



FUND UTILIZATION UNDER RUSA 1.0 IN PROVINCIALIZED COLLEGES OF ASSAM: AN ANALYSIS

Dr. Noni Rajkhowa

Associate Professor Department of Education Jhanji Hemnath Sarma College, Sivasagar, Assam

ABSTRACT

Education plays a central role in shaping both personal growth and societal progress in a knowledge-oriented economy. The expansion and strengthening of higher education are particularly crucial for achieving long-term economic advancement and social well-being at both regional and national levels. Recognizing this need, the National Development Council (NDC), under the Twelfth Five Year Plan (2012), introduced a dedicated centrally sponsored initiative for States and Union Territories to support and manage higher education institutions, known as the Rashtriya Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA). The earlier phases, RUSA 1.0 and RUSA 2.0, contributed significantly to improvements in several higher education indicators, including Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER), quality assurance through accreditation, and improvements in student-teacher ratios. Despite these achievements, persistent challenges remain in areas such as equitable access, social inclusion, enrolment expansion, quality enhancement, skill development, and graduate employability. Against this background, the present study seeks to examine the pattern of fund utilization under the scheme in provincialised colleges affiliated with Dibrugarh University in Assam. The research is based on both primary and secondary sources of data.

KEYWORDS : Funding Utilisation of fund, RUSA

INTRODUCTION:

The Rashtriya Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA) marked a significant milestone in the development of India's higher education sector through the successful completion of its initial phase, RUSA 1.0, which focused on providing financial assistance to eligible higher educational institutions nationwide. Building upon this foundation, RUSA 2.0 was subsequently introduced with the objective of reinforcing the higher education system by operationalizing eight critical components designed to enhance access, promote equity, and improve quality. The implementation of RUSA 1.0 and RUSA 2.0 yielded substantial progress and made meaningful contributions to the growth and consolidation of higher education in India. These phases resulted in notable improvements across key performance indicators, including an increase in the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER), strengthening of quality assurance mechanisms through accreditation and assessment reforms, and enhancement of the student-teacher ratio. Notwithstanding these achievements, the higher education sector continues to face several structural and functional challenges. Persistent gaps are evident in areas such as equitable access, social inclusion, expansion of enrolment, quality enhancement, skill development, and the employability of graduates. Against this backdrop, the need for focused, systematic, and context-specific interventions becomes imperative to address existing deficiencies and to ensure sustainable and inclusive development. In this regard, RUSA has emerged as a pivotal reform-oriented initiative aimed at widening access and elevating quality standards within the higher education system. The scheme adopts a framework of need-based and performance-linked strategic funding for eligible state-level higher educational institutions, with a pronounced emphasis on equity-driven growth and balanced regional development. Moreover, RUSA underscores the importance of strengthening teaching-learning processes, advancing quality research, and nurturing academic excellence across institutions of higher learning. Its scope is extensive, encompassing multiple dimensions of higher education, including financial assistance, research promotion, pedagogical innovation, inclusivity measures, infrastructure augmentation, and community engagement. These multidimensional interventions necessitate deeper scholarly inquiry, particularly with respect to innovative approaches and best practices adopted by higher educational institutions to enhance institutional effectiveness and broader societal impact.

Review of literature:

Previous studies in the domain of higher education have largely concentrated on the operational dimensions and diverse components of the Rashtriya Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA). Among these components, institutional financing has emerged as one of the most critical concerns. Chandrasiri (2003) observed that universities in India face acute financial constraints and noted that existing funding mechanisms are predominantly regulatory and control-driven in nature. Kumar (2004), in an examination of funding sources in higher education, reported that public funding is largely directed towards government-owned institutions, whereas private institutions depend mainly on alternative sources such as donation fees and income generated from endowments. Similarly, Reddy (2007) highlighted the persistent inadequacy of financial resources allocated to the higher education sector in the country. Panchamukhi and Devi (2008) drew attention to significant disparities in expenditure patterns within the higher education sector across India. Focusing on the regional context, Bora (2012) analyzed the financing of higher educational institutions with particular reference to Upper Assam and emphasized that adequate funding is a fundamental prerequisite for the efficient administration and functioning of educational institutions. The study further revealed that a considerable number of colleges continue to remain excluded from regular funding support and receive only lump-sum grants from the state government and other agencies such as the Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR). Such financial assistance was found to be grossly insufficient for the comprehensive development of these institutions. Das and Borthakur (2012) reported that although state government budgetary allocations to higher education have shown an upward trend over time, the quantum of funding remains inadequate and exhibits considerable fluctuations. Sarma (2012), in his assessment of fund inflows to higher educational institutions in Assam, noted that despite substantial investments made by the Government of India, the pace of funding has not kept pace with the rapidly increasing demand for higher education. Consequently, the system continues to experience severe financial stress. The study recommended strengthening public investment in higher education alongside ensuring efficient and judicious utilization of available financial resources. Further, Parvez and Shakir (2017) identified several critical challenges confronting higher education in India, including insufficient and declining financial support, inadequate infrastructure and facilities, a large number of unfilled faculty positions, poor quality of teaching staff, low enrolment rates, outdated pedagogical practices, and declining standards of research.

Das (2019) emphasized the role of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in enhancing teaching-learning processes, stating that effective integration of ICT tools facilitates the development of digital literacy, innovative thinking, creativity, logical reasoning, and communication skills essential for the twenty-first century. The study also highlighted pronounced disparities in the availability of internet-based ICT infrastructure between rural and urban institutions. Specifically, undergraduate colleges affiliated with Gauhati University located in urban areas were found to possess significantly better ICT infrastructure compared to their rural counterparts.

Objective of the paper:

1. To assess infrastructural development in provincialised colleges affiliated with Dibrugarh University under RUSA.

Research methodology:

The study employed a descriptive research framework to examine the selected institutions. It encompassed thirty-four (34) provincialised general degree colleges functioning under the affiliation of Dibrugarh University that had availed financial support through the RUSA 1.0 scheme. These colleges are geographically distributed across seven districts of Assam, namely Tinsukia, Dibrugarh, Dhemaji, Sivasagar, Charaideo, Jorhat, and Golaghat, in accordance with information provided by the Office of the Mission Director, RUSA, Assam. Primary information was gathered through face-to-face interactions with the Principals and RUSA Coordinators representing each of the thirty-four institutions. Thirty-four (34) provincialised degree colleges had received financial assistance under RUSA 1.0, and these colleges were purposively selected as the sample for the present investigation. For collecting first-hand data, four distinct structured questionnaires were prepared and administered to the Principals, the RUSA Coordinators of the selected colleges, the Mission Director of RUSA, Assam, and the Programme Officer of RUSA, Assam. Prior approval and informed consent were duly obtained from the institutional heads before undertaking the field survey.

Analysis and Discussion:

Inflow and Utilization of funds to the general provincialized degree Colleges affiliated to DU from RUSA 1.0 in the component of Infrastructure grants to colleges:

The utilization of Infrastructure Grants to Colleges from RUSA1.0 can be analyzed categorizing them into three main sub-components-

- (i) New Construction,
- (ii) Renovation Work and
- (iii) New Equipment

Work wise utilization in New Construction:

Out of the thirty-four colleges under study, twenty-eight institutions allocated infrastructure funds towards new building activities, collectively spending Rs. 18.85 crore. This expenditure accounts for 33.66 per cent of the total infrastructure assistance of Rs. 56 crore provided to colleges. An analysis of the distribution of funds across different types of new construction reveals that the highest share of the grant, amounting to 47.09 per cent, was devoted to the development of additional classroom facilities. This was followed by an allocation of 17.96 per cent for the establishment of computer centres and seminar halls. Expenditure on hostel construction constituted 7.96 per cent of the total funds, while the creation of common rooms accounted for 8.40 per cent. Further, 5.86 per cent of the grants were utilized for building canteen facilities, 7.85 per cent for laboratory construction, and a relatively smaller proportion, 4.88 per cent, was spent on the development of toilet blocks.

Work-wise utilization in Renovation Works:

In the renovation works, all the twenty-eight (28) colleges as a whole have utilized an amount of 19.61 crore, which is 35.02% of the infrastructure grants to colleges (56 crore). Among a variety of renovation works, the highest percentage of such grants (22.96%) has been found to utilize in the campus development works. Then, a sizeable percentage (22.59%) of such grants has been utilized in the renovation of the classrooms. Next, around 9.92% of such grants have been used in the renovation of the auditorium.

Utilization in New Equipment's

For all the 28 colleges as a whole, a total amount of 16.77 lakhs (29.95% of the total grants under infrastructure grants to college) has been found to utilize in purchasing a number of essential new equipment. Among a number of new equipment purchased, the highest percentage of the grants under this sub-component (27.95%) has been found to utilize in the purchase of laboratory equipment's. Then, a sizeable percentage (22.62%) of such grants has been utilized in purchasing the books/e-journals.

Inflow and utilization of funds under the component of up-gradation of existing degree colleges to MDCs:

Under RUSA, usually, the non-educationally backward districts are selected for this component. Each college in such districts is provided an amount of 4 crore under this component in 90:10 ratio. The colleges receiving grants under this component requires to fulfill the following criteria:

- i. Hostel and toilets for girls.
- ii. 50% boarding capacity of the hostel need to be used for socially and economically weaker sections.
- iii. Ensure disabled-friendly campus.
- iv. Ensure special facilities or equipment for the disabled.

Under RUSA 1.0, a total amount of 20 crore has been approved for this component for five (5) colleges in Assam in the central-state ratio of 90:10. In this study, out of 34 sample colleges affiliated to Dibrugarh University, in total, 3 colleges have been found to receive the financial assistance under this component. Each such college has received a grant of 4crore with the central share of 36 crore and states hare of 0.40 crore in a 90:10 ratio. These three colleges are as follows, Dergaon Kamal Dowarah (DKD) College in Golaghat District, Sibsagar Girls' College in Sivasagar District and, Dhemaji College in Dhemaji District.

Equity Initiative:

For ensuring greater inclusion of the marginalized sections of the society, another important component-Equity Initiatives is taken under RUSA. This component aims at generating an ideals institution in the society so that everyone gets an equal opportunity. Equity means giving everyone what they need to be successful. In education, it means that personal or social circumstances such as gender and family background etc. Which not act as barriers in achieving educational potentials and that all individuals reach at least a basic minimum level of skills. This component is being carried out in two phase's viz. RUSA 1.0 and RUSA2.0. Disable Friendly Facilities:

Transportation Facilities:

Under RUSA 1.0, a total amount of 15 lakhs had been approved to each beneficiary institution under this subcomponent. In the study, only 1 (one) college, namely, DHSK College (Dibrugarh district) had received a grant of 15 lakhs under this sub-component, which is around 10.34% of the total equity initiative grants (145 lakhs) under the equity initiatives component of RUSA 1.0 DHSK college, Dibrugarh hired a bus for providing transportation facility for female and differently abled students of the college at the rate of Rs. 74,000 per month. The college has used the entire approved

amount of Rs. 15,00000 of RUSA 1.0 under this provision and now this facility has been discontinued from the year 2019.

Language Laboratory:

The language laboratory renders every learner the freedom to learn any language at their own pace. The objective of language laboratory is to uplift the poor and backward students with the provision of equal opportunity to them. The major objective is to create laboratories at the institutions for maximum benefit of students who can avail the facility to enhance their language skills such as proper pronunciation, speaking, reading and writing. Under this sub-component, the grants cover the following-

- a) One server for the laboratory, b) Desktops, c) Language laboratory Software,
- d) Furniture & Fixture for the laboratory.

Responses of the coordinator of RUSA of the sample colleges regarding infrastructural aspect under RUSA 1.0

In the survey, 91.17% (31 nos.) of the RUSA coordinators have reported positively that the changes have been taken place regarding infrastructure aspect of the institution after the implementation of RUSA1.0. Again, the same percentage of the RUSA coordinators (91.17%) have opined that they have noticed the changes in the institution regarding infrastructural facilities, equity initiatives as well as teaching-learning. Most of the coordinators of RUSA (24 nos. with 77.41%) have reported that sports' equipment has been purchased and installed in the institution under the scheme of RUSA 1.0. Majority of the RUSA coordinators (24 nos. with 77.41%) have positively reported that many students have been benefited using the sports' equipment. Regarding benefit of the students using sports equipment, the RUSA coordinators of the sample colleges have opined that the students have been benefitted by using synthetic badminton court, multigym and availing other sport equipments and the students have been regularly participated in the gymnasium since its inception. The coordinators have viewed that the libraries are fully automated with SOUL 3.0 and D-SPACE user software's. E-resources are assessed through INFLIBNET N-LIST. Majority of the of the RUSA coordinators have reported that RUSA technical personnel have monitored the institution during the implementation of the projects of RUSA1.0. Again, 100% (34 nos.) of the RUSA coordinators have informed that their institutions have been monitored by RUSA, Assam through the online monitoring system such as geo-tagging and Public Fund Management System in the cases of the online submission of documents and geo-tagged photos. The same percentage of the RUSA coordinators (34 nos. with 100%) have conveyed that their colleges have constituted the project monitoring committees of RUSA 1.0 scheme. Further, 91.17%(31nos.) of the RUSA coordinators have stated that the construction works under the RUSA projects have been supervised by PWD department.

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that the implementation of RUSA 1.0 has made a substantial contribution to infrastructural strengthening, equity initiatives, and institutional capacity building in provincialised degree colleges affiliated with Dibrugarh University. Significant portions of funds were effectively utilized for new construction, renovation works, and procurement of essential equipment, resulting in improved teaching-learning environments. Equity-focused interventions, though limited in coverage, addressed inclusivity concerns such as transportation and language skill development. The positive responses from RUSA coordinators, coupled with robust monitoring mechanisms, indicate improved governance and accountability under Rashtriya Uchchar Shiksha Abhiyan. However, the study

also underscores the need for wider coverage and sustained support to ensure long-term institutional development and inclusive growth.

REFERENCES

1. Bora, S. (2012). Financing of higher educational institutions with Special reference to upper Assam. In C. Nongbri (Ed.) Proceeding of the north east India education society (PP-189-194) Ri Khasi Enterprise.
2. Chandrasiri, S. (2003). Financing of University Education in Sri Lanka. Higher Education. 45(1)91-98.
3. Das, P. and Borthakur, S. (2012). Budgetary allocation on education by the government of Assam. In C. Nongbri (Ed.), Proceeding of the north-east Indian education society (PP 284-299) Ri Khasi Enterprise
4. Kumar, N. (2004). Private cost of Medical and Para-Medical Education in Kerala, Discussion paper, No-84, Thiruvananthapuram: KRPLLD, Center for Development studies (CDS).
5. Madagowda, J. and Gowda, P.M. (2023). Union Budget-2023 and educational sector. University News 61 (7), 3-6.
6. Panchamukhi, R.P. and Devi, S. (2008). Educational Data bank for higher education. Serial Publications.
7. Parvez, M. and Shakir, M. (2017). Contemporary issues in education, a perspective. Shipra publications
8. Reddy, S.G (1995). Higher education in India, conformity crisis and innovation. Sterling publishers.
9. Sarma, M. (2012). A study on the inflow of funds in higher educational institutions of Assam. In C. Nongbri (Ed.), proceeding of the north-east India Education society (PP 271-283) Ri Khasi Enterprise.
10. Thamarasseri, I. (2016). Indian higher educational institutions and their trust with contemporary Changes. Edutracks 16 (2). 7-11.