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## HIGHER EDUCATION IN PUNJAB AND HIMACHAL PRADESH: A COMPARITIVE STUDY

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### ABSTRACT

*Higher education institutions situated at Punjab and Himachal Pradesh are operating under adverse conditions like overcrowding, lack of infrastructural facilities, financial cuts, lack of autonomy, absence of professional management and stakeholders support. No attempt is made for developing competitiveness, strategic alliances, human resource capacity, international cooperation, cultural awareness and education exports. Though stakeholders understand that benefits of GATS include academic qualitative improvement, strengthening of research, innovation in curriculum, diversity of programs and revenue generation, it is feared may lead to commercialization, brain drain and loss of cultural identity. Punjab is still first choice of Himachali students as it is perceived as ahead of Himachal in terms of discipline-wise specialized universities, number of private aided/unaided colleges and infrastructure availability. In terms of ownership structure, Punjab and Himachal colleges are dominated by private unaided colleges and government colleges respectively. Both states are facing problem of financial crunch, high student-staff ratio, high rate of dropouts and unbalanced educational development. In both States, rich students shift from educationally backward districts to other districts for pursuing higher education. Disparities in terms of education facilities to socially unprivileged section of society are also regularly increasing. These problems of unbalanced growth and increasing disparities have increased manifold after opening up of private universities/colleges in a few educationally developed districts only.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Infrastructural Facilities, Commercialization, Disparities*