

**PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION, WOMEN,
CHILDREN, YOUTH AND SPORTS**

**Review Of Education Standards, Accreditation Process, Research,
Examination Reforms And Academic Environment In Deemed/Private
Universities/Other Higher Education Institutes**

THREE HUNDRED AND FORTY FIRST REPORT

The Report looked at the situation of Higher Education in India, in light of the New Education Policy 2020 (NEP 2020), and the challenges facing Higher Education Institutes (HEIs) and covered a variety of topics and issues, ranging from the need for reforms in higher education, the provisions and objectives of NEP 2020, status of the initiatives taken by the Ministry of Education with regards to improving the higher education landscape and accreditation process, role of banks in funding of higher education, etc.

CHAPTER-1 INTRODUCTION

The first chapter provided a backdrop of the higher education landscape in India, its potential for growth, and emphasised on the need for reforms owing to rapid technological advancements in the present-day world. It was noted that in today's day and age, **“the emphasis shifted on critical thinking and analysis process rather than simply rote learning**, from not only what to learn but how to learn. Today's requirement of education, therefore, was to shift the Pedagogy towards more holistic, experiential and inquiry-driven coupled with a matching curriculum.” The need to bring the **Indian education system at par with global standards** was realised.

CHAPTER-2 NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY (NEP)-2020

The **National Education Policy 2020** was drafted with the aim of bringing about sweeping reforms in the Indian education system. Some of the important provisions of NEP 2020 :

- Reforms in higher education, such as shift towards multidisciplinary universities, faculty and institutional autonomy, revamped curriculum and pedagogy, enhanced access, equity and inclusion through online education and Open Distance Learning, etc.
- Multidisciplinary universities ending fragmentation of higher education and promoting holistic education to ensure all-round development of students
- **Internationalisation of higher education**, by encouraging Indian universities to set up campuses abroad, permitting some foreign universities to operate in India, enhancing research collaboration and student exchange programmes with global institutions, etc.
- **Promoting high quality research**, by setting up a National Research Foundation which would inculcate a culture of research across India
- Setting up a **common regulatory regime** for the education sector, i.e., National Higher Education Regulatory Authority (NHRA), which would operate in a 'light but tight' manner
- **Higher Education Grants Commission** to be set up, which would take care of funding and financing

CHAPTER-3 STATUS NOTE BY DEPARTMENT OF HIGHER EDUCATION, MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

The Department of Higher Education, Ministry of Education, provided a status note of the situation of higher education, and of the various initiatives undertaken in areas like education standard, research and academic environment, examination reforms, and accreditation.

With regards to education standards, the Education Ministry and the UGC established 141 universities during the last 3 years, and enabled the digital reach of higher education. To enhance research and development capabilities and inculcating a start-up culture, initiatives such as setting up Research Parks in IITs, IMPRINT (Impacting Research and Innovation Technology) and Uchhatar Avishkar Yojana (UAY) were undertaken. To attract talented students to pursue research in science and technology, the Prime Minister's Research Fellowship and the ASEAN Fellowship Scheme were introduced. Other initiatives include: Research Promotion Scheme promoting research in technical disciplines; setting up of Indian Knowledge System division at AICTE to promote interdisciplinary research on IKS;

IDEA-Labs (Idea Development, Evaluation & Application) in technical institutions to support new age learning and 21st century skills.

With regards to examination reforms, the **National Testing Agency (NTA) conducted the Common University Entrance Test for admission into central universities**, for both under-graduation and post-graduation programmes, so as to simplify the admission process. Also, NTA launched the mobile application ‘National Test Abhyas’ to help candidates get access to mock tests free of cost. As for the AICTE, they also introduced examination reforms in 2018, and have been conducting workshops for Controller of Examination, Deans and Senior Faculty members of various universities regarding the same.

CHAPTER-4 ACCREDITATION PROCESS

In response to a detailed questionnaire sent by the Committee, the Department of Higher Education provided information on many aspects of the subject, especially in relation to NEP 2020.

- Estimated Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) in Higher Education in India, for the age group 18-23, stands at 27.1%. For the following groups, the figures stand at: SCs (23.4%), STs (18%), males (26.9%), SC males (22.8%), ST males (18.2%), females (27.3%), SC females (24.1%), ST females (17.7%).
- NEP parameters have been put in place in all Manuals for the process of assessment and accreditation, since December 2021.
- UGC initiated measures to bring multidisciplinary education, to prepare students to develop deeper skills and approach problems with broader perspectives. These include formulation of a draft National Higher Education Qualification Framework (NHEQF).
- For improving education standards and promoting research, AICTE has launched outcome-based model curriculum for Diploma, Undergraduate and Post-Graduate Courses in engineering and PGDM/MBA courses.
- To encourage institutions to have accreditations of courses being conducted by them, technical institutions are to have 60% of their programmes NBA-accredited in the next four years, else no extension of approval will be granted.
- UGC initiatives to improve education quality are: Deekhasharambh, (Student Induction Programme), Learning Outcomes-based Curriculum Framework (LOCF) in

31 Undergraduate subjects , Jeevan Kaushal (Curriculum for Life Skills), credit course curriculum for 30 hours on “Fostering Social Responsibility Community Engagement of HEIs in India”, policy document on “Enabling and Enhancing University and Industry Linkage”, guidelines for Evaluation Reforms, policy document on ‘Student Career Progression and Alumni Network’, Guru Dakshta (guidelines for Teacher Induction Programme), PARAMARSH (scheme to mentor institutions seeking National Assessment and Accreditation Council accreditation), Handbook for Vice Chancellors - a ready reckoner guide for the essential knowledge domain required for the visionary functioning, book on Quality Mandate for Higher Education Institutions, etc.

- **Modernization & Removal of Obsolescence (MODROB) scheme** to provide financial support to institutions to equip their laboratories with modern equipment and upgrade infrastructure facilities.
- **STRIDE (Scheme for Trans-disciplinary Research for India’s Developing Economy)** to promote creation of new knowledge, inculcate innovative research culture and improve quality of doctoral research in socially relevant sectors.
- **National Skills Qualifications Framework (NSQF)** launched for the purpose of skill development among students.
- UGC issued the Guidelines on Internationalization of Higher Education in July 2021, which provide for the establishment of Office for International Affairs and Alumni Connect Cell in the campuses of each University.
- UGC developed guidelines on “**Evaluation Reforms in Higher Educational Institutions**”. The document provided a comprehensive view of evaluation, and covers different types of assessment by considering requisite learning attributes. The need for more proportion of testing based on internal assessment modes has been recognised. Aspects like grading system and moderation were considered.

CHAPTER- 5 ROLE AND CONTRIBUTION OF BANKS IN FUNDING OF HIGHER EDUCATION

On the topic of funding in the higher education sector, SBI extended financial assistance to private colleges/ deemed universities based on the commercial viability of the project for creation of movable / immovable properties, furniture / fixtures / lab equipment /college

buses etc. and repayment capability based on the cash flows. SBI granted **support of approximately INR 5 crore per borrower for setting up of Schools under Social Infrastructure** under Priority Sector Advance. RBI may consider including HEIs under this scheme, with an increased threshold of upto INR 100 crores.

The Indian Bank provided **loans at reduced interest for premier institutes** like IITs, IIMs, etc., as well as some interest rebate to girl students during the moratorium period. Indian Bank provided loans for: professional courses; approved courses leading to graduate/postgraduate degree and PG diplomas conducted by colleges/universities recognized by UGC/AICTE/ICMR/NAAC-accredited 'A' rated institutions etc.; job-oriented courses for studying part-time courses and approved by the appropriate authorities; job-oriented specialized programmes which are offered in collaboration with foreign institutions, but may not have recognition in India.

Union Bank of India extended **credit assistance to Professional Education Institutions** for setting up of the institute, purchase of the equipment, and towards the working capital requirement.

CHAPTER-6 UNIVERSITY GRANTS COMMISSION (UGC)

Representatives from the following stakeholders put forward their views before the Committee: Department of Higher Education, Ministry of Education, AICTE, UGC, NAAC, NBA, SGT University, Nirma University, Manipal Academy of Higher Education, Ramakrishna Mission Vivekanand Educational and Research Institute (RKMVERI), and AIU.

- UGC is reorienting its activities, whether academic or in governance, and also reviewing all regulations, including those concerning Deemed Universities, in order to push forward the vision outlined in NEP 2020.
- AICTE is making sincere efforts to align its activities with the NEP, such as revamping of course curricula and empowerment of teachers.
- NBA has turned to Outcome-Based Accreditation by bringing in necessary changes in its process, parameters and criteria for accreditation. NBA accreditation process consists of four stages. The stages are: Initial Stage, Pre-Assessment Stage, Assessment Stage and Post-Assessment Stage (Decision-Making).

- NAAC added the concept of “Institutional Preparedness for NEP” in the SSR profile section of the accreditation form, so as to gear up HEIs for NEP 2020.
- The Secretary of the Department of Higher Education highlighted that only 30% of the universities and 20% of colleges across India were in the accreditation system, and that these numbers need to be pumped up.
- The Vice-Chancellor of SGT University suggested accreditation-related reforms like streamlining the process to start new courses and providing greater autonomy to universities, along with research-related reforms.
- The representative of Manipal Academy highlighted challenges such as maintaining balance between quantitative and qualitative education, too many regulatory bodies and malpractices in conducting exams.

CHAPTER-7 VISITS

The Committee undertook visits to several Higher Education Institutes, to gauge the ground realities, as well as the status update of the reforms taken/set to be taken by the HEIs. The institutes covered by the Committee include: IIT Guwahati, Gauhati University, Assam Science and Technology University, Gauhati Medical College and Hospital, Guwahati College of Architecture & Planning, Central Agricultural University, Imphal, National Sports University, Imphal, Manipur University, IISc Bangalore, IIT Bombay, Institute of Chemical Technology, Mumbai and SNDT Women’s University, Mumbai.

OBSERVATIONS

The Committee recognised the need for the following reforms in the higher education landscape:

- Curbing the commercialisation of higher education in India
- Setting up more universities, so as to achieve the GER target of 50% by 2035 set by the government
- Broad-based education with an interdisciplinary and inclusionary approach
- Contribution from other stakeholders like industries and banks
- A permanent mechanism to update and review the curriculum
- Streamlining the compliance and regulatory system

- Optimising infrastructure for enabling provision of hybrid education
- Easy access to credit from financial institutions, for the purpose of infrastructural support
- Building institutional leadership capabilities of governing body members of HEIs
- Encouraging innovators by enabling them to participate in the bidding process for government tenders
- Revising norms for online courses
- Encouraging HEIs to go for accreditation, since a small proportion of institutions have formal accreditation

RECOMMENDATIONS

In this report, we will look at recommendations made by the Committee.

- The Committee taking note of the thrust areas and the proposed reforms as outlined for the Higher education sector in the National Education Policy (NEP)- 2020 recommended that the Department of Higher Education must formulate a **visionary blueprint with a clear time bound roadmap and strict monitoring mechanism**, towards each of the policy directions for their successful, effective and time-bound implementation.
- The aspects relating to protection of interests of stakeholders of the Higher Education Council of India (HECI), clear demarcation of its jurisdiction to avoid any regulatory overlaps and gaps, independent nature with adequacy of resources and performance accountability be given due consideration. The Committee recommended that instead of having too many parallel regulatory bodies in the higher education sector, a **simplified hierarchy of regulatory bodies** may be constituted which will have a final say in implementation of Government rules/regulations/acts etc.
- The Department of Higher Education/ UGC and the Universities collectively **review the current state of academia-industry partnerships** and take measures to strengthen them further as these can greatly help mitigate the shortage of skilled workforce.
- The Committee appreciating the move towards **establishing a Digital University** to provide access to students across the country of world-class quality universal

education with personalized learning experience at their doorsteps, recommended developing more such hubs and spoke models of education delivery. Public universities could act as hubs with local institutions serving as the spokes, and could thus become a carrier of quality education to all parts of the country. Further, it was recommended that a new Phygital or **Physical plus Digital (hybrid) way of instructions** be experimented with in a structured manner and its impact assessed scientifically.

- **Donations and community contribution towards higher education institutions** should be encouraged through appropriate policy measures. Donations by individuals, alumni and institutions should be encouraged through tax incentives. All **donations to the higher education institutions should be 100% tax deductible**. Institutions building a vibrant Alumni Base may be given some incentives in taxes and other charges.
- The Committee, noting that sincere efforts were required to attract and retain faculty with good research skills, recommended undertaking a **review of the current system of faculty recruitment**, appraisal, assessment, promotions and for developing a **rewards-based regime on performance** measured through research contributions and publications. Also, the model of appointing talented alumni/senior students/Ph.D. scholars as Teaching Assistants, beneficial to the universities, faculty and research students, be studied and implemented. It would help such researchers/scholars to get exposure to the teaching skill and to mitigate the shortage of faculty in universities/institutions.
- The Department advise the HEIs to consider a **‘Unipass’ system** like in many educational institutions abroad which comprise a digitally enabled card for **utilization of all internal and external facilities** provided by the HEIs and government to students. This is especially important given that most HEIs in India issue multiple paper cards like health card, library card etc. separately to students.
- **World class training programmes for academic administrators be developed** as high quality education administration has generally remained a neglected aspect of the Indian higher education system. Also, courses such as Bachelor of School/College/University Management Science for non-teaching staff to manage educational services, exam management, academic administration need to be

formulated as they form the backbone of any educational institution. The Committee further recommended that there should be Institutional Leadership/ Management courses for aspiring/existing Principals/ Administrative Heads of the Colleges/ Universities to give them exposure to the management skills required to lead the institutions.

- **Enhancing international collaborations in the form of student exchanges, faculty exchanges, joint teaching**, research, conferences, publications, executive education programmes and study-abroad programmes as such activities will not only broaden the horizon of the participants but will also help in promoting the global engagement of Indian higher education institutions.
- Many State Universities regularly fail in smooth and flawless conduct of examinations. Hence it was recommended that the **parameter of the Institution's exam management competency** be also considered as a mandatory norm towards consideration of accreditation. The NAAC and NBA should award marks to such universities/institutes who conduct examinations smoothly.
- The need to carefully **examine, assess and analyze the issues and challenges for NBA and NAAC**, through compilation of a structured feedback of HEIs so that requisite reform process can be taken forward to make these bodies a benchmark for quality accreditation. Also, it was recommended that the norms for **frequency and periodicity of the accreditations be defined** so that institutions do not develop a tendency to carry the score for years, without a review.
- The formulation of a **Comprehensive National Research Policy encompassing all kinds of research activities**- both in social as well as physical sciences—with explicitly defined norms and quantifiable parameters. While doing so, the Committee also recommends that all our well identified national developmental needs in social sector as well as infrastructure and science and technology be given high priority.
- A **deep study on improving educational standards through innovation in education**, especially through the use of technology and based on such a study, a blueprint be prepared for each of the HEIs to be followed to enhance the standards of education all across the country.
- In order to enhance the quality of education, especially in the various fields of engineering, the Committee recommended **mandatory mentoring of certain colleges**

by the **Indian Institutes of Technology**, especially catering to students from a rural background or those located there .

- The Committee recommended that a **task force be set up at the central level to explore the possibility of incorporating new emerging technologies** in contemporary syllabi and develop them for increasing the employment opportunities.
- Noting the disturbing trend of many colleges associating with coaching classes to prepare their enrolled students in certain cities, making the learning process a farce through this unholy nexus between coaching classes and colleges, it was recommended that the Government, in coordination with State Governments must work out **mechanisms to curb trends of commercialisation of education** and punish such institutions by derecognizing them. A study group may be set up by the Central Government to assess the ground realities.
- **Policy reform initiatives to fulfill the vision of “Atmanirbhar Universities”** which abide by the vision of a ‘self-sustaining’ and ‘self-generating’ University. Towards the realization of this vision, it was recommended towards adequate autonomy, growth friendly regulatory framework, enabling environment to raise significant financial resources and energizing towards innovation, entrepreneurship and collaboration of universities, under a defined policy to be formulated by UGC.