

Rusa-Present Higher Education Trends in India



Education

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ABSTRACT

Union Ministry of Human Resource Development has launched its ambitious programme to revamp the higher education sector in the country, Rashtriya Uchcharat Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA). Through RUSA it aims to cover 316 states public universities and 13,024 colleges across the country. During this time, the countries transformed from developing to advanced economies due to strategic planning and a larger vision that correlated economic development to transformation in the education sector, in particular Higher Education and Research, to become globally competitive. Despite many new National Missions/Programs and reforms agenda, by both the central and state governments with private sector intervention, the higher education sector is in a state of complete flux in India. While we have tremendously enhanced capacity, we lag in quality, given inadequate autonomy to our Universities. This paper, newly explains about the Rashtriya Uchcharat Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA)/National Higher Education Mission, a Centrally Sponsored Scheme (CSS) for reforming the State Higher Education System in India and funding approach of this plan.

INTRODUCTION

The government is looking at brining various reforms to improve the quality of higher education sector by creation of a State Higher Education Council, creation of accreditation agencies, preparation of the state perspective plans, commitment of certain stipulated share of funds towards RUSA, academic, sectoral and institutional governance reforms, filling faculty positions etc. As per the RUSA document, greater emphasis will be laid on the improvement of the quality of teaching-learning processes in order to produce employable and competitive graduates, post-graduates and Ph.Ds.

FUNDING APPROACH

With respect to the planning and funding approach, some key changes are envisaged; (a) funding will be more impact and result oriented, (b) various equity related schemes will be integrated for a higher impact, (c) instead of unplanned expansion, there will be a focus on consolidating and developing the existing system adding capacities and (d) there will be a greater focus on research and innovation. "The most significant paradigm shift proposed by the Planning Commission is in the arena of funding of state higher education system. Strategic funding of this sector has been strongly proposed in order to make a marked difference in the overall resource endowment for the state higher education sector," states the document.

FUNDING INSTITUTIONS

There are three broad categories of the higher education institutions in India, centrally funded institutions, state funded institutions and private institutions. While the centrally funded institutions (Central Universities, IITs, NITs, IISERs, Institutes of National Importance etc) receive generous funding from the center, they have a limited coverage in terms of enrollment. About 94 per cent of the students enrolled in state funded or state controlled private institutions come under the state higher education system. It is worth noting that most private education institutions are affiliated to state universities. Thus, any efforts for development in this sector must recognize the importance of state higher education institutions and strive to improve their status.

PROBLEM OF UNIVERSITIES IN INDIA

The document says that, in order to raise funds, most universities rely heavily on the affiliation fees they receive from affiliated institutions and on self-financing courses. Treating affiliation fees as source of income and starting courses for revenue-generation have led to further dilution of quality and perpetuation of inequity. Except a few institutions, most affiliated institutions

depend heavily upon the University for administrative, examination-related and curricular matters. This adds to the burden of the university as it is reduced to an administrative and exam conducting unit rather than an institution focused on promoting teaching, research and faculty development of associated colleges. This system also takes away the autonomy of affiliated institutions in teaching and conducting examinations. Instead of increasing access in a positive way, the affiliation system creates a highly centralized and inefficient institutional structure, which does not allow its constituents any room for creativity in teaching, learning, curriculum development or research. In such a structure, quality enhancement can only be brought about by reducing the burden at the university level and giving greater autonomy and accountability to the constituents through affiliation reforms.

VISION AND PLAN

There is a lack of vision and planning for the development of institutions and the higher education sector at the state level. Given the complexities of managing the access and equity issues within and amongst states as well as the large number of institutions that already come under the state university system, there is a crying need for planning in higher education focusing on the state as the basic unit. This planning should be done by an autonomous body that can raise and allocate funds from the state as well as central governments. The State Universities are already provided some funds from the central government through the University Grants Commission. However, UGC's mandate allows it to fund only a limited number of institutions that are Section 12B and 2f (UGC Act) compliant. This excludes about 33 per cent of the State Universities and 51 per cent of the colleges under such universities.

UGC FUNDING PATTERN

UGC is also not allowed to channelize funds through the state government or through any entity other than an educational institution, which makes it impossible for the UGC to fund any planning, and expansion activity through a state level higher education body. UGC as a regulator should be actively involved in planning for new institutions but the present system does not permit it to do so. Thus states often complain of being unaware of the development funds that come to the state institutions from the centre; this makes planning and funding very difficult for the states. Under RUSA the centre aims at an 'optimum' solution to create an alternate way (a centrally sponsored scheme) of providing funding to a larger number of institutions and channelize fund through a body that ensures cohesive and integrated planning at the state level. Such a solution eminent manage-

ment sense since it is almost impossible for any central agency to deal with 35000 odd institutions on a one- on- one basis. "Given the pitiable condition, wide reach of the state university system and limitations of the UGC, there is a strong need for a strategic intervention for the improvement of access, equity and quality in Indian higher education, that focuses on state universities and state institutions though a special centrally; sponsored scheme in a mission mode. This document proposes a new centrally sponsored scheme for higher education which will spread over two plan periods (XIIth and XIIIth) and will focus on state higher educational institutions," it says.

PERFORMANCE RELATED FUNDING

RUSA will have a completely new approach towards funding higher education in state universities; it is based on key principles of performance-based funding, incentivizing well performing institutions and decision making through clearly defined norms, which will establish and rely upon a management information system to gather the essential information from institutions.

AUTONOMY TO UNIVERSITIES

The document states that RUSA will aim to provide greater autonomy to universities as well as colleges and have a sharper focus on equity-based development, and improvement in teaching-learning quality and research. It will be a new flagship scheme of the government that will pave the way for far reaching reforms at the state level. The document talks about the various types of control that state universities have over them thereby leading to degradation of their quality. It says, "Many of the problems in the state universities are linked to the archaic systems and regulations that govern them. Without bringing about reforms in the existing governance and regulatory systems, it will not be possible to unleash the potential of the state universities. The reforms initiated under RUSA will build a self-sustaining momentum that will push for greater accountability and autonomy of state institutions and impress upon them the need to improve the quality of education."

ELIGIBILITY FOR FUNDING UNDER RUSA

In order to be eligible for funding under RUSA, states will have to fulfill certain prerequisites. These include the creation of a State Higher Education Council, creation of accreditation agencies, preparation of the state perspective plans, commitment of certain stipulated share of funds towards RUSA, academic, sectoral and institutional governance reforms, filling faculty positions etc. Under the scheme, an initial amount will be provided to the State government to prepare them for complying with these a-priori requirements. Once eligible for funding under RUSA, after meeting the prerequisite commitments, the States will receive funds on the basis of achievements and outcomes. The yardstick for deciding the quantum of funds for the states and institution comprise the norms that reflect the performance in key result areas (access, equity and excellence).

CONCLUSION

The State plans will capture the current position of the states and institutions with respect to these indicators, as well as the targets that need to be achieved. The State Higher Education Council will undertake this process of planning, execution and evaluation, in addition to other monitoring and capacity building functions. The demand for higher education has been accelerating in the worldwide since last decades. Today, higher education becomes a critical input in human resource development and is essential for the country's economic growth. India is also expanding its higher education system by launching a new CSS Rashtriya Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA)/National Higher Education Mission. This is for the first time since independence that Higher Education is being expanded in a mission mode which will particularly benefit State Universities and Colleges. This scheme is key to reformation of State Higher Education System in the country.

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