderson (lead observer; project Co-Principal Investigator (Co-PI)), Sejjal (project Consultant based at NIEPA) and Arushi Painuly (PhD student and former project Consultant based at NIEPA). The lead observer gave a written and verbal briefing to the observers at the start of the event, focusing on the purpose of the observation, i.e. (i) to record issues with the module which could be corrected in the subsequent draft, and (ii) to record evidence of learning that was taking place during the module. Observers were asked to familiarise themselves with the module documents before the session. For the plenary sessions of the module, the observers took notes and then combined them afterwards. For the group work sessions, each observer

was assigned to a group and took notes on that group's discussion. The observation notes were recorded in a pre-designed template which included: the time of the note; the number of the module session; whether the session was group work or plenary; and the notes. The three copies of the notes were then combined into one document and processed so that it was clear to which session of the module the notes were pertaining. The notes relating to corrections to be made to the module were filtered out and saved separately for the module revision process. Therefore, they are not further reported on here. The notes on the attendees' learnings were then analysed for each session of the module, to synthesise the principal learnings (see Sub-section 3.4.3).

The **post-module questionnaire** was administered in paper form at the end of the module session. This was a shorter questionnaire (one page) which included a yes/no question and an open text question for each item. The questions were aligned with the pre-questionnaire final section in order to track learning. The questions focused on the following aspects: change in understanding of the term HE outreach; changes in views on whether Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and FMs should conduct HE outreach; and reflections on attendees' motivations for attending the module and whether these had been met. The responses were typed up by the project team and analysed descriptively (yes/no questions) and synthesised (text-based questions). The responses were also explored in an attempt to match them with the pre-module questionnaire to identify the learning that had occurred. See Sub-section 3.4.4 for the analysis.

The **diary study** was designed to track module attendees' thoughts and actions in the three months following their participation in the module. The diary pack was provided to the attendees in a paper copy during the module session. A briefing on the diary study was delivered to explain the purpose of the diary and the process to follow. The diary pack involved instructions and three identical forms. The diary itself comprised three forms to be filled, one per month, starting from one month after the module session. A duration of three months was selected due to the need to complete the project within the funded period, and it was also in line with what could be expected of the module participants. It is recognised that a longer tracking study may have been helpful to gauge longer-term change, but this was not within the scope of this evaluation study. The diary did provide useful evidence on the impact of the module within the three-month period.

The diary form consisted of questions laid out on one page, first asking if attendees had *in any way reflected on the module or engaged in any relevant actions or experiences in the past month*. If the answer was negative, this marked the end of the entry, and the participant was asked to return to the diary the following month. If the answer was positive, questions followed to determine whether the participant had reflected and/or engaged in actions/experiences. The participant was asked to respond to a yes/no question asking if they had *reflected on the module* in the preceding month, and a text-based question asking for more elaboration (for those who responded 'yes'). This question was designed to explore the extent to which the ideas from the module had been internalised by participants, as developing understanding of HE outreach was a major aim of the module. Participants were then asked if they had undertaken any *activities or actions* as a result of the module in the past month; again, if they responded in the affirmative, they were asked to elaborate. This question targeted the aim of the module, which was to bring about a change in actions and behaviour in relation to HE outreach. The diary form concluded with a section allotting space to other reflections and comments. Participants were then requested to return to the diary the following month.

The diary study was implemented by Professor Rajeshwari, who was the lead facilitator of the module delivery. She stayed in contact on a regular basis with the module attendees and reminded them to complete their diaries. The module attendees sent a scan of their diary entry to Professor Rajeshwari each month, who then transferred the scanned copies to the project team, who saved them and typed them up. The diary results were then analysed descriptively for the yes/no answers and synthesised (for the text-based answers). The diary entries were analysed as a set, but specific participants were also explored in more detail, in terms of how active they had been and what could explain this. Diary analysis is presented in Sub-section 3.4.5.

When the diary study was complete, **post-diary interviews** were then conducted with the module participants. The interviews were conducted by Professor Rajeshwari, who was lead facilitator for the module and had implemented the diary study, with support from Dr Nidhi Sabharwal (Co-PI). A briefing session on implementing the interviews was also held as a project team. The interviews were conducted around a month after the diary was completed, accommodating availability of participants around the December/January holiday season.

The interviews comprised two parts. Firstly, the interview included questions which were specifically based on the participant's diary. This involved reading the participants' diaries before the interviews and developing a short set of questions which followed up on specific aspects of the diaries, for instance asking for more detail on a particular incident. Secondly, the interview included questions asked to all participants about their ongoing learnings from and reflections on the experience of attending the module. Thirdly, the interview concluded with a section asking about the experience of engaging in the diary study. This was important as it is well known that participating in a diary study can lead to changes in behaviour in its own right, so the project team needed to know to what extent impact from the module could be attributed to the change in behaviour portrayed in the diary study. The interview then concluded with the opportunity for participants to ask any final questions or make comments. The interviews were recorded and the files were transferred to the project team. The audio files were then transcribed and any sections in Hindi were also translated into English. The transcripts were then processed by section of the interview and analysed as a set to synthesise the learnings from the module. Reference to the diaries and the post-diary interviews, presented in Sub-section 3.4.5, were also considered.

Overall, the module pilot evaluation provided a detailed and holistic impression of the incremental impact of the module—on the day, at the end of the day, and in the months following the module. Not only was this therefore an evaluation of the pilot module, but it was also a *pilot of an evaluation process* which can be replicated in some form for further iterations of the module and/or for other similar activities.

3.4.2 Introduction to the Module Participants: Background and Prior HE Outreach Experiences

The pre-module questionnaire included questions pertaining to participants' background and prior experiences of HE outreach, to provide context for the learnings from the module. This section provides a summary of participants' data across the group, in order to protect the identity of individual participants (based on the project's ethical code).

3.4.2.1 Module Participants' Backgrounds

The 12 module participants were comprised of nine men and three women, born between the

1970s and 1990s. All participants identified as Hindu, were native Hindi speakers, and were born in the state of Haryana. All participants came from disadvantaged social backgrounds, belonging to either the Economically Weaker Section (EWS) or Scheduled Castes (SC). One participant reported having a physical disability. The vast majority of participants resided in rural areas, mostly between 20 and 40 km from their HEI, while two participants lived more than 150 km away.

In terms of professional information, the large majority of participants were the first in their families to work as FMs. They predominantly held positions as Assistant Professors and had entered the profession between 2000 and 2020. They were employed across a range of disciplines spanning STEM and Social Sciences, including Geography, Political Science, Commerce and Mathematics. Participants entered their current HEIs through different recruitment pathways, including State Government examinations, direct recruitment by their current institutions or transfers from other institutions. All participants reported holding regular (permanent) appointments.

Participants' parental and legal guardians' education levels varied considerably, ranging from no formal schooling to postgraduate education. Regarding their own schooling backgrounds, the vast majority had attended government-managed or government-aided/private-aided schools located across rural, urban and semi-urban settings. Most participants studied under a state syllabus, with Hindi being the most common language of instruction, while a few studied in English or a combination of Hindi and English. Most participants came from Arts/Humanities academic streams. Most participants had also obtained the National Eligibility Test (NET). Participants held degrees across various disciplines, with many having studied a combination of humanities and social science subjects. Most participants obtained their bachelor's degrees from colleges, with institutions predominantly being government-funded or government-aided/private-aided and located in urban areas. Two participants reported having benefited from reservation policies. In terms of advanced qualifications, nine participants had completed a PhD, while two were currently pursuing one.

3.4.2.2 Module Participants' Journeys into HE

The project team asked the participants about their own journeys into HE, to encourage

reflection on challenges faced or forms of guidance they may have received, as a precursor to the module itself. The findings suggest that participants' decisions about HE were shaped primarily by informal sources of support, particularly family members, rather than by structured HE outreach. The vast majority of participants (n=9) received support from family members during the college/university application process, while a smaller number identified teachers (n=4), and peers (n=2) as key sources of support. Family influence was also significant in participants' choice of undergraduate institution (n=9) and course or subject (n=8), although many participants reported that they made their own decisions regarding their course or subject choice (n=7). Schoolteachers (n=4), friends (n=3), and senior students (n=1) played comparatively smaller roles in these decisions.

In contrast, only one participant reported receiving advice from a college/university teacher, who was also a family member. This support extended across different stages of the HE access process, including: choosing which institutions to apply to; selecting a course or subject; visiting the institution where the teacher worked; and receiving support during the admissions process. Only around half of the participants reported accessing information about HE through external sources before enrolling in their undergraduate institution. These sources included: visits to colleges or universities (n=3); institutional brochures (n=3); visits to multiple institutions for comparison (n=2); newspapers (n=2); and radio broadcasts about HE (n=1).

Overall, while participants were able to draw upon a range of informal and individual sources of information in their own HE journeys, experiences of formal HE outreach appears to have been uneven and limited, with most participants relying more heavily on family support and their own decision-making, than on direct engagement with HEIs.

3.4.2.3 Participants' Prior Experiences of Conducting HE Outreach

The questionnaire also included questions on participants' experiences of engaging in HE outreach. This was to (i) establish participants' starting points for the module, and (ii) start the process of considering how activities they may have conducted could be redefined as *HE outreach*. The vast majority of participants (n=11) had provided pre-admission advice to others regarding undergraduate HE options and processes. They had all provided such guidance through their personal networks, including to: extended family members beyond their nuclear

families (n=11); neighbours (n=8); domestic staff (n=4); members of community groups to which they belonged (n=4); and through their own tutoring or coaching work (n=1). Many had also provided guidance in their professional roles as FMs through interactions with students visiting their college or university (n=8), encouraging current students to advise other young people within their communities (n=7), visits to schools (n=5), visits to other community settings (n=4), and assisting with Open Days or official taster sessions for prospective students at their institutions (n=4).

Participants reported providing a range of advice and guidance relating to access to HE. Some common areas of guidance included: advice on whether to pursue HE or consider alternative pathways (n=10); guidance on the choice of course or subject (n=9); and advice on selecting to which colleges or universities to apply (n=8). A number provided guidance on the admissions process (n=8), while advice on choosing between institutions when multiple offers were received was also provided by several participants (n=7). Participants also provided other admissions-related advice, including: assisting with preparation for HE entrance examinations (n=6); reviewing application forms and related documentation (n=5); contacting colleges or universities on behalf of applicants (n=3); and offering advice on tuition fees and funding options (n=2).

While one participant identified that their institution encountered no challenges in providing additional pre-admission guidance and advice about HE, other participants listed several common challenges faced by their institutions in delivering HE outreach. At the institutional level, the largest challenge identified was insufficient funding for additional activities (n=6). At the faculty level, participants reported constraints related to staff workload, which limited the time available for such engagement (n=5), and FMs living far from the institution and therefore being less familiar with the local community (n=3). It was also reported that some FMs lack awareness of the issues faced by young people in accessing HE (n=3).

In summary, while most participants had experience of providing pre-admission advice and guidance to young people, either through their personal networks or in their professional roles as FMs, their engagement in formal or structured HE outreach activities was limited. Their engagement was more commonly through individual and informal forms of support, with experience of more systematic outreach activities limited among the module participants.

3.4.3 Module Observation Findings

The module observation was designed to track learning as it was occurring (see Sub-section 3.4.1). This sub-section presents the learnings that occurred during the module pilot, based on the structure of the module. To illustrate the learnings, the relevant parts of the Module Tutor Guide are included; it is noteworthy that these excerpts are from the finalised Module Tutor Guide (including edits made after the piloting phase), but that the basics of the content have not changed.

3.4.3.1 Module Session 1: Introduction

Session 1 of the module is the introductory session, which includes three parts, an introduction from the tutor/s and an ice-breaker activity (Figure II.3.9) and then a group discussion activity (Figure II.3.10), followed by the tutor introducing the objectives and structure of the module.

Figure II.3.9: Module Session 1, Part 1

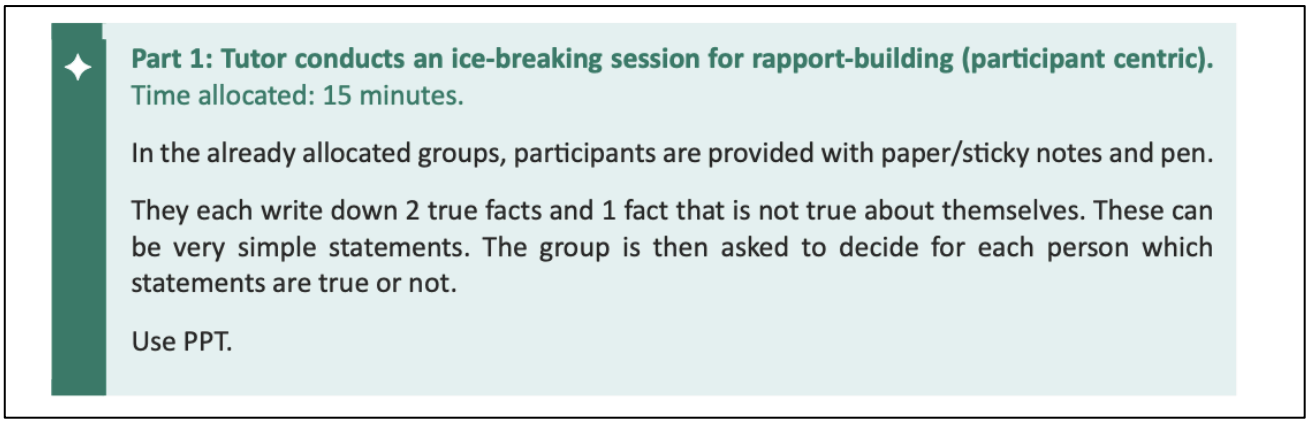
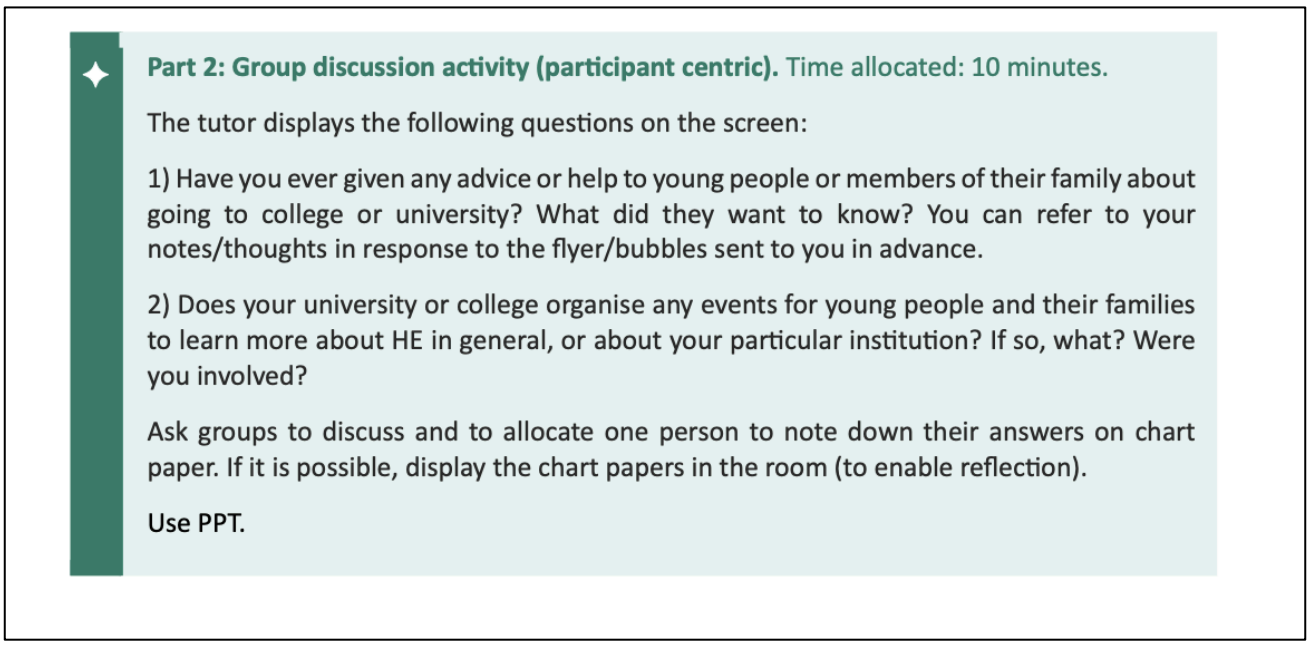


Figure II.3.10: Module Session 1, Part 2



Part 2: Group discussion activity (participant centric). Time allocated: 10 minutes.

The tutor displays the following questions on the screen:

1) Have you ever given any advice or help to young people or members of their family about going to college or university? What did they want to know? You can refer to your notes/thoughts in response to the flyer/bubbles sent to you in advance.

2) Does your university or college organise any events for young people and their families to learn more about HE in general, or about your particular institution? If so, what? Were you involved?

Ask groups to discuss and to allocate one person to note down their answers on chart paper. If it is possible, display the chart papers in the room (to enable reflection).

Use PPT.

In Session 1, Part 2, reflecting on their own experiences, participants from Group 1 shared that the main areas in which they give advice to young people are subject choices, admissions and institution choices.

Group 2 participants had more previous experience of providing HE advice to school students and their family members. In addition to general suggestions regarding tuition fees and admissions, Group 2 specifically mentioned the complexities of advising girl students, Muslim students and village students, and they emphasised the role of the family in relation to students' HE choices. Participants from Group 3 had all provided advice to young people and their families, and their advice often covered subject or stream choices and students' future employability.

Group 1 contended that their institution had never organised such outreach events and that they, as FMs, were often approached by village students through personal networks to learn more about HE. Group 2 shared a similar situation to Group 1, but they mentioned that the college principal had taken the initiative to arrange visits to local schools. Group 3 had participated in university or college-organised outreach events, but they noted that these were mostly driven by the interest of institutional leaders rather than by systematic efforts. They also noted that such events usually took the form of presentations to Class 12 students, covering

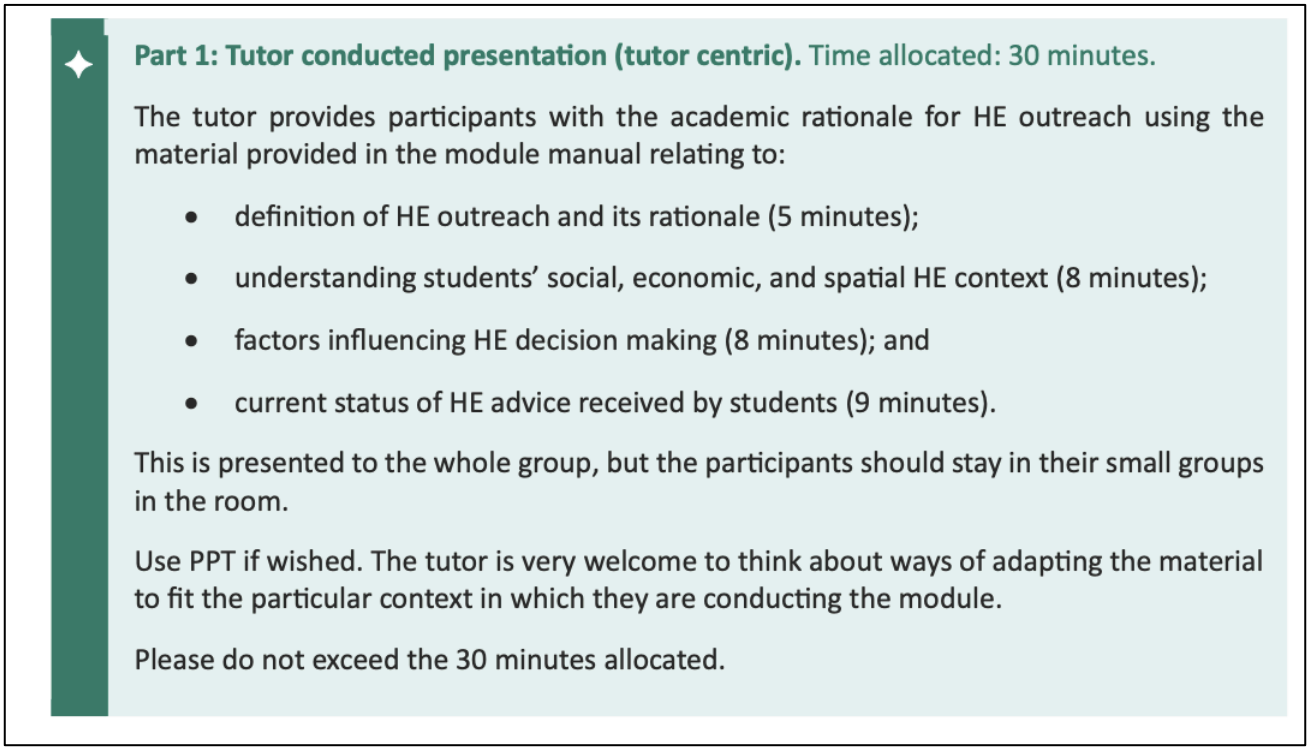
topics related to subjects offered and fee structures. They had witnessed more events being organised by institutions in better resourced urban settings.

In this sub-section, the designed questions and group discussion successfully introduced the concept of HE outreach to module participants by engaging them to first reflect on their own experiences of providing young students with HE advice and participating in university-organised outreach activities. Additionally, discussions of these two questions revealed that the current HE outreach landscape in the state remains at an individual level and lacks systematic institutional effort.

3.4.3.2 Module Session 2: HE Outreach Context and Student Decision-making

Session 2 of the module focuses on the rationale for the HE outreach context and the challenges that prospective students may face in their HE decision making. The session includes two parts, a presentation from the tutor/s (see Figure II.3.11) and a group activity (Figure II.3.12).

Figure II.3.11 Module Session 2, Part 1



Part 1: Tutor conducted presentation (tutor centric). Time allocated: 30 minutes.

The tutor provides participants with the academic rationale for HE outreach using the material provided in the module manual relating to:

- definition of HE outreach and its rationale (5 minutes);
- understanding students' social, economic, and spatial HE context (8 minutes);
- factors influencing HE decision making (8 minutes); and
- current status of HE advice received by students (9 minutes).

This is presented to the whole group, but the participants should stay in their small groups in the room.

Use PPT if wished. The tutor is very welcome to think about ways of adapting the material to fit the particular context in which they are conducting the module.

Please do not exceed the 30 minutes allocated.

In Session 2, Part 1 (Figure II.3.11), following the presentation, the module tutor organised a plenary discussion on HE outreach. Participants first shared their personal efforts in supporting

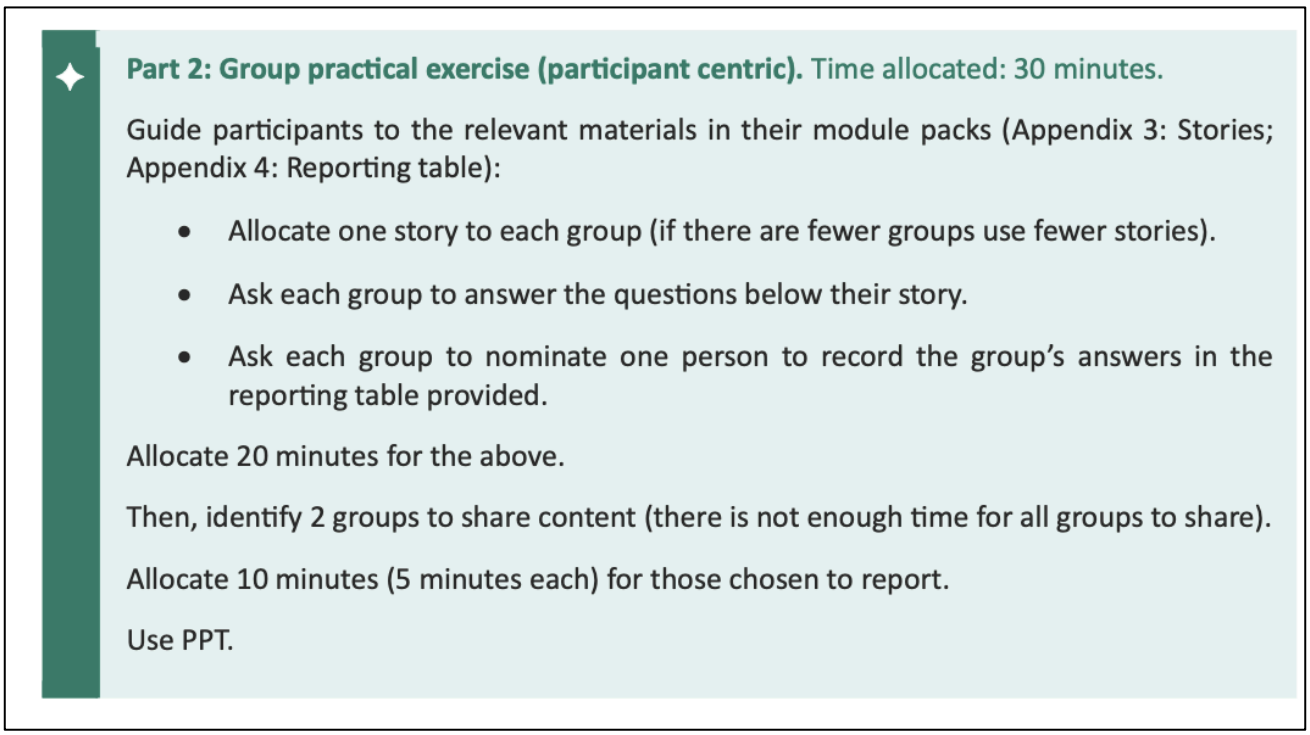
young people to access HE. The tutor then emphasised the importance of institutionalising outreach practices. Participants widely affirmed this need and discussed the systematic challenges involved in implementing HE outreach. Some identified issues included: unclear understanding of the NEP at the faculty level and how to implement it; knowledge gaps among faculty who do not currently feel prepared to guide students effectively; institutional restrictions on contacting students; and heavy workloads limiting faculty capacity for student engagement.

However, participants also raised concerns about the fairness of admissions that HE outreach may potentially create. One participant specifically questioned why students with strong academic merit are sometimes overlooked while admissions are granted to those who do not meet subject-specific requirements. Other key issues identified included: confusion and perceived unfairness in admissions criteria; mismatches between eligibility norms and actual admissions; and the potential negative impact on the quality of HE and students' preparedness for specialised subjects.

Overall, participants acknowledged the need for institutional efforts to initiate HE outreach. At the same time, they raised concerns about systemic limitations and the potential harms that such initiatives may cause. The seemingly conflicting views on WP foregrounded the need to further explore the social justice aims of HE outreach. While high-level policies (e.g. NEP 2020) provide justification and motivation to address structural barriers to HE access, wider awareness among institutions and FMs still needs to be developed.

In Session 2, Part 2 (Figure II.3.12), each group was assigned a story to read and then asked to reflect on four questions.

Figure II.3.12: Module Session 2, Part 2



Part 2: Group practical exercise (participant centric). Time allocated: 30 minutes.

Guide participants to the relevant materials in their module packs (Appendix 3: Stories; Appendix 4: Reporting table):

- Allocate one story to each group (if there are fewer groups use fewer stories).
- Ask each group to answer the questions below their story.
- Ask each group to nominate one person to record the group's answers in the reporting table provided.

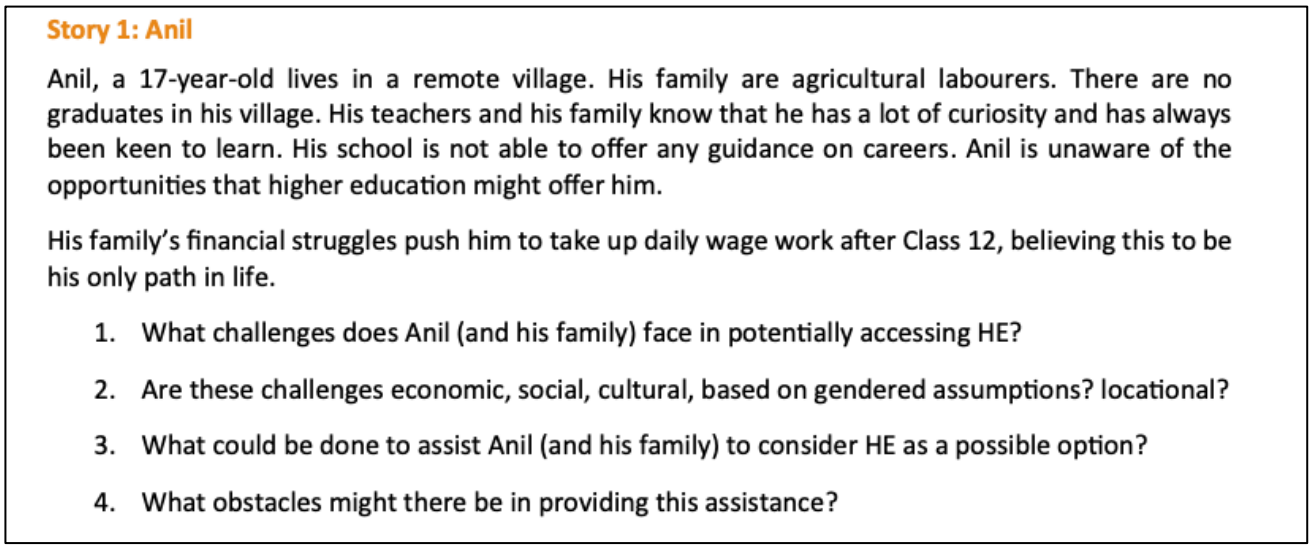
Allocate 20 minutes for the above.

Then, identify 2 groups to share content (there is not enough time for all groups to share).

Allocate 10 minutes (5 minutes each) for those chosen to report.

Use PPT.

Figure II.3.13: Anil's Story



Story 1: Anil

Anil, a 17-year-old lives in a remote village. His family are agricultural labourers. There are no graduates in his village. His teachers and his family know that he has a lot of curiosity and has always been keen to learn. His school is not able to offer any guidance on careers. Anil is unaware of the opportunities that higher education might offer him.

His family's financial struggles push him to take up daily wage work after Class 12, believing this to be his only path in life.

1. What challenges does Anil (and his family) face in potentially accessing HE?
2. Are these challenges economic, social, cultural, based on gendered assumptions? locational?
3. What could be done to assist Anil (and his family) to consider HE as a possible option?
4. What obstacles might there be in providing this assistance?

After reading Anil's story (Figure II.3.13), Group 1 identified the challenges that the student and his family may face in accessing HE as a lack of information, connectivity issues, and geographical and social challenges. They also acknowledged and agreed that the challenges Anil faces are economic, social and locational. Regarding the potential support that Anil and his family could benefit from to make more informed decisions about HE options, the group

suggested increasing HE understanding and improving financial stability. Their detailed recommendations included creating awareness of available scholarships and Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) support programmes, encouraging Anil to take up tutoring to improve his financial stability, and guiding him to pursue low-fee colleges or consider distance education options. Lastly, the group identified the major obstacle Anil faces in pursuing HE as convincing his parents.

Figure II.3.14: Neha's Story

Story 2: Neha

Neha is a 20-year-old from a minority community. She has always dreamed of becoming a nurse but faces pressures from her community to marry early. After Class 12, her family arranged her marriage. As result she felt that she had to give up her educational aspirations. She lives with her husband and family in a small town.

She knows about a local women's co-operative and thinks about contacting them. She is curious to know what they do.

1. What challenges does Neha face in pursuing her dream and potentially accessing HE?
2. Are these challenges economic, social, cultural, based on gendered assumptions? locational?
3. What could be done to assist Neha (and her marital family) to consider HE as a possible option?
4. What obstacles might there be in providing this assistance?

After reading Neha's story (Figure II.3.14), Group 2 identified the challenges that Neha may face in pursuing her dream and accessing HE as obtaining family permission, societal expectations of women, and arranging fees, as nursing programmes are typically expensive. Group 2 considered obtaining permission and support from her family as a social and gendered challenge, access to a nursing course as a locational challenge, the affordability of nursing programmes as an economic challenge, and safety concerns as a gendered challenge. To assist Neha and her family in considering HE as a possible option, the group suggested family counselling to increase awareness of government financial support, such as scholarships and government colleges, as well as providing information on the nearest HEIs and their courses. The major obstacles to providing this assistance were identified as first obtaining family permission and then providing continuous motivation for Neha to pursue HE.

Figure II.3.15: Priya's Story

Story 3: Priya

Priya is a 19-year-old from a tribal community. She excelled in her Class 12 exams. There is no one in her family or her local community that has direct lived experience of higher education. She has not been able to obtain any advice on careers. She cannot think how she could ever be able to go to college. Her family face many economic hardships. Her parents, daily wage earners, expect her to work in a nearby factory.

1. What challenges does Priya face in potentially accessing HE?
2. Are these challenges economic, social, cultural, based on gendered assumptions? locational?
3. What could be done to assist Priya (and her family) to consider HE as a possible option?
4. What obstacles might there be in providing this assistance?

After reading Priya's story (Figure II.3.15), Group 3 identified the challenges that Priya and her family may face in accessing HE as a lack of awareness of, and access to, HE and scholarship information, despite the availability of scholarships for girls and tribal students. Another challenge identified was limited access to distance education. Group 3 considered the aforementioned challenges to cut across social, economic, gendered, and locational dimensions. To assist Priya and her family in considering HE as a possible option, the group highlighted the significance of increasing awareness of government schemes and scholarships. To achieve this, the group further suggested organising sessions to guide parents on the long-term benefits of HE and strengthening local HE outreach through schools and community networks. The group also identified a range of major obstacles to providing this assistance, including: difficulties in convincing parents, especially those of first-generation learners; a lack of awareness within families and communities; economic hardship limiting choices; limited accessibility in tribal and remote areas; and insufficient communication about government schemes.

Based on the discussions, all three groups were able to identify major structural issues in each story, despite different levels of understanding of the discussion instructions. They showed deep engagement with these student cases and used their contextual knowledge to analyse each case. A common theme across the three stories was a lack of HE awareness. Although suitable HE options and financial aid schemes exist, access to such knowledge to make informed HE decisions was identified as the key challenge. Compared with the discussions in

Session 2, Part 1, the student story exercise enabled participants to shift their focus from individual merits to structural barriers to HE access.

Overall, the participants achieved the following learning outcomes in this session: (i) participants were able to understand the social justice case for what is meant by outreach for HE access, (ii) appreciate the academic rationale and basis for outreach for HE access, and (iii) be able to apply this knowledge to a specific context.

3.4.3.3 Module Session 3: Role of Faculty in HE Outreach

Session 3 of the module focuses on the role of FMs in HE outreach. The session includes three parts, a brief tutor-led review on learning from the module so far (see Figure II.3.16), a question and answer session (Figure II.3.17), followed by a group practical activity (see Figure II.3.18).

Figure II.3.16: Module Session 3, Part 1

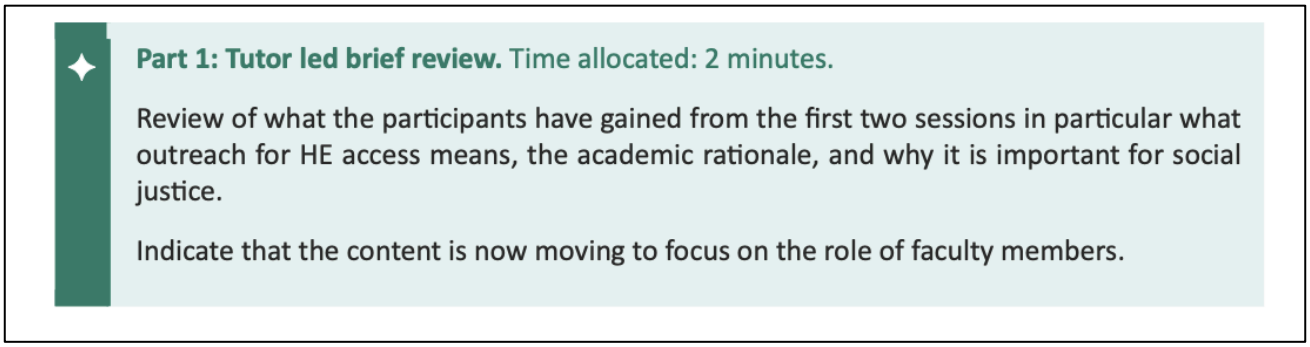
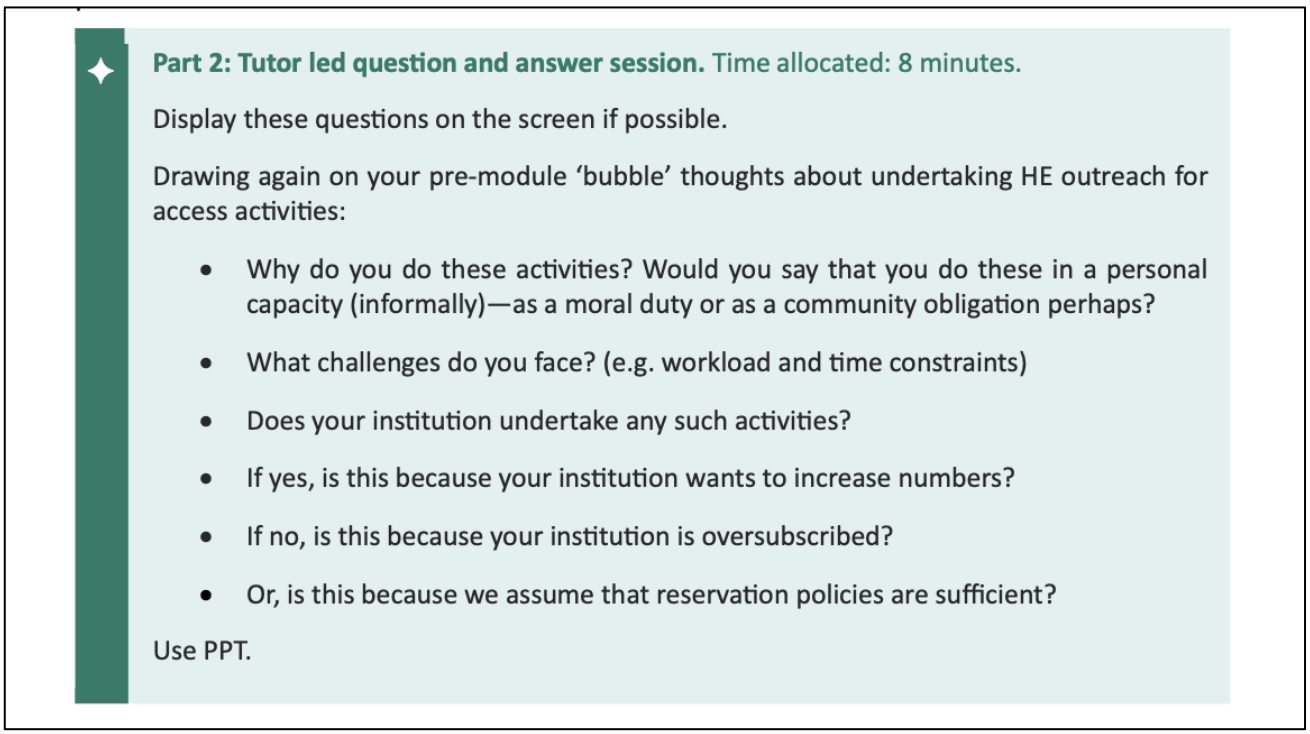


Figure II.3.17: Module Session 3, Part 2



In Session 3, Part 2 (Figure II.3.17), the module tutor led a plenary discussion with questions to help participants reflect on their previous engagement with HE outreach activities. Participants first listed various outreach activities they participated in, such as school visits, connecting with local schoolteachers, and meeting with student groups (see also Sub-section 3.4.2). During these activities, they often distributed institutional brochures and provided students with information about admissions. Participants noted that one key motivation for HE outreach is to promote courses with low enrolment, rather than specifically to advance social justice.

Participants again emphasised the challenges faculty face in organising HE outreach activities, as they are overburdened and have not received training in conducting outreach, particularly in understaffed colleges. They also reflected on the constraints encountered during outreach, as many private schools limit the FM contact with students. The module tutor further explained that HE outreach should not only rely on individual FMs, but should be formalised as an institutional practice.

The module tutor then asked about institutional agency in conducting outreach activities. Participants did not think institutions were allowed to initiate HE outreach activities, as they could only undertake activities permitted by official government instructions.

Lastly, the module tutor summarised the discussion and concluded that HE outreach activities are taking place, mostly at the personal level, but remain largely constrained.

In this tutor-led discussion, participants identified the business case for HE as the key motivation for carrying out HE outreach at present (i.e. boosting student recruitment). Although participants had previous experience of engaging in HE outreach activities, they perceived various challenges in undertaking a role in organising such activities and believed that their institutions also had limited agency to do so. Based on this discussion, it remains unclear whether participants see participation in HE outreach as part of their responsibilities as FMs.

In Session 3, Part 3, participants, working in three groups, were asked to refer back to the stories assigned to them in Session 2, Part 2 and reflect on four additional questions (Figure II.3.18).

Figure II.3.18: Module Session 3, Part 3

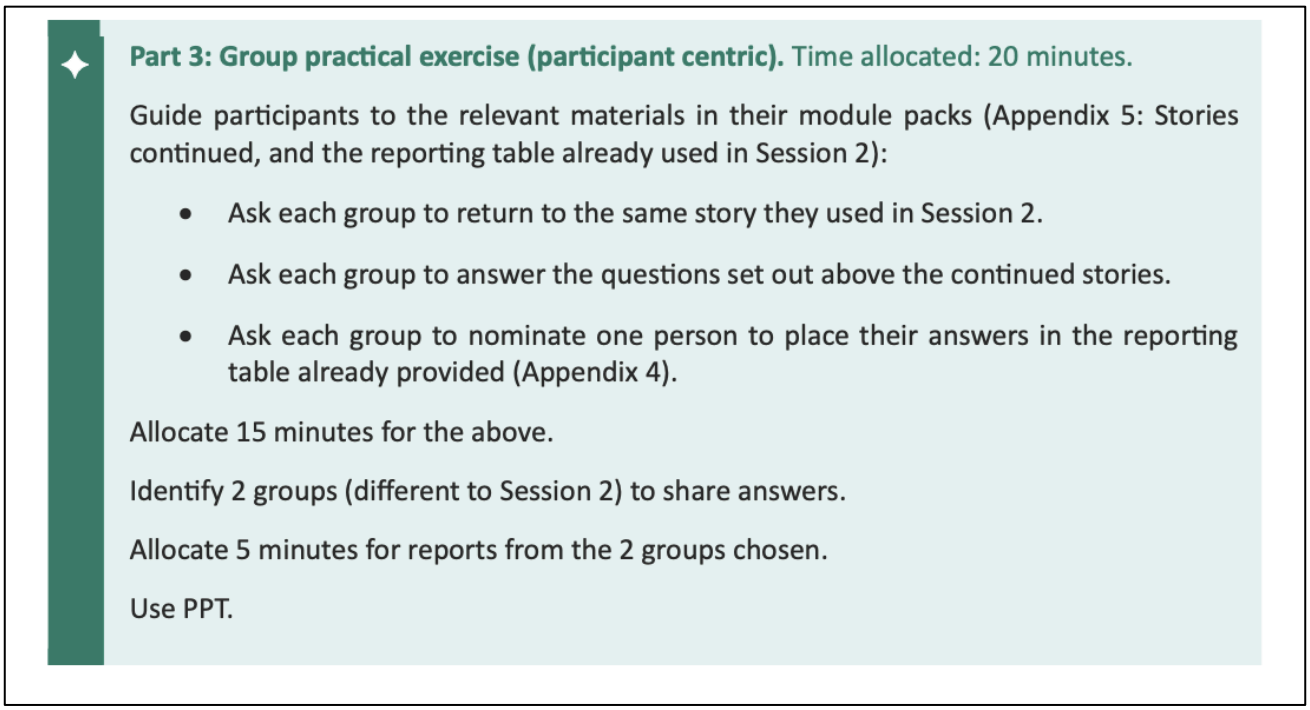


Figure II.3.19: Anil's Story (Continued)

Story 1: Anil

You are Dr Sharma, a faculty member in the nearest government college to where Anil lives (although it is still some distance away). A domestic worker in your home who has relatives in the village tells you about Anil. He says that Anil is unhappy about becoming a daily wage worker and wishes he could do something different. He also says that Anil is going to be attending a National Service Scheme camp organised in your college.

- What is your response?
- Do you think that you as a faculty member could do anything to help Anil?
- If so, what do you think you could do?
- Is there anything that your college as an institution might be able to do?
- What are the challenges you and your college might face in helping Anil?

In response to the extended version of Anil's story (Figure II.3.19), Group 1 suggested first understanding the student's social and economic background, then providing tailored advice to motivate and counsel him, and, most importantly, convincing his parents. As FMs, Group 1 wanted to provide the necessary resources and raise awareness of scholarships. They also suggested inviting the student to a National Cadet Corps (NSS) camp, where he could access institutional guidance on scholarships and other forms of financial assistance, as well as books. At the institutional level, Group 1 recommended that institutions include HE outreach as one of the objectives of the NSS, raise awareness of scholarships and provide financial assistance. Regarding the challenges they and their institution might face in supporting Anil, Group 1 considered FMs' time allocation for HE outreach to be a significant challenge.

Figure II.3.20: Neha's Story (Continued)

Story 2: Neha

It is two years later and Neha is now 22. You are Dr Lakshmi, a faculty member in the department of education at the University of XYZ. A colleague of yours has been sharing her concern about early marriages within her community with you, because she knows that you are interested in the issue of loss of educational opportunities for women and have contacts with local women's co-operatives. She mentions Neha, whose husband is a distant relative of her own husband, as an example. She is reminded of Neha because she knows that Neha is coming to a community health awareness programme organised by the University of XYZ.

- What is your response?
- Do you think that you as a faculty member could do anything to help Neha meet her dream?
- If so, what do you think you could do?
- Is there anything that your university as an institution might be able to do?
- What are the challenges you and your university might face in helping Neha?

In response to Neha's story (Figure II.3.20), Group 2 expressed concerns about Neha's situation and suggested providing personal counselling. As FMs, Group 2 proposed offering financial assistance through the Earn and Learn Scheme. At the institutional level, Group 2 focused on support after enrolment, such as access to the library and greater flexibility with class attendance. Regarding the challenges they and their institution might face in supporting Neha, Group 2 acknowledged limitations at both the institutional and faculty levels but did not specify what these challenges were. The module tutor attempted to guide the discussion towards Neha's marital status in order to provide more tailored advice prior to admission, but the group remained focused on the post-enrolment stage.

Figure II.3.21: Priya's Story (Continued)

Story 3: Priya

You are Dr Murmu, a faculty member in a local state university. After one of your classes where you had been discussing the challenges faced by tribal communities, a student in your class approaches you. He says that his uncle has got to know someone from Priya's village who has talked about a clever young woman who, because there is no one to help, is going to become a factory worker. He asks you for advice for her but also wonders whether there is any chance that someone from the university could go to the village

- What is your response?
- Do you think that you as a faculty member could do anything to help Priya to gain HE access?
- If so, what do you think you could do?
- Is there anything that your university as an institution might be able to do?
- What are the challenges you and your university might face in helping Priya?

In response to Priya's story (Figure II.3.21), Group 3 expressed concerns about her financial constraints. As FMs, Group 3 suggested providing information on scholarships, placement schemes, and student programmes (e.g. NSS and the National Cadet Corps (NCC)). At the institutional level, Group 3 recommended that institutions highlight available schemes on social media and share state government announcements to increase public access to information about HE. Regarding the challenges they and their institution might face in supporting Priya, Group 3 identified FMs' time constraints as the major challenge.

Across the three group discussions, participants were able to identify the assistance they can provide to students to help facilitate HE access and introduce students to existing institutional and national-level initiatives, such as NSS camps. The assistance needed at the faculty and institutional levels was largely considered to involve raising awareness of existing resources, particularly scholarships and student placement opportunities. Both Groups 1 and 3 considered FMs' time constraints to be a major challenge that compromises their ability to provide such assistance.

Overall, in Session 3, the achieved learning outcomes were: (i) recognising the challenges faced by FMs, and (ii) beginning to identify ways of addressing these challenges through institution-based initiatives. It remains unclear whether the other two objectives were fully achieved: (iii)

participants were to understand the role of FMs in outreach for HE access, and (iv) understand why their role is important.

3.4.3.4 Module Session 4: Institutional HE Outreach Plan

Session 4 of the module focuses on how to plan institutional HE outreach activities. The session includes two parts, a tutor presentation on institutional HE outreach and different forms it can take (see Figure II.3.22) and a group practical activity (see Figure II.3.23).

Figure II.3.22: Module Session 4, Part 1

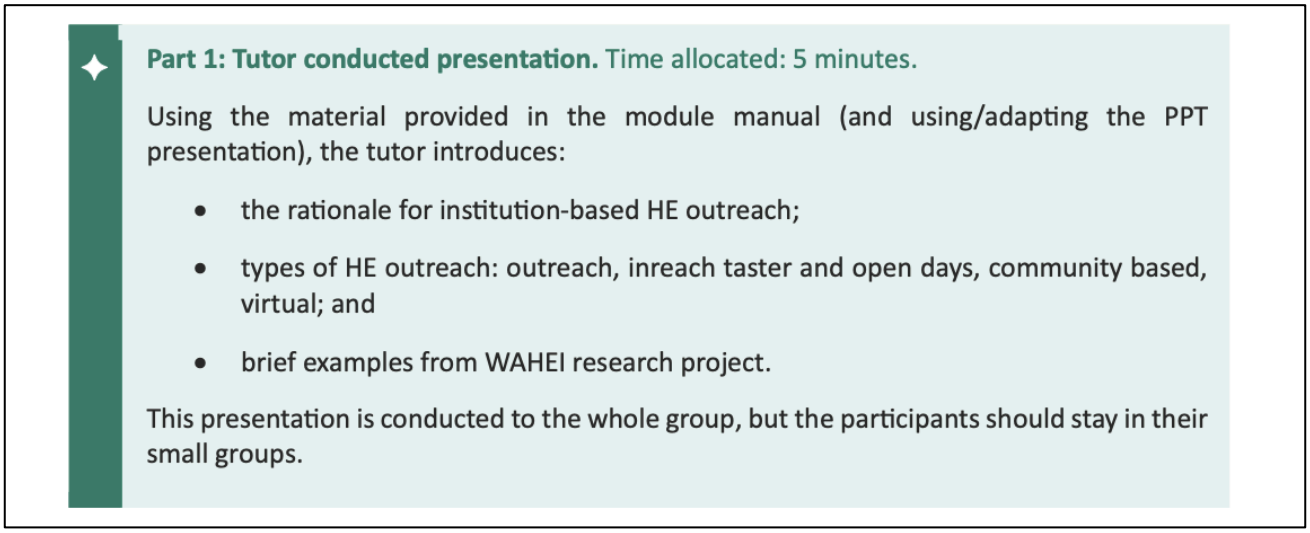
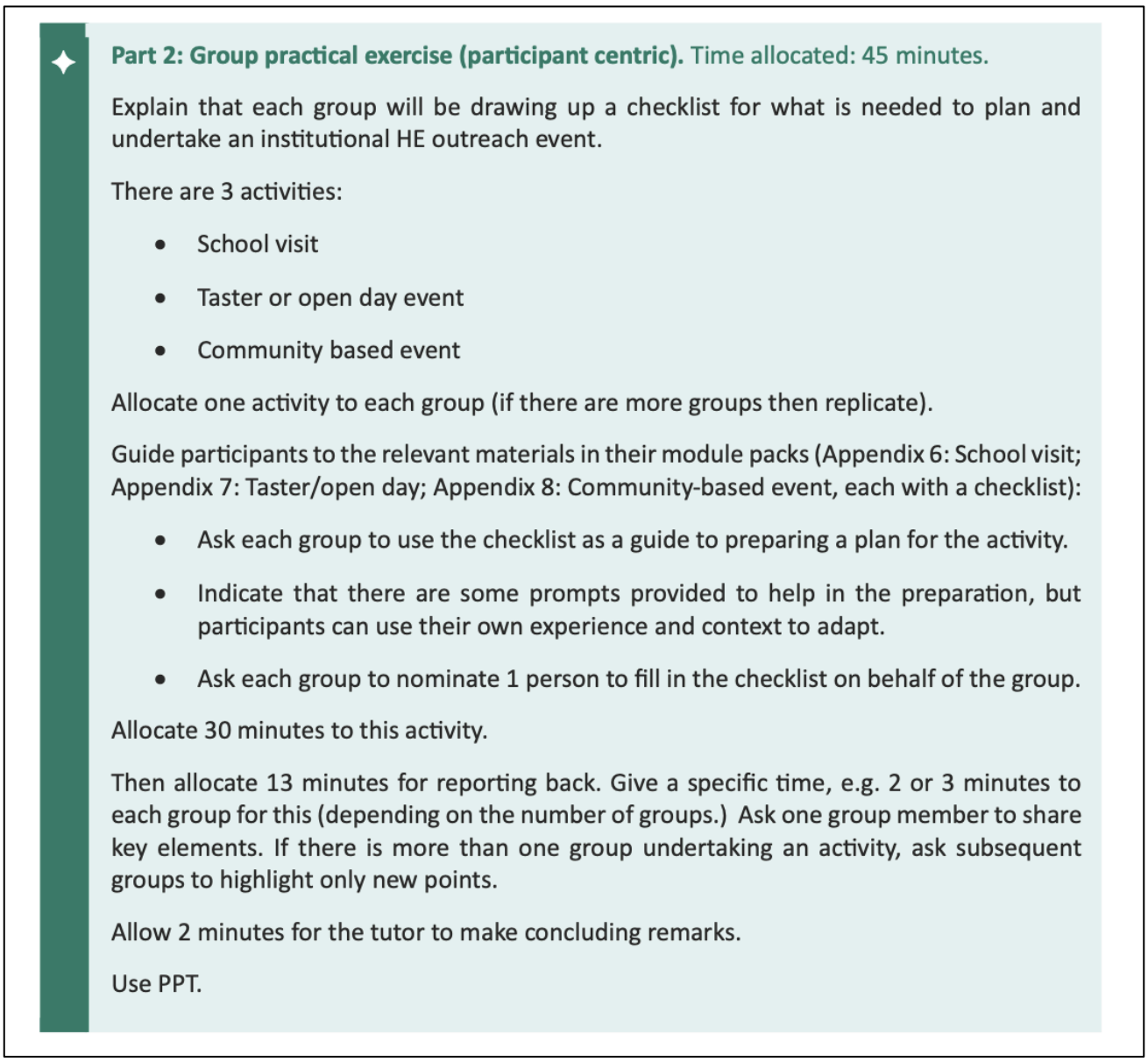


Figure II.3.23: Module Session 4, Part 2



Part 2: Group practical exercise (participant centric). Time allocated: 45 minutes.

Explain that each group will be drawing up a checklist for what is needed to plan and undertake an institutional HE outreach event.

There are 3 activities:

- School visit
- Taster or open day event
- Community based event

Allocate one activity to each group (if there are more groups then replicate).

Guide participants to the relevant materials in their module packs (Appendix 6: School visit; Appendix 7: Taster/open day; Appendix 8: Community-based event, each with a checklist):

- Ask each group to use the checklist as a guide to preparing a plan for the activity.
- Indicate that there are some prompts provided to help in the preparation, but participants can use their own experience and context to adapt.
- Ask each group to nominate 1 person to fill in the checklist on behalf of the group.

Allocate 30 minutes to this activity.

Then allocate 13 minutes for reporting back. Give a specific time, e.g. 2 or 3 minutes to each group for this (depending on the number of groups.) Ask one group member to share key elements. If there is more than one group undertaking an activity, ask subsequent groups to highlight only new points.

Allow 2 minutes for the tutor to make concluding remarks.

Use PPT.

In Session 4, Part 2, working in three groups, participants were asked to design different HE outreach activities. The activity required participants to apply the concepts discussed throughout the module (e.g. social justice role of HEIs) by developing practical outreach plans using the planning checklist provided (see example in Figure II.3.24). Guided by the module checklist, the 3 groups all developed detailed plans covering the pre-event, event day, and post-event stages for their assigned activities.

Figure II.3.24: HE Outreach Activity Planning Checklist (Example – School Visit)

Activity 1: Planning/organising an institutional outreach visit to school/s

Complete a checklist using the template below for each of the steps that would be necessary to plan and organise such a visit.

*The assumption is that this activity will be conducted at the school/s **but** at the end of the checklist you are asked to consider whether a **similar outcome** could be achieved by conducting a virtual activity? What elements would be the same? What would be different? Note any advantages or disadvantages.*

Here are some prompts but please consider all that might be needed:

- What needs to be done before the visit? (Pre-event)
- What needs to be done on the day of the visit? (Event day)
- What needs to be done after the visit? (Post-event)

Before the visit

- What administrative approvals from institutional leaders would be needed to conduct the visit/s or activity? Who would need to authorise?
- How/who would identify the schools that would benefit from such outreach? Remember the circumstances of Anil, Neha, Priya, Akash and Lipi—remote schools; in tribal areas; no family experience of HE; very limited economic resources, etc.—plan with them in mind.
- Is there an existing framework (e.g. are such activities already part of an institutional policy)? Are schools already involved in such activities? How would this be determined? Is there an appropriate dedicated cell?
- Financial resources: How would funds be identified? What funds? Who provides?
- Human resources: How to identify who would be involved in such an event (human capital)? Which faculty members are selected to attend? Remember the circumstances of Anil, Neha, Priya, Akash, and Lipi. Student ambassadors? NSS volunteers? Is there an appropriate dedicated cell?
- Physical resources: What would be needed (halls, projectors, fields, auditoriums, institutional vehicles, etc.)?

Activity Plan at the school

- What is needed for the day itself? A schedule plan (day and time) that ensures availability of students, parents, carers, other stakeholders, etc.
- What details are needed for the visit itself?
- How to convey the purpose of the visit, importance of HE, and awareness for all including students, parents, carers, etc.?
- What activity might capture the attention of students as well as parents? E.g. Street plays (nukkad- natak), videos showcasing the achievements, or a virtual campus tour and other highlights of the HEI (maybe famous alumni, etc.).
- Interaction and games with students in smaller groups based on subject or stream (parents may join in).
- How would those responsible for preparation be identified?
- Feedback session (from students and parents) and inputs on their views of HE and the likely challenges to pursue HE (individual, family, logistics, etc.).
- Invitation for a HE Fair Day, Open Day, or Taster Session with students who have shown an interest in finding out more.
- How did the students and their parents (if present) react? Did they face particular challenges? How would what is learned be passed back to the those who would be responsible for organising a follow up event?

After the event

- What is needed to follow up?

Group 1 was assigned to plan an institutional outreach visit to schools. Before drafting the plan, participants raised questions about the focus of the activity and how many schools could realistically be covered in a single day. Following discussion, they decided to prioritise the quality of engagement over the number of schools visited, demonstrating consideration of the practical implementation of HE outreach activities. For the event day, participants focused on making HE attractive to students while covering essential information about their institution, including courses, subjects, the admissions process, financial aid, and contact details. They also viewed the HE outreach visit as an opportunity for FMs to provide direct advice and guidance to students. In addition, the group planned a virtual school visit involving YouTube videos and online engagement through platforms such as Google Meet and social media. The module tutor raised questions about whether separate sessions should be designed for parents. Participants were hesitant to include such activities, expressing concerns that parents might

perceive HE as a place primarily for enjoyment, whereas students might find the same activities attractive and become more motivated to pursue HE. This discussion encouraged participants to consider how outreach messages may need to be tailored for different audiences.

Group 2 was assigned to design a Taster Day or Open Day. They preferred the shorter Taster Day format and planned a 2-hour event. To make effective use of the limited time, participants designed a range of activities from which students could choose, including exhibitions showcasing course achievements, library visits, campus tours, and introductory lectures for different academic streams. Throughout the discussion, participants emphasised presenting the outcomes of each course and helping students understand the potential career pathways available after graduation. For a virtual Taster Day alternative, participants proposed sharing presentation slides with school principals and using Google Meet to connect with students. During the planning process, participants also discussed when a Taster Day should be held, suggesting December or January to avoid the examination period. Their consideration of timing and logistics demonstrated an increasing awareness of the practical factors involved in organising HE outreach activities.

Group 3 was assigned to design a community HE outreach event. They chose to adopt the format of a *nukkad natak* (street play) as the central activity, focusing on themes including the benefits of HE and financial literacy. They also proposed a village rally, supported by the NSS. On the event day, additional activities included information stands, speeches by invited guests, and multimedia presentations featuring pre-recorded films or virtual campus tours. To strengthen the feasibility of their proposal, participants identified the financial, human and physical resources required to deliver the event. For a virtual alternative, for the community event, Group 3 proposed creating WhatsApp or Telegram groups to share HE information, recorded lectures, telefilms and virtual campus tours, while encouraging peer networks to sustain engagement beyond the event itself.

During the reflection stage of the activity, Group 3 observed that current HE outreach practices in their state remain largely dependent on individual faculty initiatives and require stronger institutional support to expand outreach to disadvantaged communities and underrepresented groups. They also discussed the importance of establishing feedback mechanisms and maintaining consistent follow-up to sustain the long-term impact of HE outreach activities.

During a discussion on follow-up mechanisms, a member of Group 2 proposed collecting annual feedback from students on where they first learned about HE opportunities. This was suggested as a practical way to monitor the longer-term impact and effectiveness of HE outreach activities.

Through the outreach activity design exercise, each group demonstrated an understanding of the key components of effective HE outreach programmes. They achieved the module objectives by: (i) familiarising themselves with one particular type of HE outreach through the provided materials and group discussion, (ii) providing contextual justifications for including different audiences, selecting particular taster sessions and suggesting feasible timelines for activity dates, and (iii) identifying the financial, human and physical resources required to deliver the events. In their final reflection on the activity plan, participants also reflected on establishing various mechanisms to create longer-term impacts from outreach activities and to monitor their impact. These reflections provide evidence of their readiness to conduct outreach activities within an institutional context.

The module ended with a tutor-led presentation on the module objectives and key learnings, and a trialled a short evaluation form (see the form and full results in Appendix F).

Overall, the module successfully introduced the concept of HE outreach to participants and equipped them with practical knowledge to organise and implement outreach activities in their institutions through strategically designed pedagogical content. Starting with reflections on their personal experiences of providing HE access-related advice to young people and participating in university-organised outreach activities, participants were able to recognise the need for institutional efforts to initiate HE outreach.

The discussion of the three student stories enabled participants to shift their focus from individual merits to structural barriers to HE access and develop an understanding of the social justice case for HE enrolment. Moreover, through group discussions on what assistance could be provided to the students in the three stories, participants identified that the limitations of their current HE outreach practices were systemic, with outreach efforts remaining largely dependent on individual faculty initiatives. They recognised the need for stronger institutional support to expand outreach to disadvantaged communities and underrepresented groups.

Furthermore, they discussed the importance of establishing feedback mechanisms and maintaining consistent follow-up to sustain the long-term impact of HE outreach activities.

In the final HE outreach activity design, participants demonstrated an understanding of the key components of effective HE outreach programmes, as manifested through contextual justifications, such as providing detailed timings for conducting particular activities and considering different audiences in activity design.

3.4.4 Pre- and Post-module Questionnaire Findings

The pre- and post-module questionnaires were designed to enable comparison of understanding and views before and after the module experience. As such, this section draws on data from the equivalent sections of the pre-module and post-module questionnaires, to develop a more in-depth understanding of how participation in the module changed participants' understanding of HE outreach.

3.4.4.1 Awareness and Understanding of the Term HE Outreach

Prior to the module, the majority of participants (n=7) reported that they had heard of the term 'HE outreach', while five participants indicated that they were not familiar with the term. In their understanding of HE outreach, many participants (n=5) emphasised 'accessibility' within HE outreach activities, highlighting institutional efforts to widen access to HE for students from disadvantaged backgrounds, such as those from rural areas. Three participants described HE outreach as involving the 'motivation' of students to apply for HE, while two participants considered its primary function to be raising 'awareness' of HE in order to increase student enrolment.

After attending the module, all participants reported a change in their understanding of the meaning of 'HE outreach'. Many noted that the module has presented a 'comprehensive and wide terminology' of HE outreach and raised awareness, particularly among those who were not very familiar with the term prior to the module. Participants recognised that different levels of stakeholders are involved in HE outreach: two participants reflected on current policies and HE enrolment in the Indian context; two participants reflected on the role of institutions in HE outreach planning, suggesting that HEIs are 'to guide, motivate or facilitate school students to

take part in HE'; and three participants gained more practical knowledge to enact HE outreach at an individual level, aiming to 'make aware the society about HE through [their] personal effort'.

3.4.4.2 Understandings of and Views on the Role of HEIs in Delivering HE Outreach

Prior to participating in the module, 11 participants agreed that colleges/universities had a role in providing guidance to young people and their families about undergraduate HE options and admissions processes, and they provided rationales for this role. The majority of participants drew on the functionality of such guidance, suggesting it would help to demystify aspects of HE, such as fees, courses and admissions processes, and support more students and their families, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds. Three participants considered this a social responsibility of HE institutions, arguing that institutions should provide the public with 'awareness about the availability of courses, admission processes, fees, etc., in newspapers and on social media'.

After the module, all 12 participants reported a change of view on institutions' responsibility. Seven participants acknowledged the special 'responsibility' of universities/colleges, as well as of FMs, to provide such guidance and resources to young people in order to raise awareness of HE and support more informed decision-making. Participants (n=3) identified this as area for improvement, noting that many institutions may not provide such guidance or 'are providing such but need to improve a lot' and two participants perceived a gap between the current NEP 2020 policy and institutional efforts to increase HE enrolment.

3.4.4.3 Understandings of and Views on the Role of FMs in Delivering HE Outreach

Prior to attending the module, although 11 participants agreed that FMs should provide guidance to young people and their families about undergraduate HE options and admissions processes, their focus was mainly on the functionality of such guidance in helping students and their families to understand HE. Only one participant particularly noted the unique position of FMs, who possess 'both past and current experience about which subjects or streams have relevance in the present situation for providing employment', as advisers. Another participant also suggested specific actions FMs could take, such as 'visiting schools and nearby areas'.

By the end of the module, with a change in their views on FMs' role, more participants were able

to reflect on FMs' detailed responsibilities in HE outreach. Three participants believed that FMs play a key role in these social inclusion practices due to their position as a 'direct link' between young students and HEIs. Six participants reflected on the range of guidance which could be offered by FMs, including: 'acceptable or believable' information about HE for 'common citizen/students/parents'; 'informing and inviting' student families; offering directional advice on 'admission process & students' future'; and introducing their affiliated institutes and courses. Three participants also believed that FMs could 'do more' than they are currently doing.

3.4.4.4 Participants' Motivations for Attending and Expectations of the Module

Before attending this module, participants had various motivations and expectations. In terms of motivation, three viewed the module as an opportunity to deepen their existing knowledge of HE outreach, as they wished to participate in efforts to 'spread HE for rural communities and the development of Haryana'. Four participants were drawn by the content of the module and acknowledged the significance of the 'new thinkings' it introduced. Another four participants were either approached by the module tutor or referred by friends, which encouraged their participation. One participant was not clear about their motivation.

Regarding expected gain, the majority of participants (n = 8) wanted to gain a 'deep understanding of HE outreach' from this module. The module content was considered relevant to their research interests and as a practical guide for conducting future HE outreach activities, such as how to 'make it work effectively for students', guide other FMs, and 'develop plans for HE development'. Three participants also wanted to learn about the pedagogical dimension of this module. One participant acknowledged the significance of this module, believing it 'should be applied in every institute of state'.

After participation, all participants reported positive feedback for this module and indicated that their expectations were met or exceeded. Three participants noted that, although they initially had limited knowledge of the module or HE outreach, they gained a deeper and more comprehensive understanding. Two participants highlighted that the module introduced a more 'humane' and inclusive perspective towards students. Many participants described the module as informative, productive and relevant, with three stating that they had gained more than expected. All participants emphasised the practical value of the module, including clearer

insights into the responsibilities of FMs and HEIs in guiding and motivating students, as well as strategies for making HE outreach more accessible to young people and their families. Participants also reflected on increased awareness of the challenges faced by students in navigating HE choices, and their own potential role in supporting informed decision-making.

Overall, the module was perceived as beneficial, impactful and applicable in practice, with several participants expressing satisfaction and a sense of fulfilment in relation to their initial hopes and motivations.

This pre- and post-module comparison demonstrates participants' key areas of improvement in various aspects of HE outreach, through their learning in the module. In terms of awareness and understanding of the term 'HE outreach', participants developed a more comprehensive understanding by recognising the key stakeholders involved in HE outreach (i.e. policy, institutions and FMs) and their respective responsibilities. In contrast, before the module, many participants considered outreach as an abstract concept concerning accessibility to HE.

In terms of the role of HEIs and FMs in delivering HE outreach, prior answers show that the majority of participants' understanding remained focused on the function of guidance provided by HEIs and FMs to students. After participation, however, they were able to reflect on the social justice responsibilities institutions bear, recognise how their role as FMs could serve as a connection between students and HEIs, and identify areas for improvement in current practices. Although the reasons for participating in the module varied, all participants found it a fruitful experience for gaining practical knowledge about HE outreach.

3.4.5 Diary Study Findings

This sub-section of the report is based on the diary interview study following the HE outreach module workshop. It offers a detailed view of reflections, learnings, experiences and initiatives of the 12 FMs from Haryana during the three months following their participation in the HE outreach module. As discussed in Sub-section 3.4.1, the solicited diary-interview study was designed to capture the engagement of the participants once a month on the same day for three consecutive months (i.e. three potential entries per participant, totalling 36 potential entries—see Table II.3.1). After the three months diary period, each participant was interviewed individually to gain further clarity and contextual comprehension of the HE outreach

engagements. This sub-section of the report is based on comprehensive consolidation of data gathered through solicited diary entries and post-diary interviews with the 12 participants.

Table II.3.1: Overview of Module Participants' Diary Entries

Participant pseudonym	Number of entries with activity reported	Number of 'nothing to report' entries
Dr Aman	3	0
Dr Abhi	3	0
Dr Anushree	3	0
Dr Dalbir	3	0
Dr Neil Nicholas Arjun	3	0
Dr Gulshan Kumar	2	1
Dr Kadian	1	2
Dr Latika Singh	1	2
Dr Pooja	1	2
Dr Golu	0	3
Dr Kumar	0	3
Dr Tiny	0	3
Total	**20**	**16**

Source: Authors

In total, amongst 36 potential diary entries collected from the FMs, 20 instances of reflections and/or initiatives related to HE outreach were recorded. Three participants did not record that they undertook any reflection or action stemming from the module. Their accounts are discussed in greater detail below, but it is worth noting that these participants went on to discuss that they had in fact reflected and even acted on their learnings from the module but had not considered their thoughts/actions for the diary. This highlights the importance of post-diary interviews as an opportunity to discuss the diary data (and, in these cases, lack thereof).

The first part of this sub-section offers a summative overview of FMs' engagements related to HE outreach during the diary study period. The second part provides a detailed view of each participants' learnings, reflections and initiatives in the form of individual profiles based on diary entries and post-diary interviews with the participants. The third part of this sub-section

presents an overview of FMs' ongoing reflections and suggestions related to HE outreach and the HE outreach module through the post-diary interviews.

3.4.5.1 Learnings and Engagements of FMs Related to HE Outreach

The module aimed to enhance FMs' understanding and awareness of HE outreach. As such, the first part of the diary aimed to capture the ways in which learnings from the module entered into FMs' thoughts during the three months after the module sessions.

Nine participants recorded reflections related to learnings from the HE outreach module at least once during the period of three months. In these reflections, participants were either recollecting their learnings gathered from the workshop or relaying their experiences and learnings from the workshop to their colleagues, relatives or members of the community. The frequency of reflections varied across the diary study period. Five participants shared reflections of their learnings each month. One FM recorded two instances of reflections, and three FMs recorded their reflections only once during the three months period.

Three FMs considered the HE outreach module highly relevant for HEIs overall. The module led to FMs reflecting on the importance of HE and its significance in enabling prospects for rural students. The FMs recorded that HE outreach is instrumental in creating awareness about the flexible nature of HE, the NEP 2020 and the role of FMs in facilitating access to HE. Further, FMs shared that participating in the HE outreach module improved their knowledge about HE.

The HE outreach module prompted participants to think about the possibilities of guiding students about HE. On an individual front, the participants shared that they recollected the process of planning, delivery and evaluation of the HE outreach module. The execution of the module helped them understand ways in which HE outreach could be conducted at local level. For example, Dr Pooja stated: 'The HE outreach module helped me to understand how outreach activities are planned, delivered and evaluated' (diary entry, month 3). Here, Dr Pooja highlights the implicit knowledge that she gained by participating in the HE outreach module. Similarly, another FM shared that the module helped them to envision an HE outreach cell (i.e. committee) at the HEI level: 'This module helped me in various dimensions. Now, I have a vision of outreach cell & its futuristic approaches' (Dr Neil, diary entry, month 3).

Other FMs specified the nature of HE outreach that might be relevant for their contextual setting. For instance, Dr Latika was able to specify that the prospective students in her locality needed support with arriving at HE programmes of their choice: 'As I observe in [name of the locality] there is already lots of awareness about HE…Students only *need right choice of courses*' (Dr Latika, diary entry, month 1, emphasis added).

FMs reflected that they thought of programmes for admission purposes, career counselling, and organising special drives to facilitate enrolment. They also recorded plans to organise education fairs and community-based programmes such as *nukkad natak* (street plays), to increase enrolment of students in HE. On the whole, recurrent reflections and thoughts related to HE and HE outreach at individual and collective level, propelled participants to take varied initiatives to facilitate HE outreach for prospective students.

The second part of the diary form requested information on any actions or initiatives that participants took during the three months, which were in some way influenced by having participated in the module. Seven FMs recorded. The highest number of initiatives were facilitated by Dr Aman, with six instances of initiatives to facilitate HE outreach.

Within their own HEIs, some of the participants initiated discussions about HE outreach following on from the module. One FM initiated a discussion with his colleagues to organise a special drive for student enrolment during the admission process. Another FM submitted a proposal to the college principal to establish an HE outreach cell within their HEI premises. He successfully established an informal HE outreach cell for advising students regarding HE enrolment and job opportunities at their HEIs.

Making a difference in other institutions, two FMs were invited to deliver talks to 11th and 12th class government school students on issues other than HE outreach and included HE outreach as a topic of their own accord:

> After learning from the HE outreach module workshop, I decided to work on this topic whenever I got chance. As soon as I got the opportunity to go to Government Girls Senior Secondary School, [name of a district], for delivering a lecture, I gave detailed information about the importance of HE to the 11th and 12th [class] girl students and also invited them to pursue HE in my college. (Dr Kumar, diary entry, month 1)

> I went to a rural Government Model Sanskriti School and engaged with students of 11th & 12th. I delivered/talked with them & provided accurate information and guidance about higher education & NEP 2020 & a campus visit of college will be organised for these students soon. (Dr Pooja, diary entry, month 3)

Dr Abhi recorded that participating in the HE outreach module workshop helped her to prepare a plan to establish a local library within her community with the help of local community members and crowdfunding. This local library supported around 40 students preparing for HE-related examinations.

Further actions and activities included discussion of the NEP 2020 with students who were playing cricket in the village, offering advice regarding programmes available at the HEI, discussions regarding flexibility of HE with workers and their children during construction at their home, advice to prospective students in village, and friends and relatives regarding importance of HE. Some FMs actively counselled their close relatives such as a cousin's daughter, nephew and other relatives regarding the importance of HE. This was usually during family gatherings, a wedding or when families gathered around festivities. Apart from these instances, FMs also shared their learning with colleagues, friends and family members.

The diary form also included space for other comments and reflections. Six FMs shared 13 comments related to the HE outreach module. The FMs realised that the module facilitated them to gain comprehension of HE outreach and its relevance within the Indian context. They shared that the module had the potential to enable actualisation of the goals set by the NEP 2020 to achieve a national Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) of 50%. Further, participants reflected that the module would be effective in contexts such as hilly (i.e. often remote) and tribal locations with comparatively lower educational access and attainment. FMs also reflected on the personal capabilities that they developed from participating in the HE outreach module workshop. The module enabled FMs to connect with their students and engage in thinking about employment enabled by HE. They also realised the need for HE outreach activities for schoolteachers and students. FMs shared that they were motivated to participate in future HE outreach programmes and that it helped them to support students to make informed choices about their future education.

3.4.5.2 HE Outreach Profiles of FMs

The second part of the sub-section offers an in-depth view of each FM's HE outreach engagements over a three-month period following participation in the HE outreach module workshop. Data gathered through solicited diaries and post-diary interviews are presented as individual profiles to provide a comprehensive overview of HE outreach engagements. The profiles are based on the diary data and also include elaborations on diary entries ascertained during the post-diary interviews. The profiles are listed in order of number of entries.

Dr Aman

Amongst all participants, Dr Aman was most active in creating spaces to discuss HE outreach. His diary entries illustrate his active reflections and commitment to facilitate HE outreach. Over the period of three months, he actively reflected about learnings from the HE outreach module in the form of discussions. He engaged in HE outreach discussions with a wide range of individuals and collectives. For instance, he discussed the importance of HE outreach with his colleagues and in the next two months he capitalised on festive gatherings and weddings as occasions to instil the importance of HE amongst relatives.

> I sat with the college principal, all my college colleagues and discussed the module. So, when we discussed this workshop, all of them heard it enthusiastically. They all liked it, that yes, this workshop was very useful as it addressed the real problem of rural students. Like they talked about the importance of HE for students, we can work on that, so along with the administration all the colleagues also agreed to it that yes, you make any plan, we will go together in a team or alone like it was suggested in the workshop. All agreed on it that everyone will do some activity before admission. (Post-diary interview)

Apart from initiating discussions and attuning his colleagues towards the relevance and importance of HE outreach, he extended discussions related to HE outreach amongst other forums where he was invited as an expert. In his first month diary reflection following from the workshop he recounts an instance where he was invited to deliver a lecture on environmental awareness at a local Government Girls Higher Secondary School (see above sub-section). Upon realising that his audience were higher secondary school students (prospective HE students) he encouraged them to pursue HE. Further, he initiated the prospective students to think about the

challenges that they might encounter if they decided to pursue HE and extended further support to facilitate thinking about HE. The quote below offers a flavour of his interaction with prospective students from the school.

> I was invited for a guest lecture on environmental awareness at the Government Senior Secondary Girls School, so I was invited. When I reached there, there were 11th and 12th grade girls in front of me, and I told them about environmental awareness. After that, I spoke to them about HE. I addressed all girls, and asked that, after passing 12th, they must be/should be ready for their next career. So, for that, I told them that they must definitely pursue HE. I asked them what they thought and what kind of problem they are having for HE. I gave my contact, in case they have any problem in that or have any questions, then contact me. You can come to college for a good education. I insisted that all of them should definitely pursue HE. And all the students were very impressed by it, and even after the programme, the students interacted with me, and I told them about subjects and other good things (activities, financial incentives available in colleges) like scholarship etc. if you also pursue HE. (Post-diary interview)

Apart from facilitating HE outreach in his professional role, Dr Aman engaged in discussions regarding the importance of HE, with prospective students and their parents within extended family circles in various religious and personal social gatherings, as showcased below:

> During the Diwali holidays, I discussed HE Outreach whenever I visited relatives. (Diary entry, month 1)

> I had gone to my brother's home in Delhi, and their daughter (my niece) was in 12th. Whenever I go, all the youngsters/children meet me. I do ask them about their studies and interact with them about how everything is going on. The girl told me she perhaps can't pursue [HE] when I enquired, what are you doing for further studies. Then I talked to my brother and sister-in-law and I told them and convinced that HE is very important. (Post-diary interview)

> When I went to my sister's house on a festival, during that time my sister's daughter and their relatives also came to meet me. They generally do so. I interacted with them and

> told the significance of HE. I gave my own example that, without HE, what I would have been?...So, they were also influenced by this and agreed for HE. (Post-diary interview)

He realises the importance of the module and its role in ensuring successful implementation of the NEP 2020. His thoughts reflect a sense of pride as the module provided him with the knowledge to connect with his students and young people within his family circles and in his role in facilitating them to access HE.

> Thanks to the knowledge I gained from the HE outreach module workshop, I have been able to connect many students with HE and will continue to do so. I truly enjoyed being involved with the HE outreach programme. (Diary entry, month 2)

On the whole, Dr Aman's three months diary entries and post-diary interview conversations showcase his committed involvement in facilitating access to HE, both in his professional and personal capacity. HE outreach conversations seem to successfully connect him with his colleagues, institutional leader of his HEI and most importantly with prospective students.

Dr Abhi

Dr Abhi actively reflected and took initiatives related to HE outreach during the three months diary period. She appreciated the role of the HE outreach module in facilitating enrolment of students in HE and implementing the NEP 2020. In the first month, she discussed the learnings from the module with a district magistrate, colleagues, friends and family members and developed an HE outreach plan for her to implement in future. Apart from reflecting, she also contacted youngsters in her locality and discussed the importance of HE.

> Mostly the children feel that their school is over and they are moving towards jobs because they want to prepare. Then I also explained to them that there are many limited jobs on the basis of 12th, so they understood that if they go for higher studies then many options will open up and chances are more. (Post-diary interview)

In the second month diary entry, she reflected that participating in the HE outreach module enhanced her knowledge of HE outreach. She felt confident to implement her plan related to HE outreach and to motivate students to enrol for HE. During this month she actively discussed HE outreach in her personal networks, such as with her friend's children and relatives. As with the

first month, she offered them information related to admission, scope and fees. She also initiated contact with parents of the students from her college of her own volition and motivated them to enrol their children in HE. She also provided them with information related to scholarships provided by government and NGOs.

> I came to the library of my village where many students study and do preparation of different exams. I motivated them for HE and told them role of HE in their life and society. (Diary entry, month 3)

> I motivated, those people of the colonies [housing areas], who were in jobs, then they had the idea of gathering together and starting a library…started a library in that temple. We collected the funds, through donations, by collecting money amongst ourselves, we started a library…it's still small…Started with 40 students…I motivated them [prospective students] to prepare for yourself, keep preparing for your examinations and move towards HE as well. (Post-diary interview)

Dr Abhi further shared that the HE outreach module was very important for HE teachers and students. During the three months period following her participation in the HE outreach module workshop, Dr Abhi was able to create a communal space of young people, where they could discuss and prepare for HE-related examinations within the local community.

Dr Anushree

Dr Anushree shared three instances of HE outreach across the diary period. Throughout the three months following the HE outreach module participation, she reflected on the learnings, and the role of FMs in facilitating HE outreach. In the first month, Dr Anushree recounted the practical requirements of conducting an HE outreach programme. She recollected learnings from the workshop and thought through the process of facilitating informed access to HE by offering information regarding admission processes and linking HE choices with possible career options.

Her second month diary entry shared her experience of offering HE related advice to some students telephonically. Some prospective students contacted her telephonically through her contact details available on a public website.

> Some students had contacted me via 'Just Dial' as my phone number is registered on 'Just Dial' for [name of the college] and some of them enquired about options and faculty available in that college and I took personal interest to satisfy their queries. (Diary entry, month 2)

> They ask how much the fees will be, when is the date for filling the form, when will the college forms be released, they also ask this, where to apply and how to apply online. (Post-diary interview)

Her HEI had been established recently and contact details of the FMs had been shared on select public websites to increase student enrolment within HEI. As intended by the HEI, prospective students reached out to Dr Anushree seeking guidance regarding the admission procedure and enquiry related to the fee structure. Participating in the HE outreach module workshop strengthened her willingness to aid prospective students to make informed choices regarding HE.

In her third-month diary reflection she presented the impact that the activities and overall message of the HE outreach module workshop had had on her: 'I remembered how everyone suggested how can FMs take initiative to motivate students for HE' (diary entry, month 3).

These recurrent reflections facilitated by diary entries on a monthly basis made Dr Anushree realise the importance of HE outreach and the role of FMs in facilitating prospective students to access HE. It prompted her to think of appropriate mechanisms of institutionalising HE outreach.

Dr Dalbir

In the diary, Dr Dalbir shared that participating in the HE outreach module and maintaining the diary helped him recollect learnings from the workshop and reflect on the importance of HE outreach. Participating in the module and diary study overall facilitated him to recurrently reflect on the role of FMs in enabling informed HE choices amongst students from villages. Dr Dalbir was of the view that HE outreach was essential with the current overhauling of HE programmes and implementation of the NEP 2020 within Haryana:

> Today children are troubled because they have been given eight subjects [a development within NEP]...So, in today's time, I think the government should make HE outreach mandatory. (Post-diary interview)

Dr Dalbir suggests that HE outreach should be institutionalised by making it a routine task that needs to be incorporated in the academic calendars of the HEIs. The quote below offers a plan that Dalbir suggested and trialled to ensure that the HE outreach programme is conducted through his HEI.

> So why not have career related outreach and it should be included in our academic calendar. The principal can do this at his level by forming a committee and including it in the calendar through IQAC [Internal Quality Assurance Cell].
>
> I spoke to our principal, and she said that as soon as we enter the session, in April, February, and March, we'll make some kind of plan. We'll run such orientation programmes in eight or ten nearby villages by forming separate teams. (Post-diary interview)

Participating in the HE outreach module workshop increased Dr Dalbir's confidence and instilled a sense of social responsibility. He reflected on his personal trajectory to HE and realised the role of FMs in facilitating access to HE. Within the diary period he was unable to organise a substantial HE outreach activity involving prospective students, owing to his current workload.

Dr Neil Nicholas Arjun

Dr Neil was one of the active participants of the HE outreach module workshop. He reflected and shared instances of HE outreach in all three months of the diary study, following his participation in the HE outreach module. He was able to successfully establish an informal 'outreach cell' to offer students guidance about HE enrolment and employment opportunities on completing HE.

> An informal group under the title 'outreach cell' in college has been established, which will work on guiding students about the enrolment and future opportunities (Job) after getting HE. (Diary entry, month 3)

In the first month after the workshop, he planned and submitted a proposal for establishing an outreach cell in his HEI. In the second month, Dr Neil planned for an enrolment drive specifically for facilitating admission of students from rural areas to HE. Enacting this, he contacted the higher authorities of his college responsible for organising an enrolment drive at the time of admission at his HEI. In the last month diary entry, he recollected various approaches that could facilitate enrolment in HE, such as education fairs and community-based programmes, e.g. *nukkad natak* (street play). As mentioned above, he also shared his success in establishing an outreach cell. Further, he recounted that participating in the module helped him envision how to further develop an outreach cell and plausible approaches that could be adopted. This informal cell at present is integrated into the already existing NSS of the HEI.

> Taking this as a reference point, we are organising a camp in [a village] between February 8th and February 14th. It's an NSS camp. We've decided to schedule a day to visit the government schools there and provide some guidance to the children. I'm working as a resource person in that programme myself. (Post-diary interview)

As evident in the above quote, Dr Neil and his team were proactive in integrating the HE outreach activities within the NSS activities. Overall, his efforts over the period of three months to institutionalise HE outreach activities within his HEI were successful.

Dr Gulshan

Dr Gulshan recorded two instances of engaging in HE outreach during the first two consecutive months of participating in the HE outreach module. He actively reflected on learnings from the module. In the first month, he reflected on the need for creating awareness regarding the NEP 2020 amongst school students who were playing cricket in the village. He joined them in playing cricket and initiated a conversation regarding HE and the NEP 2020. He believed that creating awareness regarding the NEP 2020 would aid students to take informed decisions regarding their career, based on their interest and preferences. Dr Gulshan's second month entry reflected on his plan to guide students about HE. During this month, he planned to take an active step by interacting with some students from his village and discussed the NEP 2020 with the students.

> Last week I went to my village, In the evening some students were playing cricket in the village playground, I told them about NEP 2020. (Diary entry, month 2)

> I realised how important it is to address issues related to HE choices, and also whether the children were aware of HE or not. So, I asked them about HE, but they had no idea about the NEP. So, I told them a little bit. Maximum children were from 9th, 10th and 12th class… They asked with great curiosity that there is a new education policy, tell us about it, tell us about admission…. (Post-diary interview)

The diary entries of Gulshan reflect the connection that HE outreach has with the NEP 2020. Gulshan realises his positioning as the FM and views the NEP 2020 as a core aspect to facilitate discussions regarding HE with prospective students. He not only offered prospective students a comprehensive overview of the NEP and its linkages but also thought through their concerns. Overall, his approach reflects an integration of his professional role in his everyday engagements and interactions for leisure.

Dr Kadian

Dr Kadian shared one instance of reflecting and actively engaging in HE outreach during the three months diary period. He reflected on the necessity to make prospective students aware of the flexibility of accessing HE in the third month of the diary study. During this month, he also interacted with construction workers working at his house. He was motivated to interact with men and women workers. He also invested some time interacting with their children.

> Interacted with the children of those workers, asked about their syllabus, told about the flexibility of education, specifically HE. (Diary entry, month 3)

> Two or three boys came to [conduct some construction work in the house], I mean, those kids were around 18 or 20 years old, but their education hadn't even finished 10th, and some hadn't even finished 12th. So, told them a little about…exams through open schooling…told them a little about scholarships…and efforts are being made to bring in some flexibility…their concern was that it has been so many years since we left studies, how can we join again? (Post-diary interview)

This instance made Dr Kadian reflect about the immense potential of HE in shaping an individual's life. Further, this interaction also made him reflect on the need for recurrent engagements to motivate individuals towards HE. Though this was a chance interaction that Dr Kadian had with construction workers at his home, it makes evident the need for reimagining prospective candidates for HE.

Dr Latika

Dr Latika shared one instance of reflecting on the HE outreach module. In the first month's diary entry, she reflected on the prevalence of awareness about the importance of HE and HE programmes within her locality: 'As I observe in [name of the place] area there is already lots of awareness about HE…Students only need right choice of courses' (diary entry, month 1). When asked more about this in the post-diary interview, she stated:

> I mean that students just follow a trend. They even don't exactly analyse themselves, what type of choice they have or what type of career opportunity they can better find in any type of courses. They just follow the trend. The people are going on Arts side, they took the Arts subject. People are going on Commerce, they took the commerce subject. (Post-diary interview)

Dr Latika seemed to have a sense about the specific HE outreach related needs of prospective students within her locality. She was specific that the agenda of HE outreach in the catchment area of her HEI ought to focus on supporting students to choose courses. Her reflection demonstrates the need for adapting HE outreach programmes to suit the demands of the local region.

Dr Pooja

Overall, Dr Pooja recorded one instance where she reflected and effectively engaged in HE outreach during the diary study period. In the third-month diary entry, she reflected that participating in the HE outreach module helped her think through the process of planning, delivering and evaluating HE outreach activities. Here, she was reflecting on processual learning, internalised by experiencing the HE outreach module.

> Yes, the HE outreach module helped me to understand how outreach activities are planned, delivered and evaluated. (Diary entry, month 3)

> I went to a rural [name of the school] and engaged with students of 11th & 12th. I delivered/talked with them & provided accurate information and guidance about HE & NEP 2020 & a campus visit of college will be organised for these students soon. (Diary entry, month 3)

By the third month diary entry, Dr Pooja had organised a visit to a particular school which was recognised as the leading institution among government schools in the vicinity. Participating in the HE outreach module and the initiatives thenceforth had instilled a sense of social responsibility in Dr Pooja:

> Being a woman, being a teacher, if I am talking about my neighbourhood, I mean my neighbourhood, or the children I know around my college, whether they are in 12th or 10th grade, I definitely tell them that if anyone asks, they do it [follow her advice regarding HE], they definitely do it. (Post-diary interview)

In the final round of interactions after the diary study period, Dr Pooja shared her individual level initiative, that she resolved to carry forward as a way of life as a responsible woman academic in her neighbouring community.

Dr Golu

Dr Golu also had not shared any reflections relating to the HE outreach module in the three months diary period. However, in the post-diary interview he shared that he had discussed his experience of attending the training and learnings from the module with FMs from nearby colleges. Further, he believed that any initiative related to HE outreach would be best suited during May-June months as the time period would be appropriate as per the academic calendar of the HEIs of the region, and it would also align with the academic calendars of the higher secondary schools in the region. At that time, prospective students would have completed their final school level public examinations and would be exploring options to enrol in HE.

Dr Golu firmly believed that the HE outreach module needed to be circulated at a large scale by involving state level authorities of HE, such as the Director General of HE of the state. At the

institutional level, he suggested that mechanisms to interlink colleges and schoolteachers could be initiated by organising online sessions on HE outreach. Dr Golu shared the chain of responsibility for the institutionalisation of HE outreach at state level in his post-diary interview, as follows: *State Director General of HE → College Principal → College FMs → Higher Secondary Schoolteachers →Prospective HE Students*. Dr Golu stated:

> If a teacher goes out for an hour, the principal gives permission. Now if he goes with a proposal, the principal will not pay much attention to it…Sensitising the principal will be much more effective than the teacher [i.e. FM]. (Post-diary interview)

The chain of responsibility and quote presented above present the institutional hierarchy operational in the context. Further, Dr Golu suggested that a suitable mechanism, in the form of certification and recognition in promotion criteria, needs to be in place to acknowledge the efforts of the FMs involved in HE outreach. He was appreciative of the diary study through which reflections and engagements of FMs' HE outreach were gathered:

> Otherwise we forget everything and, if it is considered in writing, then the participant is more attentive, so the response is being given in writing. (Post-diary interview)

Overall, Dr Golu shared the insights gathered from participating in the HE outreach workshop with other HEIs FMs and the suggestions presented in the post-diary interview present his ongoing reflections regarding HE outreach over the period of four months.

Dr Kumar

Dr Kumar did not share any details about his reflections on the impact of participating in the HE outreach module through the three-month solicited diary. In the post-diary interview he shared that he in fact *had* reflected on the HE outreach module and had discussed his reflections regarding participating in the module with his colleagues, coordinators within his HEI and the principal of his HEI:

> I have a taken an initiative and discussed with staff because I am the coordinator of the Arts faculty at our college, so I have taken an initiative and I have told my faculty or colleagues what this module is about that I have attended recently in Delhi about how to practice outreach regarding HE in the village area, a discussion with the principal and our

> Coordinator, I asked them to take the details, and they are creating the different groups to utilise the output of the module. (Post-diary interview)

Dr Kumar explained that, as his initiatives were not directed at prospective HE students, he did not record any instance in his HE outreach diary. However, the principal of his HEI mobilised FMs into groups to use outputs of the module at the institutional level.

Dr Kumar advocated the need for greater circulation of the HE outreach module. He proposed that the module needs to be promoted at a regional level with the principals and coordinators of departments as key stakeholders. He emphasised the need to strengthen visits of experts from universities to colleges for furthering HE outreach in areas surrounding colleges. Dr Kumar was successful in initiating conversations and thinking around HE outreach amongst his colleagues within his HEI.

Dr Tiny

Dr Tiny had not shared any reflections relating to the HE outreach module in the three months diary period. However, in the post-diary interview she elaborated on the indifference expressed by her fellow colleagues when she initiated discussions regarding HE outreach.

> There wasn't a single person who was ready to discuss the topic... they said, what are you talking about, what are the requirements for it? Everyone already knows about HE... other things after social media, there are different online ones, they can search like that. (Post-diary interview)

Her post-diary interview was valuable in comprehending a suitable approach for initiating discussions regarding HE outreach at an institutional level.

Based on her experiences, she suggested involvement of college principals as a requisite for HE outreach. Further, she also suggested mechanisms whereby HE outreach could be integrated with other existing programmes of community outreach conducted by the college in surrounding villages. For example, she suggested holding a NSS camp in villages away from cities, which could then lead to the organisation of official institutional visits and campus tours for prospective students.

Further, Dr Tiny shared that the sight of physical copies of the diary instilled a sense of responsibility to facilitate HE access.

> whenever I looked at my diary, I thought, now I will be more responsible to make students aware about HE, whether a child or someone else comes, I will listen to their problem and, at my own level I will tell them what different options they have. (Post-diary interview)

On the whole, her experiences of initiating conversations related to HE outreach present the challenges that could be encountered while engaging with other FMs.

3.4.5.3 Ongoing Reflections of Module Participants on HE Outreach and the Module

Following discussions of reflections and initiatives during the diary-study period, in the post-diary interviews participants were prompted to share their ongoing reflections regarding HE outreach and the module. These discussions brought about insightful thoughts to strengthen conceptual knowledge regarding HE outreach amongst stakeholders, challenges and opportunities, and measures to strengthen the HE outreach module.

The participants expressed the need to popularise the conceptual comprehension and implementation of HE outreach initiatives through institutions. They emphasised the importance of creating awareness through state machinery such as Directorates/Departments of HE in each state of India.

> Only after attending the module, I understand the nature of HE Outreach, the programmes that exist and should be conducted. I had no idea about it before that. (Dr Abhi, post-diary interview)

The participants felt that institutionalising conceptual understanding and implementation would involve making it mandatory for all HEIs within each state to plan and implement HE outreach initiatives on a recurrent basis. As such, HE outreach, when provided through institutional mechanisms, would aid prospective students and their families to make informed decisions regarding HE. FMs were of the view that this would help students from previously underrepresented communities within HE.

> When students come from SC or other communities, they often leave things [i.e. education] in between [i.e. dropout from college]. So, we had gone there [a government school] in December. I had told a little about the education policy then, specifically what we are seeing now, the syllabus designed in our university, the minor subject is relatively more difficult for the student [unclear] than the major subject....The only thing that can happen is that children of class 11th or 12th should be sensitised three to four times a year about their future prospects.... Perhaps it's a collaboration between the school and the college. (Dr Kadian, post-diary interview)

Participants recounted that the HE outreach module instilled a sense of social responsibility, and they took active initiatives to encourage and familiarise students from rural and socially marginalised communities. All participants suggested that they would recommend the HE outreach module to their colleagues. Two FMs recorded that there was an appetite for the HE outreach module amongst their colleagues.

> There are plenty of opportunities, and many people are interested. Even when I shared with my college colleagues about my trip, two or three people said, 'You should have told us, we could have gone too'. (Dr Dalbir, post-diary interview)

FMs reinforced the need to involve various stakeholders such as principals, heads of departments, coordinators and FMs in HE outreach initiatives of the HEI. Institutionalisation of the initiatives would lead to strategised HE outreach, such as suitable timings for conducting HE outreach activities, catchment area, financial resource allocation, recognition of FMs' work as a part of their workload and associated credential benefits in terms of career progression. The participants also suggested an integration of HE outreach activities, with ongoing outreach activities conducted through HEIs such as NSS and other community-focused initiatives. They recommended that the HE outreach module be made available online to facilitate FMs to complete the module as per their convenience and enable reaching a wider audience. Participants made a strong case for the need of further modules, to develop the capabilities of FMs to support students across different HE subjects/programmes.

> Interviewer: So, would you like to suggest something about professional learning modules?

> Dr Kadian: I'm a geography teacher, so I have knowledge about it. Anyone can learn about anything with interest. But even then, I don't know the avenues of commerce: what all you can do with commerce, where you can go. If teachers knew about these things, they might be able to guide you in a better way. (Post-diary interview)

Participants recounted the need to familiarise prospective students with the recent revamping of the HE programme structure at the national level with the implementation of the NEP 2020. Given the increasing workload, FMs recurrently emphasised and suggested mechanisms for institutionalising HE outreach and the HE outreach module.

The diary study which followed the HE outreach module workshop enabled participants to record how, over time, they reflected upon and discussed HE outreach and the HE outreach module, with their institutional leaders, heads of the departments, coordinators, fellow colleagues within HEI and colleagues from nearby HEIs. They were also able to share their learnings at instances where they were invited as experts to address higher secondary school students. Apart from the education sector, one of the participants discussed HE outreach with a district magistrate within her locality. The diary entries reflect that the participants were motivated to think about contextual relevant approaches to HE outreach, as per the needs of their local community, and how to integrate HE outreach with other ongoing outreach activities carried out by their HEI.

Module participants also extended knowledge related to HE to people they encountered. For instance, they initiated HE-related conversations with construction workers undertaking work at their homes or children playing cricket, mobilising funds to set up a community space such as a small public library to facilitate HE outreach. FMs actively shared and discussed the need for HE, the NEP 2020 and HE outreach, with their relatives and extended family members. In some instances, FMs used HE outreach as conversation starters to build rapport with the next generation family members, whom they met during festive family gatherings, weddings or other religious ceremonies. To sum up, participants endorsed the need for HE outreach initiatives and mass participation in the HE outreach module. They recommended institutionalisation of the HE module through state-level stakeholders

3.5 Conclusion

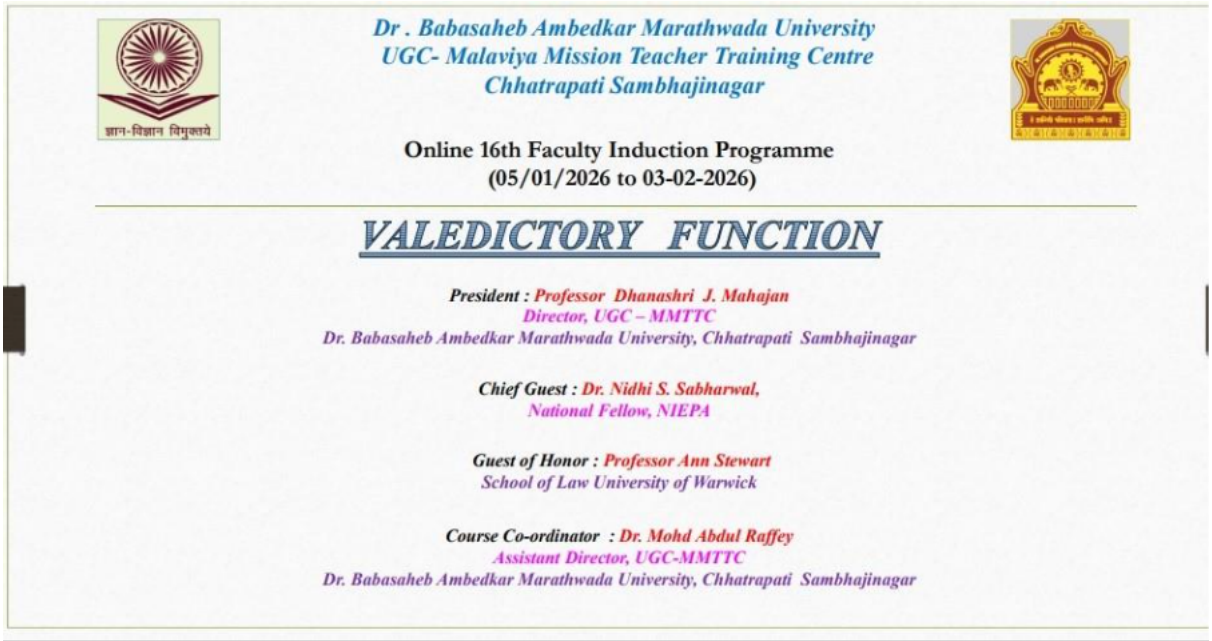
This chapter documented the CPL module piloting process and its evaluation, starting with module preparation, followed by module implementation and evaluation of the impact of the module pilot on participants' learning, both in the short and longer term. The chapter brought together reflections from the module tutor, observation notes of module participation, and data collected through a rigorously designed evaluation process for the CPL module. By combining accounts from various stakeholders involved in the module piloting process, this chapter presented the multifaceted impact of the piloted module and provided valuable insights into implications for future module implementation.

The CPL module was developed through a collective effort involving both the core project team and SRTs, as detailed in Chapter 2, and was selected for piloting in Haryana. Professor Rajeshwari, the SRT leader in Haryana, facilitated the invitation of 12 FMs from colleges serving different areas and communities across Haryana, to participate in the module. Professor Rajeshwari and Dr Virdi facilitated teaching and related preparation, with the support from NIEPA-based team members. The module piloting was observed by Emily Henderson (lead observer; project Co-PI), Sejjal (project Consultant based at NIEPA) and Arushi Painuly (PhD student and former project Consultant based at NIEPA), who took observation notes to document the learning process.

Through a comprehensive and detailed evaluation of the module, the piloting demonstrated the successful implementation of the CPL module. It achieved its key learning outcomes by introducing the concept of HE outreach to participants and equipping them with practical knowledge to organise and implement outreach activities in their institutions. Despite varied starting points, all participants grasped the fundamental elements of HE outreach, deepened their thinking by identifying areas for improvement in their current practices and acknowledged the social justice responsibilities of HE outreach. The pre- and post-module survey responses showed a clear deepening of participants' awareness and understanding of their own unique positions to assist young students in making informed HE decisions. In the diary-interview study, module participants showed long-term enthusiasm for promoting HE outreach initiatives and encouraging wider participation in HE outreach activities.

Following the module pilot, Dr Nidhi Sabharwal, Professor Dhaneshri Mahajan (WAHEI Maharashtra SRT Lead) and Professor Ann Stewart presented an online version of the HE outreach module on 3rd February 2026, as part of the one-month-long Faculty Induction Programme (FIP) organised by the UGC-Malaviya Mission Teacher Training Centre (MMTTC) at Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar Marathwada University, Maharashtra (see Figure II.3.25). The session was attended by 77 FMs from 17 HEIs from the state of Maharashtra. This event enabled the team to assess the extent to which the module, which was designed to be conducted in person, could be adapted for use in the online format adopted by MMTTCs. The in-person module is participant-focused and includes involvement in practical activities. This session established that the technical infrastructure provided by the MMTTC could support such an approach when adapted to being conducted online. The interactive elements worked and produced considerable engagement from the participants, both through their verbal interactions but also with good use of the chat box facility. The contribution from Professor Mahajan (also Director of the MMTTC) added invaluable local contextual knowledge drawn from the research. The session was recorded and made available on the MMTTC website.

Figure II.3.25: Record of Subsequent Piloting of Module Material at Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar Marathwada University MMTTC



Chapter 4: Learnings from the International Discussion Meet

4.1 Introduction

This final substantive chapter of Part II of the report presents findings from the International Discussion Meet, which constituted the final major stage of the 'Widening Access to Higher Education in India: Institutional Approaches' (WAHEI) project. The event was organised in accordance with the aims and objectives of the project (see Section 1.3), which included as a final aim: *To develop and evaluate the potential for institutional, state and national policy impact via interactive consultations.*

The event was entitled 'Higher Education Outreach and Equitable Access in India: Advancing NEP 2020 Goals through HEIs' and was hosted by the National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration (NIEPA) on 16th June 2026. The concept note for the event can be found in Appendix G, the programme is in Appendix H and the attendee list is in Appendix I.

During the event, notes were taken to record how event speakers and participants were relating to the topic of Higher Education (HE) outreach, and how this topic was linked to other key areas of policy and practice. Following the event, the notes were thematically analysed and are presented below as a summary with three principal themes. The first theme pertains to how different existing policy priorities intersect with an HE outreach agenda. The second theme reports on event participants' understandings of HE outreach, and how schools and Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) can collaborate on HE outreach. Finally, a synthesis of the feedback on the WAHEI project is presented. The notes have, in the main, not been attributed to specific speakers, except where particularly relevant, in order to present an overview of the event.

Figure II.4.1: International Discussion Meet



4.2 Theme 1 – Policy Priorities

The event included discussions of several different policy priorities that interlink with the HE outreach agenda. Many of these relate to the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. The section outlines how each of the different policies or initiatives were discussed at the event.

4.2.1 National Education Policy (NEP 2020)

It was noted that the NEP 2020 provides a strong policy foundation for HE outreach. The future offers an opportunity to deepen and scale its implementation across institutions and regions.

The NEP aims for connections between HEIs and schools, due to HEIs and schools often working in a disconnected manner. Although it was recognised that programmes were organised some time ago on how to connect the two through curriculum, it was acknowledged that there was still further to go.

The consultation aspect of the development of the NEP was discussed, noting it was the widest consultation after the Constitution for policy formation, and many stakeholders and modes were included. The value of community participation as a major aspect of the implementation of the NEP was noted, as without this there is a risk of failure in implementation; learning from the community creates an empowering environment for that community.

It was discussed that one principle of the NEP is that equitable access to HE is at the forefront, and that for equality, inclusivity, and equity, all education institutions have to work according to these values. A requirement of the NEP is that enrolment and equity complement each other.

HEIs prepare Institutional Development Plans (IDPs) for both the short and long term, with consideration to growth and needs, and there is a need to have equity goals and outreach strategies outlined. It was noted that for the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC), this type of planning was already there, but that more emphasis was needed on the *outreach and access*, including increasing evaluation marks. Further, many colleges have not submitted IDPs to NAAC, thus sensitisation of HEIs is required. There was a suggestion of creating (and reporting on) HE outreach units, and considering outreach offices in HEIs that should not burden Faculty Members (FMs) but could include outreach officers to help with the role of engaging with schools and communities to make the bridge.

The NEP enrolment targets were discussed in further detail. It was recognised that there was a need for all children to be in education up to high school, not through force but through minimising challenges. It was noted that there has been progress over recent years. A major topic of conversation was the target Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) of 50% for India by 2035. The All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) 2023 Report notes that 4.46 crore (44.6 million) students are enrolled in HE, although there is still an uphill movement required to reach the target in nine years (MoE, 2023). Notably, women students, Scheduled Castes (SC) / Scheduled Tribe (ST) students, those from minority communities such as rural populations, first-generation learners, people with disabilities (PWD) and economically disadvantaged groups, have seen improvements in enrolment, but challenges remain. Although guidelines for accessibility and inclusion are in place, they need to be followed, and it was questioned who should take this forward and how to roll it out on the ground so that they do not just exist on paper or in data but in practice. Furthermore, it was emphasised that paperwork needs to be reduced and actions increased for ground-level transformation which is much needed.

State universities (SUs) were recognised for their pivotal role in the GER, as 3.25 crore (32.5 million) students are catered to by SUs. HEIs with high grades in NAAC and central universities can partner with SUs, as education is a dual subject for policy at both state and central levels.

In discussions of the GER target, it was highlighted that it was important to keep the current 18% rate for rural women in mind (MoE, 2020; Khan et al., 2024). This was noted to include both providing education in rural areas and when women engage in educational mobility from rural settings. Safety, security barriers, and residential facilities need to be considered in both policy and implementation when rural women are moving across districts. Further, special education zones were mentioned, relating to the 112 aspirational districts that Niti Aayog, the Government of India Public Policy Think Tank, has identified as a way for sensitising and informing those in schools regarding the benefits of HE, and should be kept in mind as ways of collaborating with SUs.

In terms of the NEP/GER global perspectives, two recent UNESCO documents were noted: 'Higher education global trends report: Towards inclusive, equitable and quality higher education in an internationally mobile landscape' (Gutović et al., 2026), and 'Transforming higher education: Global collaboration on visioning and action' (UNESCO, 2026). The 50% 'access' target for India was considered in relation to the UNESCO HE trends report finding that, across 146 countries, enrolment for the age group 18-25 was reported at 43%, i.e. 269 million students globally. Countries have recognised the importance of HE, including for economic, social and community engagement; however, global completion rates are still relatively low (27% in 2024, compared to 23% in 2011). It was noted that, although India has an enrolment rate of 28%, the completion rates are not known to UNESCO.

It was recognised that, although much has been done since the NEP 2020, including points discussed here, there remained a gap that needed to be bridged in terms of what is written and reported, and what is happening and has been achieved, with consideration to the implementation challenges at the ground level.

4.2.2 Unnat Bharat Abhiyan (UBA)

Unnat Bharat Abhiyan (UBA) (the national flagship programme linking HEIs with local rural communities to drive sustainable development) was launched in 2014 in 'Invitation Mode', where selected participating institutions were invited directly for pilot engagement, with a second phase commencing in 2018, and a third phase launching in 2026, with aims of further integrating HE in rural areas. UBA was noted as working across the country and across over

24,000 villages, offering students opportunities to share with rural areas but also to learn from the communities, including learning about Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) (MoE, 2026b). With the Indian Institute of Technology Delhi (IIT) acting as the national coordinating institute, the initiative comprises 50 coordinating institutions including IITs, central universities and over 5,000 participating institutes. Thematic areas of focus include agriculture, water, energy, basic amenities, education, and artisan/rural craft. Credit courses, including those on social responsibility and community engagement, are also offered, with over 52,000 students enrolled in related Massive Open Online Courses (MOOC) (MoE, 2026b).

Both students and FMs are engaged in a rural immersion process and visiting villages, alongside alumni engagement. Outreach engagements create meaningful links between local governance and communities, and gram panchayats (local governance) through community development activities, community engagement and experiential learning connecting youth with heritage. This was illustrated through a case study in Maharashtra.

Following these discussions, the session chair asked how HE outreach can be integrated into UBA to increase GER. A suggestion was raised about the potential for direct embedding of HE outreach in UBA, which would positively contribute to the GER target.

Students of IIT Delhi were discussed in terms of the fact that students already conduct activities, including student visits to villages, such as visits to learn about agricultural processes for mushroom cultivation. The question of whether HE information can be embedded into this kind of activity was raised. This would potentially be a fusion of HE outreach with community outreach.

4.2.3 Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS)

IKS was noted as a mechanism for harmonious blending of tradition and technology, to link HE and society through community participation, dialogue and harmony with nature, and the Vedic tradition. Within IKS, challenges are often discussed in relation to how they can be converted into opportunities. Discussions of temples, water supply systems, and other original systems that are currently not functioning due to issues such as polluted water are addressed by basing development on harmony with nature. Related focuses include going to the rural communities

not in a deficit mode but to learn from them, consider how to collaborate and explore ways of including them in formal systems.

4.2.4 National Service Scheme (NSS)

The National Service Scheme (NSS), launched in 1969 based on a belief of education through service, incorporates students going to adopted villages to deliver English language and other subject classes. Risk of tick-box implementation and tokenism were noted, with an emphasis on the need for introspection, focus on knowledge and serving the community, a spirit of service, and for coordinators and officials to be ethically motivated, in order to give the correct impression to student volunteers. Thus, studies were suggested as being needed on the efficacy of the schemes with a focus on third party evaluation. It was felt that NSS was a potential route through which HE outreach could be delivered.

4.2.5 National Cadet Corps (NCC)

The National Cadet Corps (NCC) were discussed as already making positive contributions to HE outreach due to being within the remit of the armed forces, with relatively high levels of presence in HE and high levels of NCC members accessing HE. It was suggested that there could be learning points from the programme. Examples of actions included a one-week programme focused on the 10th class entering 11th class, calling individuals from different fields, including professors, and guiding students to make community members aware of career opportunities and offering camps, including counselling sessions. Programmes with specific focuses such as for girls from minority group are also provided.

4.2.6 Malaviya Mission Teacher Training Centres (MMTTC)

The vision of Malaviya Mission Teacher Training Centres (MMTTCs) was discussed in relation to enhancing the development of teaching staff and their relationship with the NEP, with the underlying emphasis that HE outreach training for FMs could potentially be delivered through the MMTTC structures. The structured programmes of MMTTC were considered to improve the understanding of FMs' role as educators in HE, with matters relating to pedagogy, classroom management—as well as the ethical and nurturing role of FMs—featuring prominently. Promotion of inclusivity and equity, reaching marginalised and socio-economically

disadvantaged groups, student diversity, equitable classrooms including PWD, digital accessibility, and geographical democratisation, amongst other topics, were covered in the MMTTCC programmes (including in refresher programmes). The provision of sensitisation and Professional Development (PD) programmes—both online and hybrid—allow FMs to access national level experts, at no cost. Technology training, using AI and digital resources are also available.

It was noted that outreach is not just about FM training but also systematic learning (e.g. 21st century skills, digital competency, and India-centric value systems). This can include special topics in the short-term programmes (e.g. the Faculty Development Programmes (FDPs)) and refresher courses targeting needs and requirements. Meanwhile, the FIP (Faculty Induction Programmes) is currently being delivered to newly appointed faculty. It was noted that there were over 4,700 attendees on the courses in one year.

In sum, several different policies and initiatives were discussed during the event in relation to HE outreach and the potential to build HE outreach into existing schemes. The NEP 2020 provides a clear basis for the implementation; indeed, HE outreach would be necessary to reach the target GER of 50%.

4.3 Theme 2 – HE Outreach & Connecting Schools and HEIs

A second major theme that emerged during the event was how HE outreach can be delivered, including the potential role that schools can play in facilitating HE outreach activities, and the ways in which HEIs and schools can be connected in order to cooperate more effectively in delivering an HE outreach agenda.

4.3.1 Importance and Challenges of HE Outreach

A question was raised by one attendee of how to define HE outreach in the context of contemporary India. This was considered in relation to the questions of why HE outreach is important, what is expected from HEIs, and what existing practices may be adopted in ensuring prospective students will be accessing HE in an informed way.

In discussions of HE outreach, it was highlighted that it was important to connect earlier, rather than wait for 11th and 12th class when decisions had already been made in middle school. For instance, this could be achieved through arranging summer school camps, open doors events and immersive programmes. It was suggested to set up opportunities for campus orientation, demonstrating what colleges looks like, engaging with FMs, experiencing making connections, hands on exercises, and other activities which raise exposure and awareness of what HE can entail. Education fairs were also discussed, although they were noted as being both time and resource intensive. At these fairs, different HEIs host counters to take questions, and parents and potential students are invited. There was an observation that, in relation to inclusivity of HE outreach, this should include transgender students and relevant training. It was also discussed that a key consideration of HE outreach is how to include those who are traditionally disadvantaged into traditional elite institutions.

A challenge for HE outreach raised was the potential misunderstanding of purpose. For example, one member noted that there could be confusion between HEI outreach and coaching or tutoring organisations which were seeking to make profits, thus impacting on engagement with HE outreach.

HE outreach was seen as not possible in isolation, with social media platforms being suggested as a way for parents and students to reach out and explore options. HE outreach was seen as being historically targeted at young people without adequately recognising parents as decision-makers whose voices need integrating into HE outreach scenarios.

4.3.2 Connecting Schools and HEIs

Linkages between HE and schools, and linkages between community and society were discussed, with education considered the basis for shaping society and developing the nation. It was highlighted that HEIs already have a community outreach / social engagement cell (i.e. committee), and that HE outreach could be integrated into this agenda. Change was considered to happen through educational institutions working in synergy, both schools and HEIs, with school and college collaboration necessary. FMs' potential contribution to HE outreach was also noted.

Some attendees of the event were based at Kendriya Vidyalyas (i.e. a type of centrally governed government-supported school). It was noted that these schools could be considered as pillars of the system and were needed for facilitating the targeted increase in GER.

It was discussed that HE outreach could potentially be organised at school level, e.g. by including parent-teacher meetings (PTMs) with a school counsellor trained by or connected with universities. There were considered to be opportunities for universities to share materials with schools on different HE pathways, to invite them to campus, and generally guide students.

The experiences of those in remote places was discussed with consideration of the relatively minimal 14% GER. One school principal discussed how, due to the distance to colleges, children have no HE access. He noted that he was able to have two counsellors in his school but that many other rural schools could not afford this, highlighting financing as one of the most important aspects. Relatedly, the state government only supports teachers, but there is funding needed to train and finance counsellors, especially as children do not always understand courses and accreditations. This highlighted the need for the community to be sensitised with employability considered and efficiently communicated.

Remote area experiences were further considered with a focus on counselling, raising questions of who will counsel when there is no certified counsellor, and how awareness of courses will be spread. It was noted that institutions may be approached to counsel, and that some HEIs come to the school in some areas to guide students, but that this does not happen everywhere. It was emphasised that employability and cost are important to know and suggested that HEIs need to make more effort to share awareness and aid in counselling parents. In discussing counselling sessions, suggestions included career cards being available, alumni and opportunities during PTMs to see and learn about opportunities. It was again noted that these sessions should be around 9th class, in preparation for students selecting their 10th class stream.

There was discussion of the challenges of obtaining permissions or paperwork to be completed if the organisation of HE outreach activities was attempted. For example, one member discussed visiting a nearby school to guide students on how to fill in the Common University Entrance Test (CUET) form when it was first introduced, but they had not been granted the necessary permissions. There was a suggested mismatch between schools needing guidance

and the colleges which are able to support being located in different areas. Relatedly, problems of communication amongst institutions was recognised, with suggestions that these could be potentially resolved through the role of organisations such as NIEPA. There was a suggestion that the HEI could write a letter, to relevant stakeholders in schools, outlining a commitment to providing sessions on guidance.

The potential role of District Education Officers (DEOs) was raised, where DEOs could link HEIs and schools, especially those in the 'educationally backward districts'. It was noted that having FMs collaborating with schools, with the DEO as a linkage to bring people together and bridge concerns, would be valuable. The Chair noted that this collaboration would be recommended to the UGC for inclusion under the HE Outreach theme.

4.3.3 Opportunities and Priorities for HE Outreach

The questions were raised on how HEIs can take forward the discussions from the event to connect HEIs to adopted villages, and how to then partner with government schools in areas such as NSS, hygiene, government schemes, and information sharing. There was recognition that HEIs need to sensitise schools regarding HE and get involved where 'hand holding' is not there at home, for students needing career guidance.

One initiative discussed was a residential programme within the Department of Science and Technology aimed as an 'inspire' programme due to low numbers in science courses. The programme involves a one-week residential stay at HEIs for high-achieving students to learn about possibilities of careers, visit laboratories, hear about scholarship opportunities, and generally to demystify HE and develop aspirations. This programme had already been trialled at the University of Hyderabad and has also been seen in the WAHEI study. There are aspirations to make the programme work at a larger scale.

In situations where geography may make HE difficult to access, mobile counselling units were proposed due to the challenges of in-reach visits. These were proposed to include learning about specific programmes (e.g., agriculture through agricultural HEIs), relating to employability, and including collaboration with panchayats to take the initiative to village level.

The Non-collegiate Women's Education Board at Delhi University (NCWEB, 2026) was also discussed, with the programme noted as having made provision for young women residing in National Capital Territory (NCT) Delhi to access HE. As a large, semi-urban area, there was a recognised issue with young women not accessing HE due to social challenges. The Board was established, allowing students to be educated at weekends, not in distance mode but through classroom teaching. Through this programme, colleges became centres for provision, with guest faculty employed including both full-time academics and otherwise unemployed members. Students also gained access to classes during weeks when regular classes were on breaks. There were important success stories from the programme. The programme was subsidised and aimed to address cultural issues, for example the concern of parents about the safety of their daughters were lessened by the fact it was only for one or two days per week.

A further suggestion was to provide credits to HE outreach programmes to encourage student engagement, and for FMs to be rewarded, for example as part of the evaluation in the Career Advancement Scheme (CAS) or perks such as earned leave for those going to distant locations to engage in HE outreach and sensitisation.

In discussing HE outreach, the mindset and skills sets were noted as needing to change, particularly that of parents. Children who gain good marks are often pressured or drawn towards science, but there were instances, particularly in Assam and other areas, of parents pressuring children to take science regardless of where their talents lie. Skills development with consideration of employability were noted as important, with a suggestion that more choice was needed at school level where subjects are less flexible than in HE. Likewise, it was highlighted that students need an understanding of what will result from taking a particular course. Although HEIs and professional colleges are coming to the school and working with the school on such matters, an institutional plan was considered necessary for consistent direction. Relatedly, there were issues with subject choice, in that parents may choose on behalf of the student, with the students needing to make choices themselves based on informed understanding and autonomy. Activities organised in schools could aid this by utilising basic exercises to get students excited about subjects.

The era of AI was noted as potentially making HE outreach possible in different languages and as a tool for creating materials needed for the diversity of language in India, as a way of making HE more accessible.

In summary, there was a rich discussion which covered recognition of the importance of HE outreach, ideas for potential HE outreach, including the ways in which HEIs and schools may work together to result in informed HE choice.

4.4 Theme 3 – Feedback on WAHEI Project

Finally, there were discussions pertaining specifically to the WAHEI project, providing feedback to the team on the timeliness and relevance of the project.

4.4.1 Importance, Relevance and Timeliness of Topic

Turning discussions to the WAHEI project specifically, it was highlighted that the event was an outcome of a collaborative research programme between University of Warwick and NIEPA, which was now coming to conclusion following the testing of the professional learning module. It was noted that WAHEI had specific relevance to the 2035 GER target of 50%, as this figure cannot be obtained without HE outreach.

A core aim of WAHEI was to increase accessibility to HE for underprivileged, rural and women learners. This involved sensitisation to HE to bring them into the fold (a recognition of the HE outreach principle). The importance of reaching the community was noted, especially the marginalised or disadvantaged communities, with a recognition of the need to think of the 'last person' to fulfil the agenda of bridging the gap. Questions were raised about how to help prospective students be informed about HE when increasing numbers of people are considering HE as pathways for the future. Progress in expansion of HE is positive, but there is a need to evaluate progress in terms of inclusion, numbers, quality of education, reaching with purpose, etc. Continuing variations in GER across social groups and gender underline the importance of sustained, targeted strategies for expanding inclusive participation in HE. New opportunities and pathways for students, such as flexible courses and more student choice, have been possible due to initiatives such as the NEP.

Mr Jian Xi Teng (Programme Specialist in Education for UNESCO, India) noted: 'The WAHEI project adds a lot of value of how HE outreach can enhance access and outcomes and experiences for disadvantaged and marginalised communities – an important aspect that doesn't come through in UNESCO global data'.

Overall, WAHEI was noted as a useful and meaningful project.

4.4.2 Usefulness of Findings, Professional Learning Module and the Event

The NIEPA/Warwick team were congratulated that the module tutor guide had already been prepared based on extensive research, but maintaining a tone that is simple and clearly understandable in recognition of the fact that India has many languages and challenges. NIEPA's institutional leadership expressed strong appreciation for its quality and usefulness. While the WAHEI findings were still being consolidated, the leadership also expressed confidence that the efforts invested in the project would yield meaningful and productive outcomes.

Findings highlight that first-generation and rural students may have limited information and there is a need to make the process of getting into HE easy and bring school and college education nearby. Students need opportunities to learn about HE well before the decision-making stage. As highlighted, although many may aspire for prestigious programmes, such as medical colleges, this is not possible for everyone and students must be aware of the range of available courses, for example aligned skills courses, medical equipment education, and other innovative and employable alternatives.

In relation to the event, the insights shared were recognised as strengthening collective understanding on HE outreach.

Attendees were impressed by the professional learning module but recognised that guidance was needed to ensure that people were fully supported. Ms Sandeepa Sahay (Regional Head of Higher Education Insights and Engagement, South Asia British Council, New Delhi) emphasised: 'You are already on that track, which is wonderful'.

Gratitude for the opportunity and value of the collective learning space for discussions about outreach were expressed, with the Chair concluding the event with remarks on the positive learning that was taking place.

4.5 Conclusion

The International Discussion Meet was a rich occasion to explore how the WAHEI project findings and Continuing Professional Learning (CPL) module would be received beyond the parameters of direct involvement in the project. It was clear that the theme of HE outreach is of interest to a wide range of stakeholders and that, simultaneously, there is a need for clearer understanding of the concept and what a formalised HE outreach agenda would look like in practice.

As the thematic summary of the event shows, there are many different policy agendas and initiatives that overlap with the HE outreach agenda. HE outreach is seen as relevant for the NEP 2020, as well as UBA, IKS, NSS, NCC and faculty development via MMTTCs. It would be valuable to explore further how HE outreach can be prioritised within these existing agendas, which may already have resources that could be utilised for HE outreach.

The thematic summary also indicated many similar points that were already raised during the empirical phase of the WAHEI project, pertaining to the importance of HE outreach as well as the challenges. Given the event included a contingent of school principals and teachers, there was substantial discussion of how schools and HEIs can connect to strengthen HE outreach—at the same time, challenges were raised about the interface between schools and HEIs, due to different bureaucratic systems.

Finally, the event yielded useful and encouraging feedback on the WAHEI project. Attendees discussed the relevance and timeliness of the topic of HE outreach. There was also recognition of the value of the project's findings and particularly of the CPL Module. Event participants also openly stated their appreciation of the opportunity to attend the event and learn from the project and the various speakers.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

Part II of the report focused on the core aims and objective for the impact-oriented phase of the 'Widening Access to Higher Education in India: Institutional Approaches' (WAHEI) project. The project sought to develop and evaluate the success of professional learning activities for Faculty Members (FMs), which would develop their capacity and motivation to engage in gender-equitable, socially-just Higher Education (HE) outreach activities in their local communities. Part I of the report confirmed the need for FM training and the importance of building the capacity and motivation of FMs to engage in gender-equitable, socially-just HE outreach activities in their local communities.

The report charts the way in which the WAHEI core team worked with the State Research Team (SRT) members to develop a professional learning module focusing on HE outreach. This includes the care and attention taken to design the module ensuring that it captured the empirical findings from the research phase but also reflected the acquired knowledge and personal experiences of the SRT members. The report documented each stage in the collaborative development of the module, which centred on the intensive residential workshop held in the UK at the University of Warwick. SRTs capacity was built through interactions with those designing and conducting HE outreach activities in the UK and by observing outreach in action at a University of Warwick Open Day. The content of the module was produced using highly participatory, experiential learning techniques. Substantial learning occurred among the team members which laid the foundations for the development of their pedagogical role as future module tutors. A key aim was to inspire and equip the SRT members to act as HE Outreach Champions; evidence of intentions in this regard was documented in the report.

The report charts how the robustness of the module was explored through piloting the module and evaluating the impact. Did the module increase participants' knowledge of HE outreach? Did they feel more equipped to pursue HE outreach activities through their institutions? The pilot of the module was facilitated by two SRT members, and the participants were FMs drawn from a range of colleges in Haryana. Learning was captured both from the module tutors and from the participants. The pilot showed that the design of the module was robust—it was deliverable in the time allotted and with the resources provided. However, it was clear that more detailed

guidance for future module tutors would be of assistance. The final draft of the module therefore benefitted greatly from the learning from the pilot. The pre- and post-module questionnaires revealed increased understanding of the concept of socially equitable HE outreach and the role that institutions need to play in undertaking such HE outreach. The diary study assessed the extent to which this learning translated into any actions over the next few months; participants indicated in the diaries that they were motivated to undertake HE outreach activities and to reflect on their own practices.

The rigorous evaluation of each stage in the development of the module—from its design through piloting to the impact on pilot participants—has ensured that this professional learning module can play a significant role in two linked ways: developing FMs' understanding of the importance of undertaking gender-equitable, socially just HE activities and highlighting the necessity for HE outreach to be led by HE institutions.

The report documented the learning from an International Discussion Meet hosted by NIEPA, which was designed to develop and evaluate the potential for institutional, state and national policy impact via interactive consultations. The meeting brought together key stakeholders with interests in HE policymaking, nationally and internationally, to discuss the role of HE outreach. Participants confirmed the importance of HE outreach in pursuing national educational goals and offered examples of the ways in which HE outreach may be implemented through the incorporation into existing initiatives, including collaboration between schools and Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). The meeting also confirmed the important contribution that the WAHEI project research and the module had made to the development in the understanding of HE outreach.

This report is a product of a four-year research project which produced very rich empirical data relating to how FMs and Institutional Leaders (ILs), particularly those serving rural and semi-urban communities, understand HE outreach. It revealed the importance of developing an institutional approach to replace reliance on individual FMs and their personal networks. This rich data and the knowledge of those who undertook the research has been used to create a professional learning module which can be used to increase awareness of the importance of HE outreach to meet the objectives of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. The eventual

design of the module has benefitted from rigorous research-based evaluation that has accompanied and informed its development.

The aspiration now is to see the module adopted and used as extensively as possible to support the development and undertaking of gender-equitable, socially-just HE outreach activities in local communities across India and beyond. A further aspiration is to consolidate the role of HE Outreach Champion and further this work, and to contribute to the development of new champions. There is also scope to explore the realm of HE choice and HE outreach as a transnational phenomenon.

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Appendix A: Details of Qualitative Methods Participants

In this appendix, basic details of the participants who participated in the qualitative methods are included. For each set of participants, a table is presented which includes the state, HEI, title and pseudonym, gender, caste / social group, and religion. Further details about the participant group are provided following this—these are not listed with the pseudonyms, in order to avoid identifiability of participants, based on the project's ethical code.

Appendix A.1 Institutional Leaders (IL)

One semi-structured interview was conducted with an IL in each sampled HEI, including a short IL profile to gather basic information.

Table I.A1: IL Interview Participants – Basic Information

S. No.	State	HEI code	Title and Pseudonym	Gender	Caste / Social group	Religion
1	Assam	SU: 1_1	Prof IL1	Male	General/Non-SC/ST/OBC	Hindu
2	Assam	GCID: 1_2	Dr IL2	Male	OBC	Hindu
3	Assam	GCA: 1_3	Dr IL-3	Male	General/Non-SC/ST/OBC	Hindu
4	Assam	GCB: 1_4	Dr IL-4	Male	General/Non-SC/ST/OBC	Hindu
5	Chhattisgarh	SU: 2_1	Prof. S. Shukla	Male	General/Non-SC/ST/OBC	Hindu
6	Chhattisgarh	GCID: 2_2	Mr William Jones	Male	OBC	Hindu
7	Chhattisgarh	GCA: 2_3	Dr. Dinesh	Male	General/Non-SC/ST/OBC	Hindu
8	Chhattisgarh	GCB: 2_4	Dr. K.L. Verma	Male	OBC	Hindu
9	Haryana	SU: 3_1	Prof Daarji	Male	General/Non-SC/ST/OBC	Hindu
10	Haryana	GCID: 3_2	Mr Vaasu	Male	SC	Hindu
11	Haryana	GCA: 3_3	Dr. Anji	Female	General/Non-SC/ST/OBC	Hindu
12	Haryana	GCB: 3_4	Mrs Ranju	Female	General/Non-SC/ST/OBC	Hindu
13	Kerala	SU: 4_1	Dr Jose	Male	General/Non-SC/ST/OBC	Christian
14	Kerala	GCID: 4_2	Mr Jack	Male	OBC	Muslim
15	Kerala	GCA: 4_3	Dr Shibu	Male	OBC	Muslim
16	Kerala	GCB: 4_4	Dr Janaki	Female	OBC	Hindu
17	Maharashtra	SU: 5_1	Prof Nana	Male	OBC	Hindu
18	Maharashtra	GCID: 5_2	Dr James	Male	General/Non-SC/ST/OBC	Hindu
19	Maharashtra	GCA: 5_3	Dr Yashwant	Male	SC	Hindu
20	Maharashtra	GCB: 5_4	Dr Vitthal	Male	General/Non-SC/ST/OBC	Hindu

Table I.A2: IL Interview Participants – Sample Information

Department	
Anthropology	1
Botany	1
Electronics	1
Internal Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC)	1
Marathi	1
Mathematics	1
Not mentioned	1
Physics	1
Political Science	1
VC office	1
Geography	2
History	2
Economics	3
English	3
Total	**20**
Age (derived from year of birth, as of data collection in 2024, rounded to age group e.g. 40-49)	
31-40	1
41-50	5
51-60	14
Total	**20**
Disability and type	
Physical Disability (e.g. locomotor, visual, hearing, speech and language disability)	1
Sexual orientation/identity	
LGBTQIAP+	0
Relationship status	
Married	20
Caring responsibilities (children)	
Yes	20

Place/country of birth	
Delhi/India	1
Haryana/India	1
UP/India	1
Punjab/India	2
Chhattisgarh/India	3
Kerala/India	3
Assam/India	4
Maharashtra/India	4
Oman	1
Total	**20**
Place of residence (rural/urban)	
Invalid response	1
Rural	8
Urban	11
Total	**20**
Mother tongue	
Assamese	4
Malayalam	4
Marathi	4
Hindi	8
Total	**20**
Length of time as an IL (rounded to nearest 5 years) as of 2024	
11-15 years	1
6-10 years	1
0-5 years	18
Total	**20**
Current Leadership role	
Dean, School	1
Head of the Department	1
Response unclear / not available	3
Other	7

Principal	8
Total	**20**
Length of time at current institution	
0-5 years	8
6-10 years	3
11-15 years	3
16-20 years	2
21-25 years	2
26-30 years	0
30-35 years	2
Total	**20**
Current designation	
Cluster Head	1
Principal (Associate Professor)	1
Senior Professor	1
Vice Chancellor	1
Associate Professor	3
Assistant Professor	4
Principal	4
Professor	5
Total	**20**
Process of appointment at current institution	
Promotion to IL on seniority basis	1
Transferred to this institution from another institution	1
Transferred and Promotion	2
Examination conducted by the state government	4
Direct recruitment call to this institution by the HEI	12
Total	**20**
Nature of appointment	
Regular	19
Other	1
Total	**20**

Appendix A.2 Faculty Members (FMs)

Five semi-structured interviews were conducted in each sampled HEI, including a short FM profile to gather basic information. In addition, the table below (Table A3) indicates which participants also completed a diary.

Table I.A3: FM Interview Participants – Basic Information

S. No.	State	HEI code	Title and Pseudonym	Gender	Caste / Social group	Religion	Diary
1	Assam	SU: 1_1	Mr ULC 2	Male	General/Non-SC/ST/OBC	Hindu	Yes
2	Assam	SU: 1_1	Ms Women's Studies	Female	General/Non-SC/ST/OBC	Hindu	Yes
3	Assam	SU: 1_1	Dr Eco-1	Female	General/Non-SC/ST/OBC	Hindu	Yes
4	Assam	SU: 1_1	Mr Commerce 1	Male	General/Non-SC/ST/OBC	Muslim	Yes
5	Assam	SU: 1_1	Dr ULC 1	Male	General/Non-SC/ST/OBC	Hindu	Yes
6	Assam	GCID: 1_2	Mr Gaurav	Male	General/Non-SC/ST/OBC	Hindu	Yes
7	Assam	GCID: 1_2	Dr Louee Adyasa	Female	General/Non-SC/ST/OBC	Hindu	Yes
8	Assam	GCID: 1_2	Mrs Duffy	Female	General/Non-SC/ST/OBC	Muslim	Yes
9	Assam	GCID: 1_2	Mr ZLG2	Male	General/Non-SC/ST/OBC	Muslim	Yes
10	Assam	GCID: 1_2	Mr Suman	Female	General/Non-SC/ST/OBC	Hindu	Yes
11	Assam	GCA: 1_3	Bora- 1	Male	OBC	Hindu	No
12	Assam	GCA: 1_3	Mrs Bora - 2	Female	SC	Hindu	No
13	Assam	GCA: 1_3	Dr Bora - 3	Female	General/Non-SC/ST/OBC	Hindu	No
14	Assam	GCA: 1_3	Dr Bora - 4	Male	General/Non-SC/ST/OBC	Hindu	No
15	Assam	GCA: 1_3	Dr Bora - 5	Female	General/Non-SC/ST/OBC	Hindu	No

16	Assam	GCB: 1_4	Dr Das- 1	Female	OBC	Hindu	No
17	Assam	GCB: 1_4	Dr Das- 2	Female	OBC	Hindu	No
18	Assam	GCB: 1_4	Mr Das- 3	Male	OBC	Hindu	No
19	Assam	GCB: 1_4	Mr Das- 4	Male	SC	Hindu	No
20	Assam	GCB: 1_4	Dr Das- 5	Female	General/Non-SC/ST/OBC	Hindu	No
21	Chhattisgarh	SU: 2_1	Dr Smitha	Female	General/Non-SC/ST/OBC	Hindu	Yes
22	Chhattisgarh	SU: 2_1	Mr Govind	Male	ST	Hindu	Yes
23	Chhattisgarh	SU: 2_1	Dr Bhanushree	Female	OBC	Hindu	Yes
24	Chhattisgarh	SU: 2_1	Dr Adep	Male	General/Non-SC/ST/OBC	Hindu	Yes
25	Chhattisgarh	SU: 2_1	Mr Rakesh	Male	ST	Hindu	Yes
26	Chhattisgarh	GCID: 2_2	Mr Hitnarayan	Male	SC	Hindu	Yes
27	Chhattisgarh	GCID: 2_2	Dr Rajesh	Male	SC	Hindu	Yes
28	Chhattisgarh	GCID: 2_2	Mr Kamal	Male	General/Non-SC/ST/OBC	Hindu	Yes
29	Chhattisgarh	GCID: 2_2	Dr Vaibhav	Male	SC	Hindu	Yes
30	Chhattisgarh	GCID: 2_2	Dr Balram	Male	SC	Hindu	Yes
31	Chhattisgarh	GCA: 2_3	Dr Vishnu	Male	OBC	Hindu	No
32	Chhattisgarh	GCA: 2_3	Mrs Kavita	Female	OBC	Hindu	No
33	Chhattisgarh	GCA: 2_3	Mrs Sugandha	Female	OBC	Hindu	No
34	Chhattisgarh	GCA: 2_3	Mr Rajkamal	Male	SC	Hindu	No

35	Chhattisgarh	GCA: 2_3	Mr Mahesh	Male	General/Non-SC/ST/OBC	Hindu	No
36	Chhattisgarh	GCB: 2_4	Dr Pradip	Male	General/Non-SC/ST/OBC	Hindu	No
37	Chhattisgarh	GCB: 2_4	Dr Kishor	Male	General/Non-SC/ST/OBC	Hindu	No
38	Chhattisgarh	GCB: 2_4	Mr Nagesh	Male	SC	Hindu	No
39	Chhattisgarh	GCB: 2_4	Dr Vaishnavi	Female	OBC	Hindu	No
40	Chhattisgarh	GCB: 2_4	Mrs Ganga	Female	General/Non-SC/ST/OBC	Hindu	No
41	Haryana	SU: 3_1	Dr Gary	Male	OBC	Hindu	Yes
42	Haryana	SU: 3_1	Mr Vipul	Male	OBC	Hindu	Yes
43	Haryana	SU: 3_1	Dr Akram	Male	OBC	Muslim	Yes
44	Haryana	SU: 3_1	Dr Dhiraj	Male	SC	Hindu	Yes
45	Haryana	SU: 3_1	Dr Damini	Female	General/Non-SC/ST/OBC	Hindu	Yes
46	Haryana	GCID: 3_2	Mr Kuljeet	Male	OBC	Hindu	Yes
47	Haryana	GCID: 3_2	Dr Stargazer	Female	SC	Hindu	Yes
48	Haryana	GCID: 3_2	Mr Pankaj	Male	General/Non-SC/ST/OBC	Hindu	Yes
49	Haryana	GCID: 3_2	Dr Nimmo	Female	SC	Hindu	Yes
50	Haryana	GCID: 3_2	Dr Balu	Male	SC	Hindu	Yes
51	Haryana	GCA: 3_3	Dr Das	Male	OBC	Hindu	No
52	Haryana	GCA: 3_3	Mr SriKumar	Male	OBC	Hindu	No
53	Haryana	GCA: 3_3	Mr Ram	Male	OBC	Hindu	No
54	Haryana	GCA: 3_3	Mr Rajat	Male	SC	Hindu	No
55	Haryana	GCA: 3_3	Mr Disky	Male	General/Non-SC/ST/OBC	Hindu	No
56	Haryana	GCB: 3_4	Dr Ginny	Female	General/Non-SC/ST/OBC	Hindu	No
57	Haryana	GCB: 3_4	Dr Rubal	Female	General/Non-SC/ST/OBC	Hindu	No
58	Haryana	GCB: 3_4	Ms Sarina	Female	SC	Hindu	No

59	Haryana	GCB: 3_4	Dr Saabir	Male	OBC	Hindu	No
60	Haryana	GCB: 3_4	Mr Satnam	Male	General/Non-SC/ST/OBC	Hindu	No
61	Kerala	SU: 4_1	Dr. Ponnoo	Female	SC	Hindu	Yes
62	Kerala	SU: 4_1	Dr Joseph	Male	General/Non-SC/ST/OBC	Christian	Yes
63	Kerala	SU: 4_1	Mr Krish	Male	OBC	Hindu	Yes
64	Kerala	SU: 4_1	Dr Lathika	Female	OBC	Hindu	Yes
65	Kerala	SU: 4_1	Dr John	Male	General/Non-SC/ST/OBC	Christian	Yes
66	Kerala	SU: 4_1	Mr Peace	Male	OBC	Muslim	Yes
67	Kerala	GCID: 4_2	Mrs Alice	Female	OBC	Muslim	Yes
68	Kerala	GCID: 4_2	Mr Sujith	Male	General/Non-SC/ST/OBC	Hindu	Yes
69	Kerala	GCID: 4_2	Dr Mithra	Female	OBC	Hindu	Yes
70	Kerala	GCID: 4_2	Mr Explorer	Male	OBC	Muslim	Yes
71	Kerala	GCID: 4_2	Mrs Rithika	Female	OBC	Hindu	Yes
72	Kerala	GCA: 4_3	Ms Rumi	Female	OBC	Muslim	No
73	Kerala	GCA: 4_3	Mr Babas	Male	OBC	Muslim	No
74	Kerala	GCA: 4_3	Dr PCF	Female	OBC	Muslim	No
75	Kerala	GCA: 4_3	Mr Jaisal	Male	OBC	Muslim	No
76	Kerala	GCA: 4_3	Dr Kulva	Male	OBC	Muslim	No
77	Kerala	GCB: 4_4	Mrs Vinesha	Female	SC	Hindu	No
78	Kerala	GCB: 4_4	Mr Alvin Varghees	Male	General/Non-SC/ST/OBC	Christian	No
79	Kerala	GCB: 4_4	Dr Braille	Male	ST	Hindu	No
80	Kerala	GCB: 4_4	Bava	Male	OBC	Muslim	No
81	Kerala	GCB: 4_4	Mrs Priya	Female	General/Non-SC/ST/OBC	Christian	No
82	Maharashtra	SU: 5_1	Dr Shri	Male	General/Non-SC/ST/OBC	Hindu	Yes
83	Maharashtra	SU: 5_1	Dr Vibha	Female	SC	Buddhist	Yes

84	Maharashtra	SU: 5_1	Dr Radha	Female	General/Non-SC/ST/OBC	Hindu	Yes
85	Maharashtra	SU: 5_1	Mr Abhinay	Male	ST	Hindu	Yes
86	Maharashtra	SU: 5_1	Dr Kavya	Female	OBC	Hindu	Yes
87	Maharashtra	GCID :5_2	Mr Shaw	Male	OBC	Hindu	Yes
88	Maharashtra	GCID: 5_2	Dr John	Male	General/Non-SC/ST/OBC	Hindu	Yes
89	Maharashtra	GCID: 5_2	Prof Mary	Female	General/Non-SC/ST/OBC	Hindu	Yes
90	Maharashtra	GCID: 5_2	Mr Andy	Male	ST	Hindu	Yes
91	Maharashtra	GCID: 5_2	Mr Smith	Male	SC	Hindu	Yes
92	Maharashtra	GCA: 5_3	Dr Deva	Male	OBC	Hindu	No
93	Maharashtra	GCA: 5_3	Dr VCK	Male	General/Non-SC/ST/OBC	Hindu	No
94	Maharashtra	GCA: 5_3	Dr Lata	Female	General/Non-SC/ST/OBC	Hindu	No
95	Maharashtra	GCA: 5_3	AMU	Male	SC	Hindu	No
96	Maharashtra	GCA: 5_3	Gaju	Male	ST	Hindu	No
97	Maharashtra	GCB: 5_4	Dr Falguni	Female	General/Non-SC/ST/OBC	Hindu	No
98	Maharashtra	GCB: 5_4	Ms Sharmishtha	Female	ST	Hindu	No
99	Maharashtra	GCB: 5_4	Mr Sumit	Male	SC	Hindu	No
100	Maharashtra	GCB: 5_4	Mr Thomson	Male	NT-D	Hindu	No
101	Maharashtra	GCB: 5_4	Mr Edison	Male	OBC	Hindu	No

Table I.A4: FM Interview Participants – Sample Information

Department	
Business Administration	1
Chemical Technology	1
Computer Application	1
Computer Science	1
Dramatics	1
Education	2
Environment Science	1
Geology	1
Integrated Mass Communication and Media Technology	2
Malayalam	1
Management Science	1
Marathi	1
Mass Communication and Journalism	1
Performing Arts	1
Philosophy	1
Physical Education	1
Physics	1
Sanskrit	1
Tourism and Management	1
Women's Studies	1
Botany	2
Economics	2
Fine Arts	2
Hindi	2
History	2
Sociology	2
Development Studies	3
Law	3
Psychology	3

Mathematics	4
Chemistry	5
Political Science	6
Zoology	5
Geography	6
English	10
Commerce	12
Total	**91**
Age (derived from year of birth, as of data collection in 2024, rounded to age group e.g. 40-49)	
21-30	14
31-40	34
41-50	29
51-60	14
Total	**91**
Disability and type	
Physical Disability (e.g. locomotor, visual, hearing, speech and language disability)	3
Sexual orientation/identity	
LGBTQIAP+	0
No response	2
Relationship status	
Divorced/separated	5
Unmarried	15
Married	71
Total	91
Caring responsibilities (children)	
Yes	70
No	21
Total	**91**
Place/country of birth	
Madhya Pradesh/India	1

Odisha/India	1
Chhattisgarh/India	13
Assam/India	19
Haryana/India	18
Maharashtra/India	19
Kerala/India	20
Total	**91**
Place of residence (rural/urban)	
Rural	39
Urban	51
Not mentioned	01
Total	**91**
Mother tongue	
Bengali	1
Haryanvi	1
Odia	1
Punjabi	1
Assamese	18
Marathi	18
Malayalam	20
Hindi	31
Total	**91**
Length of time at current institution	
0-5 years	40
6-10 years	21
11-15 years	10
16-20 years	10
21-25 years	3
26-30 years	3
30-35 years	3
Total	**91**

Current designation	
Coordinator	1
Teaching Associate	3
Professor	4
Guest Assistant Professor	7
Associate Professor	14
Assistant Professor	62
Total	**91**
Process of appointment at current institution	
Transferred to this institution from another institution	5
Examination conducted by the state government	23
Direct recruitment call to this institution by the HEI	63
Total	**91**
Nature of appointment	
Ad-hoc	1
Self-Financing Scheme	1
Guest Lecturer	7
Contractual	10
Regular	72
Total	**91**

Appendix A.3 Undergraduate Students

Two Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were conducted in SUs and GCIDs (five students per group), including a short undergraduate student profile to gather basic information. In addition, six semi-structured interviews with selected FGD participants were conducted in SUs and GCIDs.

Table I.A5: Undergraduate FGD and Interview Participants – Basic Information

S. No.	State	HEI code	Pseudonym	Gender	Caste / Social group	Religion	Interview
1	Assam	SU: 1_1	FGD 1-1	Male	ST	Hindu	Yes
2	Assam	SU: 1_1	FGD 1-2	Female	OBC	Hindu	Yes
3	Assam	SU: 1_1	FGD 1-3	Female	OBC	Hindu	No
4	Assam	SU: 1_1	FGD 1-4	Female	General/Non-SC/ST/OBC	Hindu	No
5	Assam	SU: 1_1	FGD 1-5	Male	General/Non-SC/ST/OBC	Hindu	Yes
6	Assam	SU: 1_1	FGD 2-1	Male	General/Non-SC/ST/OBC	Hindu	Yes
7	Assam	SU: 1_1	FGD 2-2	Female	General/Non-SC/ST/OBC	Hindu	No
8	Assam	SU: 1_1	FGD 2-3	Male	OBC	Hindu	Yes
9	Assam	SU: 1_1	FGD 2-4	Female	OBC	Hindu	Yes
10	Assam	SU: 1_1	FGD 2-5	Female	General/Non-SC/ST/OBC	Hindu	No
11	Assam	GCID: 1_2	Sumon	Male	General/Non-SC/ST/OBC	Muslim	Yes
12	Assam	GCID: 1_2	Physics1	Male	OBC	Hindu	Yes
13	Assam	GCID: 1_2	ABCD	Male	General/Non-SC/ST/OBC	Muslim	Yes
14	Assam	GCID: 1_2	Nazish Khan	Female	General/Non-SC/ST/OBC	Muslim	Yes
15	Assam	GCID: 1_2	Maina	Female	General/Non-SC/ST/OBC	Muslim	Yes
16	Assam	GCID: 1_2	Chemistry1	Female	General/Non-SC/ST/OBC	Muslim	No
17	Assam	GCID: 1_2	Mr.Commerce	Male	General/Non-SC/ST/OBC	Muslim	No
18	Assam	GCID: 1_2	Jiya	Female	General/Non-SC/ST/OBC	Muslim	No
19	Assam	GCID: 1_2	Priya Das	Female	General/Non-SC/ST/OBC	Muslim	No
20	Assam	GCID: 1_2	Zain Yusuf	Male	General/Non-SC/ST/OBC	Muslim	Yes

21	Chhattisgarh	SU: 2_1	A	Female	ST	Hindu	No
22	Chhattisgarh	SU: 2_1	B	Female	OBC	Hindu	No
23	Chhattisgarh	SU: 2_1	C	Female	General/Non-SC/ST/OBC	Hindu	No
24	Chhattisgarh	SU: 2_1	D	Female	General/Non-SC/ST/OBC	Hindu	No
25	Chhattisgarh	SU: 2_1	E	Female	OBC	Hindu	Yes
26	Chhattisgarh	SU: 2_1	F	Female	General/Non-SC/ST/OBC	Hindu	Yes
27	Chhattisgarh	SU: 2_1	G	Female	OBC	Hindu	Yes
28	Chhattisgarh	SU: 2_1	H	Male	OBC	Hindu	Yes
29	Chhattisgarh	SU: 2_1	I	Male	OBC	Hindu	Yes
30	Chhattisgarh	SU: 2_1	J	Male	General/Non-SC/ST/OBC	Hindu	No
31	Chhattisgarh	GCID: 2_2	1	Male	General/Non-SC/ST/OBC	Hindu	No
32	Chhattisgarh	GCID: 2_2	2	Male	General/Non-SC/ST/OBC	Hindu	Yes
33	Chhattisgarh	GCID: 2_2	3	Female	OBC	Hindu	Yes
34	Chhattisgarh	GCID: 2_2	4	Female	General/Non-SC/ST/OBC	Hindu	Yes
35	Chhattisgarh	GCID: 2_2	5	Female	OBC	Hindu	No
36	Chhattisgarh	GCID: 2_2	6	Mal	ST	Hindu	No
37	Chhattisgarh	GCID: 2_2	7	Female	General/Non-SC/ST/OBC	Hindu	Yes

38	Chhattisgarh	GCID: 2_2	8	Female	General/Non-SC/ST/OBC	Hindu	No
39	Chhattisgarh	GCID: 2_2	9	Male	ST	Hindu	Yes
40	Chhattisgarh	GCID: 2_2	10	Female	General/Non-SC/ST/OBC	Hindu	No
41	Haryana	SU: 3_1	Shiksha	Female	OBC	Hindu	Yes
42	Haryana	SU: 3_1	Jashan	Female	OBC	Hindu	Yes
43	Haryana	SU: 3_1	Lucky	Male	OBC	Hindu	Yes
44	Haryana	SU: 3_1	Deep	Male	OBC	Hindu	Yes
45	Haryana	SU: 3_1	Prashi	Female	General/Non-SC/ST/OBC	Hindu	Yes
46	Haryana	SU: 3_1	Arpit	Male	General/Non-SC/ST/OBC	Hindu	Yes
47	Haryana	SU: 3_1	Sandy	Male	OBC	Hindu	No
48	Haryana	SU: 3_1	Akku	Male	OBC	Hindu	No
49	Haryana	SU: 3_1	Shivu	Male	General/Non-SC/ST/OBC	Hindu	No
50	Haryana	SU: 3_1	Reshu	Male	General/Non-SC/ST/OBC	Hindu	No
51	Haryana	GCID: 3_2	Ritika	Female	General/Non-SC/ST/OBC	Hindu	Yes
52	Haryana	GCID: 3_2	Khushi	Female	General/Non-SC/ST/OBC	Hindu	Yes
53	Haryana	GCID: 3_2	Tanvi	Female	SC	Hindu	Yes
54	Haryana	GCID: 3_2	Gippy	Female	SC	Hindu	Yes
55	Haryana	GCID: 3_2	Amarpal	Male	OBC	Hindu	Yes
56	Haryana	GCID: 3_2	Devender	Male	OBC	Hindu	Yes
57	Haryana	GCID: 3_2	Himani	Female	OBC	Hindu	No
58	Haryana	GCID: 3_2	Ekta	Female	OBC	Hindu	No
59	Haryana	GCID: 3_2	Lavi	Male	OBC	Hindu	No
60	Haryana	GCID: 3_2	Mehak	Female	SC	Hindu	No
61	Kerala	SU: 4_1	Dhyan	Male	SC	Hindu	Yes
62	Kerala	SU: 4_1	Priya	Female	OBC	Hindu	No
63	Kerala	SU: 4_1	Raghuvendra Pillai	Male	General/Non-SC/ST/OBC	Hindu	No

64	Kerala	SU: 4_1	Mia	Female	OBC	Hindu	Yes
65	Kerala	SU: 4_1	SJ	Male	OBC	Hindu	Yes
66	Kerala	SU: 4_1	Unni	Male	OBC	Christian	Yes
67	Kerala	SU: 4_1	Jimin	Female	OBC	Muslim	Yes
68	Kerala	SU: 4_1	Kitty	Female	General/Non-SC/ST/OBC	Christian	No
69	Kerala	SU: 4_1	Shiva	Female	SC	Hindu	No
70	Kerala	SU: 4_1	Nieranjnn	Male	SC	Hindu	Yes
71	Kerala	GCID: 4_2	Sachu	Male	SC	Hindu	Yes
72	Kerala	GCID: 4_2	Diya	Female	OBC	Muslim	Yes
73	Kerala	GCID: 4_2	Malu	Female	OBC	Hindu	Yes
74	Kerala	GCID: 4_2	Kuttu	Female	EWS(Non-SC/ST/OBC)	Hindu	No
75	Kerala	GCID: 4_2	Pappy	Female	OBC	Muslim	No
76	Kerala	GCID: 4_2	Dreamy Girl	Female	General/Non-SC/ST/OBC	Hindu	No
77	Kerala	GCID: 4_2	Nasim	Male	OBC	Muslim	No
78	Kerala	GCID: 4_2	Anna	Male	OBC	Muslim	No
79	Kerala	GCID: 4_2	Tomy	Female	OBC	Hindu	No
80	Kerala	GCID: 4_2	Maeve	Female	OBC	Muslim	Yes
81	Kerala	GCID: 4_2	L. Messi	Male	General/Non-SC/ST/OBC	Hindu	Yes
82	Kerala	GCID: 4_2	Vasu	Male	OBC	Hindu	Yes
83	Maharashtra	SU: 5_1	Lucky	Male	SC	Hindu	No
84	Maharashtra	SU: 5_1	Ayesha	Female	General/Non-SC/ST/OBC	Muslim	No
85	Maharashtra	SU: 5_1	Ram	Male	ST	Hindu	Yes
86	Maharashtra	SU: 5_1	Aadishri	Female	OBC	Hindu	Yes
87	Maharashtra	SU: 5_1	Rohit	Male	General/Non-SC/ST/OBC	Hindu	Yes
88	Maharashtra	SU: 5_1	Prachi	Female	SC	Buddhist	No
89	Maharashtra	SU: 5_1	Harshda	Female	General/Non-SC/ST/OBC	Hindu	No
90	Maharashtra	SU: 5_1	Vihan	Male	OBC	Hindu	Yes
91	Maharashtra	SU: 5_1	Adinath	Male	ST	Hindu	Yes

92	Maharashtra	SU: 5_1	Drishti	Female	General/Non-SC/ST/OBC	Hindu	Yes
93	Maharashtra	GCID: 5_2	Sonu	Female	ST	Hindu	No
94	Maharashtra	GCID: 5_2	Tom	Male	General/Non-SC/ST/OBC	Hindu	Yes
95	Maharashtra	GCID: 5_2	Yuki	Female	OBC	Hindu	Yes
96	Maharashtra	GCID: 5_2	Rahul	Male	General/Non-SC/ST/OBC	Hindu	Yes
97	Maharashtra	GCID: 5_2	Jenifer	Female	SC	Buddhist	No
98	Maharashtra	GCID: 5_2	Harshali	Female	General/Non-SC/ST/OBC	Hindu	Yes
99	Maharashtra	GCID: 5_2	Vicky	Female	OBC	Hindu	Yes
100	Maharashtra	GCID: 5_2	Sumit-1	Male	SC	Buddhist	No
101	Maharashtra	GCID: 5_2	Harry	Male	General/Non-SC/ST/OBC	Hindu	No
102	Maharashtra	GCID: 5_2	Shivansh	Male	ST	Hindu	Yes

Note: Undergraduate profiles were not locatable for Chhattisgarh.

Table I.A6: Undergraduate FGD and Interview Participants – Sample Information

Department	
Bioscience	4
Business Administration	3
Commerce	14
Communication	1
Computer Science	3
Development Studies	6
Economics	2
Electronics	2
Fine Arts	4
Food Technology	2
Geography	1
Hindi	1
History	1
Language and Literature	2

Law	5
Liberal Arts	11
Malayalam	1
Mass Communication and Journalism	2
Media Technology	2
Political Science	1
Sciences	6
Vocational Studies	7
Women's Studies	1
Total	**82**
Age (derived from year of birth, as of data collection in 2024, rounded to age group e.g. 40-49)	
17-20	71
21-23	9
25	2
Total	**82**
Disability and type	
(No participants reported disability)	**0**
Sexual orientation/identity	
LGBTQIAP+	0
No response	3
Relationship status	
Married	1
Unmarried	81
Total	**82**
Caring responsibilities (children)	
(No participants reported children)	82
Place/country of birth	
No response	1
Haryana /India	19
Assam/India	20

Maharashtra /India	20
Kerala /India	21
Total	**82**
Place of residence (rural/urban)	
Urban	21
Rural	61
Total	**82**
Mother tongue	
Bengali	1
Haryanvi	1
Nepali	1
Parsi	1
Urdu	1
Marathi	15
Assamese	18
Hindi	21
Malayalam	22
Total	**82**

Appendix B: Additional Information on the Solicited Diary Study

A 12-week semi-structured solicited diary study was designed for this research. Recognising high demands on FMs' time, a semi-structured, solicited diary format was designed to capture HE outreach-related advice. Each diary entry included a set of focused, closed-ended questions to understand the nature of the advice, to whom the advice was offered, and the context of the HE advice provided by the FM. A set of open-ended questions followed to elicit the FMs' motivations and perceptions of their advice. The interval-based diary design invited FMs to record their experiences with HE outreach-related advice every two weeks. This meant that the FMs were invited to record HE outreach advice experience six times over the course of 12 weeks. Post-diary interviews were conducted with the FMs who participated in the solicited diary study soon after the solicited diary study period. A total of 50 FMs were invited across the five case study states. Table A7 provides a summary overview of the FMs from each state across the SUs and GCIDs involved.

Table I.B1: FMs in the Solicited Diary Study

State	SU	GCID	Total FMs
Assam	5	5	10
Chhattisgarh	5	5	10
Haryana	5	4	9
Kerala	6	5	11
Maharashtra	5	5	10
Total	**26**	**24**	**50**

A total of 302 HE outreach advice entries were recorded by the FMs (Table A8). 46 of the recorded HE outreach-related experiences were not related to enabling access to the undergraduate level of HE and were therefore not considered for further analysis. The analyses presented in this report are based on 256 experiences of HE outreach advice gathered from FMs of SUs and GCIDs.

Table I.B2: Total Valid and Invalid HE Outreach Advice Experiences

Total number of diary experience entries	Number of invalid experiences entries (i.e. not about access to undergraduate studies)	Number of valid experience entries
302	46	256

Appendix C: Warwick Visit Programme

13 June – Arrival at London Heathrow and settling in on campus
14 June – Campus tour
15 June – Coventry and Stratford-upon-Avon Cultural Visits
16 June – Module Development Session and State Research Team Meeting
17 June – Module Development Session and Visit to Fircroft College, Birmingham
18 June – Widening Participation Briefings, ES/DEAR Department Seminar, Further WP briefings
19 June – Module Development Session and DEAR/WAHEI Talk
20 June – Module Development and Wrap-up
21 June – University of Warwick Open Day
21 June – Departure from campus

Appendix D: Visit Preparation Tasks

Preparation for your visit to Warwick

We will be sending a detailed workshop programme before your departure. Here we are focusing on work preparation for the visit.

Below we set out the overall objectives for your visit and how the visit contributes to the module development process.

We have set out **4 tasks** which we would like you to undertake prior to your visit. Each task requires you to produce a short piece of written work. The first 3 require no more than 200 words each, the fourth involves preparation of slides.

- Please send **your submissions for the first 3 tasks by 11th June 2025** to [content redacted] so that we can compile for sharing at our first session on16th June.
- If you have any queries relating to the first 3 tasks please *contact Ann* [content redacted];
- For the fourth task can you *please contact Emily or Arokia*.

Overall objectives

- To co-design and produce a draft of a module, based upon WAHEI SRT findings, on HE Outreach to be used for Professional Learning Module (PLM) in India – to then be finalised for piloting in September 2025
- To familiarize SRT members with existing approaches to widening access and participation in the UK using Fircroft and Warwick as two differently positioned institutions as examples to think about HE outreach in India.
- To support SRT members to become champions for widening access policies and activities within their institutions and beyond including through the building of a SRT champions network

Learning outcomes at end of the module development process and the UK visit overall:

- More understanding of learning and delivery methods for the professional development of FMs Additional knowledge relating to institutional policies relating to HE Outreach and experience of an event relating to widening access.
- Capability and commitment to deliver pilot PLM (as a champion)

Background preparation

Task 1

While at Warwick, we will be co-designing a module to be used for professional learning, which raises questions relating to how adults (like you – FMs) learn. We would like you to start to think about your own experiences of being 'trained' and delivering training to FMs (if you have done this). If you were being trained on widening access to HE, how would you like this to happen? You will see that we have set word limits. They are there to indicate that we don't want you to write huge amounts but to think about the questions and then note down your thoughts which can then be sent in advance and then shared when we all meet up.

- TASK 1A) Please identify a professional development/learning/training event/module - e.g. orientation/induction, refresher course, that you have taken part in as a learner (or facilitated/developed as a trainer) – what was the event/module about? What was the structure? What worked well about it? What could have been improved? (max 200 words)
- TASK 1B) Please think about how you like to learn during professional development/training. For instance, do you appreciate practical, experience-based learning, knowledge/content delivery, and so on…? (You can use your experiences from engagement with this project e.g. the Research Methodology workshops in NIEPA – how have you learned including changing your perspectives?) (max 200 words)

Task 2

The module which we are producing in this workshop has the following format:

- conducted over 3 hours (with a 15 minute break)

- delivered online (in real time with a trainer present) or in person
- based on the WAHEI project including your research findings
- TASK 2A): *Please read through recent WAHEI publication, which contains useful content about HE outreach: Sabharwal, N. S., Henderson, E. F., Stewart, A., Sierra, D. L., Khurana, R., Mary, S. A., Painuly, A. (2025). The Role of Higher Education Institutions and FMs in Higher Education Outreach in India. CPRHE Research Paper Series 20. New Delhi, India: CPRHE NIEPA.*

Available at:

https://cprhe.niepa.ac.in/assets/papers/CPRHE_Research_Paper_20.pdf

- TASK 2B: Please consider what you think should be covered in the module –list up to 4 topics (from your own research findings and broader knowledge of WAHEI) and very briefly explain why (max 200 words)

Task 3:

We also want to you to enrich your experience of how widening access and participation more generally works in the United Kingdom – the area of HE access and choice and guidance on these areas is known as 'Widening Participation' in the UK. This involves university professionals who engage in HE outreach work. We will use the examples of Warwick University and Fircroft Adult Education College. Fircroft College will be introduced during the visit. Warwick University's website provides a wide range of information about widening participation. We would like you to familiarize yourself with this information prior to the workshop. This will enable you to think about what you would like to explore in discussions with our colleagues who are involved in Widening Participation.

TASK 3: Please access and read these two documents provided by the Warwick Widening Participation Team [content redacted]:

1. Unleashing Talent and Enabling Potential [content redacted]

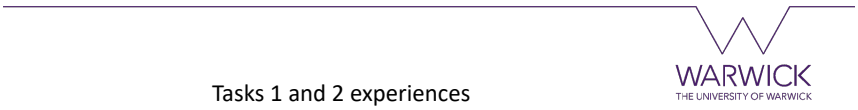
2. Widening Participation Departmental Reference Guide [content redacted]

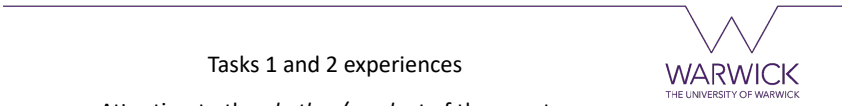
Note down your preliminary reflections on what information is presented on the website including the 2 documents (200 words max)

Appendix E: Summary of Pre-module Tasks

The below slides show a summary of the submissions from visit participants for the pre-module tasks (see Appendix D).







Task 2 content

- Provide understanding of outreach for access and widening participation – use global but focus on Indian diverse socio economic/state specific factors (WAHEI findings)
- Role of faculty members (and challenges faced)
- Role of HEI institutions – local autonomy within policy framework – for contextually sensitivity
- Implementation – engagement modules + mechanisms to formalise
- An institutional plan

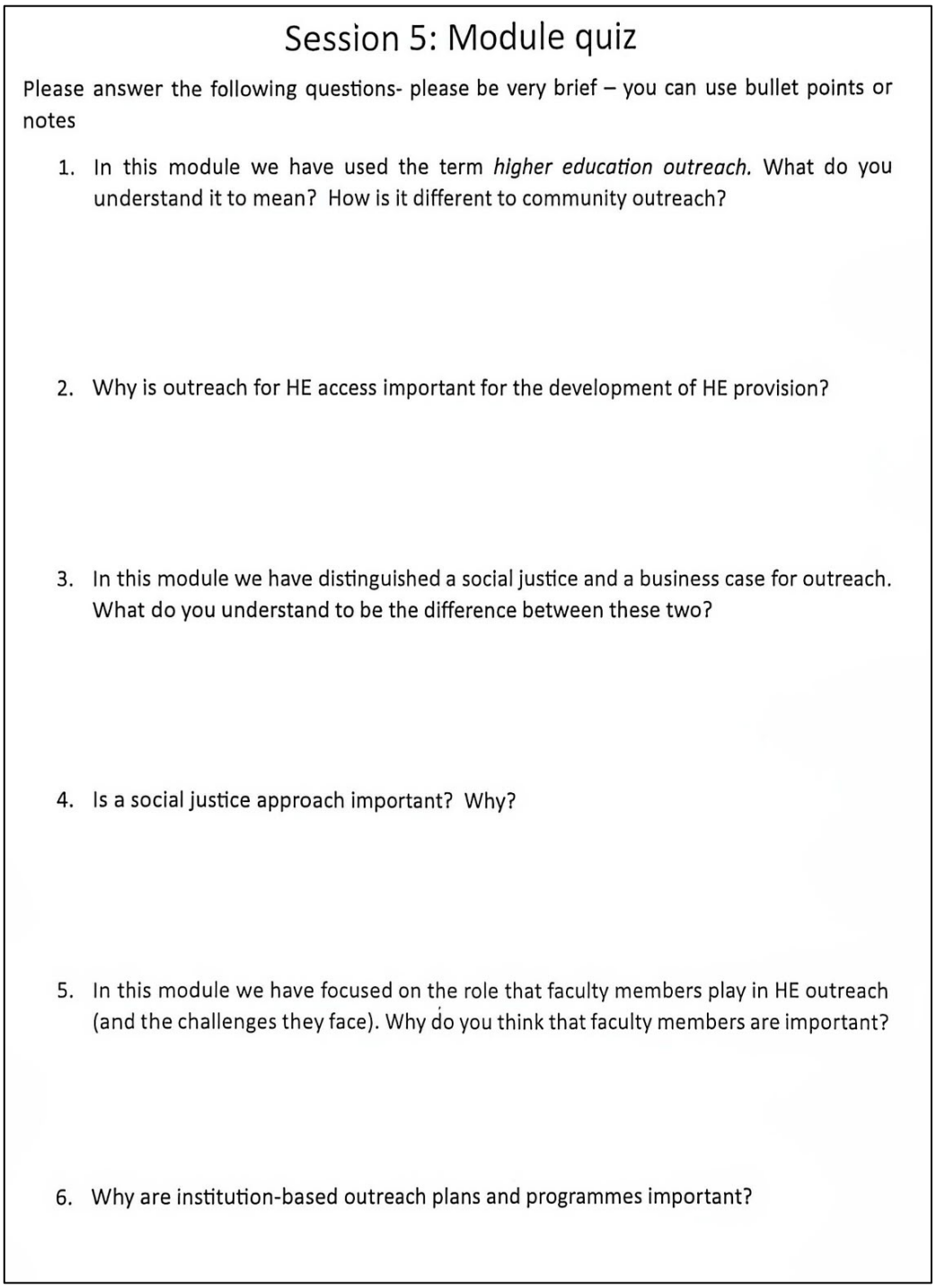
Task 3 content

- Website important
- Value driven approach to HE
- Widening participation integral to institution's education ecosystem
- Emphasis on practical tools (and evaluation)

Appendix F: End of Module Quiz (Built-in) Results

In the pilot version of the module, a brief module evaluation form (Figure II.F1) was trialled by the module tutors. The results are presented below. In the final version of the module, this has been replaced with a quiz (Figure II.F2).

Figure II.F1: Module Evaluation Form (Pilot)



Session 5: Module quiz

Please answer the following questions- please be very brief – you can use bullet points or notes

1. In this module we have used the term *higher education outreach.* What do you understand it to mean? How is it different to community outreach?

2. Why is outreach for HE access important for the development of HE provision?

3. In this module we have distinguished a social justice and a business case for outreach. What do you understand to be the difference between these two?

4. Is a social justice approach important? Why?

5. In this module we have focused on the role that faculty members play in HE outreach (and the challenges they face). Why do you think that faculty members are important?

6. Why are institution-based outreach plans and programmes important?

7. Can you identify 3 institutional outreach activities? What are they and how are they different?

8. Do you think that you feel more able to contribute to the development of outreach for access activities in your institution?

9. If yes, very briefly set out what you would like to do and when, and the initial steps you would take?

10. Do you have suggestions of how this module could be improved?

The results of the initial evaluation were as follows.

The first learning objective was to address limited or confused understanding of 'outreach' for HE access. **100% (12)** of the participants understood what *outreach for HE* meant by the end of module.

The second learning objective was to emphasise the social justice mission of HE outreach and distinguish it from the 'business case'. **100%** were able to relate HE access to the social justice mission and **83% (10)** were able to identify the importance of the social justice mission. However, two respondents also considered that HE access was important for increasing the GER, which might be more associated with the business case.

The third learning objective was to counter the potential for HE outreach practices to replicate rather than address the prevalent societal assumptions. The questions asked in this quick survey were not nuanced enough to provide direct information on this point. **100%** of respondents identified FMs as playing a key role in HE access initiatives (using words like

‘backbone’, ‘core’, and ‘most suitable’) and all identified why institutional initiatives are important. The reasons given as to why included: ability to plan; provide better information; provide good guide; offer a welcoming approach; and provide finances.

The last learning objective was to provide FMs with ‘templates’ of how to plan and execute a variety of institution-based HE outreach activities and thus to increase institutional readiness. **100%** were able to identify specific institution-based HE outreach activities. Most listed those covered in the module with four focusing such initiatives around villages. Four participants added social media campaigns.

Figure II.F2: End of Module Quiz (Final)

Please answer the following questions. Please be very brief, you can use bullet points or notes.

In this module we have used the term ***higher education outreach***.

What does it mean?

Is it different to community outreach? Yes No

If yes how is it different?

On a scale of 1 - 5 where 1 is totally disagree and 5 is completely agree

The main purpose of HE outreach is to encourage all young people and their families to consider the possibility of proceeding to HE.

1	2	3	4	5

The main purpose of HE outreach is to help all young people and their families to make informed choices about HE before they seek admission to college/university.

1	2	3	4	5

The main purpose of HE outreach is to encourage and support young people and their families from disadvantaged groups/communities or experiencing disability to access HE.

1	2	3	4	5

The main purpose of HE outreach is to increase numbers on courses in my college/university.

1	2	3	4	5

There is no need for HE outreach if my college/university has sufficient numbers of students.

1	2	3	4	5

As a faculty member I can support HE access initiatives in my college/university.

1	2	3	4	5

This module has helped me to understand the importance of HE access.

1	2	3	4	5

After taking this module, I am more able to contribute to the development of HE access activities in my institution.

1	2	3	4	5

In your college/university is it possible to organise:

a 'taster' event/day	Yes	No
An open day	Yes	No
A HE outreach visit to schools	Yes	No

Any other HE outreach activity?

Appendix G: International Discussion Meet – Concept Note

International Discussion Meet

Higher Education Outreach and Equitable Access: Advancing NEP 2020 Goals through HEIs

16 June, 2026 at 10:00 am
Venue: 113 Lecture Hall, 1st Floor, NIEPA

The National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration (NIEPA), New Delhi proposes to organise an International Discussion Meet on "Higher Education Outreach and Equitable Access: Advancing NEP 2020 Goals through HEIs".

Higher Education (HE) outreach refers to the efforts made by higher education institutions (HEIs) to engage with schools, families, and surrounding local areas in order to improve awareness, aspirations, preparedness, and informed participation of prospective students in higher education. Such outreach may include activities such as taster sessions, mentoring programmes for prospective students, campus visits, interactions with faculty members, guidance on admissions and higher education choices, and initiatives designed to familiarise students and their families with HE life and support their transition into HE.

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 places strong emphasis on equity, inclusion, and expansion of higher education opportunities. The policy envisages increasing the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in higher education to 50 percent by 2035 and identifies socially and economically disadvantaged groups (SEDGs) as requiring focused support in accessing higher education. NEP 2020 specifically acknowledges that many students from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds continue to experience barriers arising from a "lack of knowledge of higher education opportunities" and "admission processes" (NEP 2020, p. 41). The policy also recognises the role of state universities and government colleges in conducting outreach programmes on HE opportunities and scholarships among SEDGs (NEP 2020, p. 41).

Empirical evidence generated through the NIEPA–University of Warwick, UK collaborative research project on widening access to higher education in India points towards an important but often overlooked reality. Many students, particularly those studying in government colleges, come from rural areas, government schools, regional-language schooling backgrounds, and households with limited prior exposure to higher education. The findings further suggest that students rely primarily on family members and informal networks while making decisions about higher education, with very limited involvement of faculty members or structured institutional guidance during the pre-entry stage. At the same time, the study indicates that rural-serving state universities and government colleges can potentially function as important local higher education knowledge hubs, particularly by supporting schools and students with information, guidance, and exposure to higher education opportunities.

The evidence also suggests that faculty members do engage in HE outreach by providing advice and guidance to prospective students, although this engagement is often informal and not embedded within structured institutional mechanisms, i.e., it occurs within faculty members' personal networks. Existing literature indicates that interaction with faculty and exposure to HEIs spaces can positively influence students' aspirations, confidence, and preparation for higher education, particularly among first-generation learners.

The proposed consultation, therefore, seeks to deliberate on how higher education outreach can move from individual efforts to a more systematic and institutionalised framework within higher education in India, in line with the equity, inclusion, and access goals envisaged under the National Education Policy 2020. Importantly, existing institutional platforms such as *Unnat Bharat Abhiyan* (UBA), National Service Scheme (NSS), National Cadet Corps (NCC), extension activities, and faculty development programmes offer opportunities to integrate higher education outreach into existing engagement frameworks. These platforms can support structured higher education awareness, mentoring, admissions guidance, and outreach activities in nearby schools and villages.

Major Objectives of the International Discussion Meet

1. To discuss the role of HEIs, faculty members, and institutional leaders in higher education outreach, particularly in rural and semi-urban areas, in the context of the equity and access goals envisaged under National Education Policy 2020, to address the challenges of students from socially and economically disadvantaged groups (SEDGs) in accessing and choosing higher education.
2. To deliberate upon institutional strategies and policy support for strengthening higher education outreach, including weaving these within existing institutional and governmental engagement platforms such as *Unnat Bharat Abhiyan* (UBA), National Service Scheme (NSS), and National Cadet Corps (NCC), to advance equitable and informed access in higher education.
3. To deliberate upon faculty awareness, sensitisation, and continuing professional learning approaches for supporting higher education outreach activities.
4. To provide a platform to guide the development of institutional approaches and action plans for strengthening higher education outreach practices.

The proposed International Discussion Meet seeks to bring together policy makers, institutional leaders, academics, researchers, and international experts to deliberate on the role of higher education outreach in advancing the equity and access goals envisaged under the National Education Policy 2020.

Appendix H: International Discussion Meet – Programme

Programme Schedule

Higher Education Outreach and Equitable Access in India: Advancing NEP 2020 Goals Through HEIs

16 June 2026 | 10:00 hrs-16:00 hrs

Venue: 113 Lecture Hall, 1st Floor, NIEPA

9:30 hrs	**Registration**
10:00 hrs	**Inaugural Session** **Chairperson:** Professor Shashikala Wanjari, Vice-Chancellor, NIEPA, New Delhi **Welcome Address:** Professor Kumar Suresh, Dean (Academic & Research), NIEPA, New Delhi **Programme Highlights:** Dr Nidhi Sabharwal, National Fellow, NIEPA, New Delhi **Distinguished Address:** Professor Dinesh Prasad Saklani, Director, NCERT, New Delhi **Guest Speaker 1:** Professor Geeta Bhatt, Director, Non-Collegiate Women's Education Board, University of Delhi, New Delhi **Guest Speaker 2:** Professor Akhilesh Mishra, Chairman, National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS), Noida, Uttar Pradesh **Chairperson's Address:** Professor Shashikala Wanjari, Vice-Chancellor, NIEPA, New Delhi **Vote of Thanks**
11:00 hrs	**Tea Break**
11:30 hrs	**Panel Discussion: Policy Perspectives on Higher Education Outreach** **Chair:** Professor Kumar Suresh, Dean (Academic & Research), NIEPA, New Delhi **Panel Speakers:** • Professor Virendra Kumar Vijay, National Coordinator, Unnat Bharat Abhiyan, Ministry of Education, Government of India/Dr. P. K. Singh, Project Director, Unnat Bharat Abhiyan, Ministry of Education, Government of India • Mr. Jian Xi Teng, Programme Specialist (Education), UNESCO, India/Ms. Huma Masood, Senior Gender and Education Specialist, UNESCO, India • Ms. Sandeepa Sahay, Regional Head, Higher Education Insights and Engagement, South Asia, British Council, New Delhi • Dr Amit Gautam, Director, UGC- MMTTC, NIEPA, New Delhi **Discussion:** All
13:00 hrs	**Lunch**
14:00 hrs	**Panel Discussion: Institutional Perspectives on Higher Education Outreach** **Chair:** Professor Pradeep Kumar Misra, Director, CPRHE, NIEPA, New Delhi **Panel Speakers:** • Dr. Syed Mubin Zehra, Associate Professor, Department of History, Atma Ram Sanatan Dharam College, University of Delhi, New Delhi • Mr. Krishna Kumar Dubey, Principal, Dr. Rajendra Prasad Kendriya Vidyalaya, New Delhi • Dr. Suman Lata, Principal, PM Shri KV No. 1, Delhi Cantonment, New Delhi • Mr. Vinod Kumar Mathpal, Principal, PM Shri KV No. 2, Delhi Cantonment, New Delhi • Mr. Avneesh Kumar Pathak, Principal, PM Shri KV No. 3, Delhi Cantonment, New Delhi • Mr. Rabindra Kumar, Principal, KV Sector-8, RK Puram, New Delhi • Teachers and Faculty Coordinators of UBA/NSS/NCC at School & College level **Discussion: All** **Vote of Thanks**
16:00 hrs	**Tea**

Appendix I: International Discussion Meet – Attendee List

Higher Education Outreach and Equitable Access

Advancing NEP 2020 Goals through HEIs

List of all Attendees

S. No.	Name
1.	Professor Shahikala Wanjari Vice-Chancellor National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration
2.	Professor Dinesh Prasad Saklani Director National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT)
3.	Professor Geeta Bhatt Director Non-Collegiate Women's Education Board University of Delhi
4.	Professor Kumar Suresh Dean (Academics & Research) and Director (Planning & Development) National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration
5.	Professor P.K. Misra Director, Centre for Policy Research in Higher Education (CPRHE) National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration
6.	Dr. Amit Gautam Director, MMTTC National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration
7.	Ms. Huma Masood Senior Gender and Education Specialist, UNESCO
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[End of report]