PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT

Issues and Challenges Before Higher Educational Sector in India

TWO HUNDRED AND EIGHTY FOURTH REPORT

OVERVIEW

The Higher Education System of a nation encompassing Management, Engineering, Medicine, Law, etc., is a major source of developing and imparting the skills and knowledge necessary to increase the productivity of human resources and thereby growth. The **higher education sector has tremendous growth potential and would be a viable investment avenue considering the shift from manufacturing to the service sector**; this shift has resulted in conventional courses being less preferred and increased demand for higher education. The government has pledged to **overhaul the regulatory framework** and enable access to education for all through the conversion of intention into accomplishment to be seen.

In the light of this background the Committee discussed and gave recommendations on the subject of issues and challenges facing the Higher Education sector in India. The Report encompasses the feedback from various stakeholders including Directors of Institutions as well as officials representing State Governments regarding the challenges they face and the steps undertaken by them and the Public Sector Banks providing financial assistance for higher education.

KOLKATA

During deliberations with the authorities of IIM Calcutta, the officials of the Institute specified the need of facilities required such as a new Academic Block, Hostel Complex and other facilities and constructions needed to accommodate the needs of different students eg. married students, etc. They also discussed the **vision of the Institute to be an International Center of Excellence in all aspects of management education** and develop innovative and ethical future leaders capable of managing change and transformation in globally competitive environment

MUMBAI

Innovations and initiatives undertaken by the SNDT Women's University included encouragement to research via **fellowships, grants, workshops along with new curriculum designs, and integration of ICT in admission and the teaching-learning process**. Partnerships with industries were undertaken that offered fellowships to students, mentorships and interaction with industry experts, along with guidance during internships.
The university apprised about the **challenges** faced by them such as-

- Shortage of academic posts in post-graduate departments.
- UGC sanctions posts for 5 years only and the State Government takes over the posts which does not happen and therefore Universities cannot take advantage of these posts even for 5 years.
- Development grant by UGC is only 50% of what is required for infrastructure.
- Challenges on account of the availability of faculty and funds at the UG level and implementation of the Choice Board Credit System only at the PG level.

The sanctioned strength of faculty positions for all the central universities together was merely 16339 of which 6107 were lying vacant. This was a result of under-qualified candidates, unavailability of faculty with specialized domain knowledge and those from reserved categories, vocational difficulties and immobility of senior faculty members on account of the Career Advancement Scheme.

BANGALORE

The Committee held discussions with the authorities of IIM Bangalore (IIMB), Bangalore University and the Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore. The Director informed about the vision and programs of the institute.

The **initiatives** taken by the Institutes included the **Centre for Public Policy and tele-education satellite-based interactions** and the vision of attaining research excellence and promoting innovation, modernising infrastructure by **scaling up research equipment and engaging international faculty.**

Further, the **issues faced by the Higher Education Institutes** that resulted in the declining quality of higher education were highlighted-

- Need for the use of technology
- The difficulty in hiring and **retaining high-quality faculty**
- The lack of adequate and state-of-the-art infrastructure for research
- Inadequate number of quality teachers present
- A lack of adequate infrastructure for teaching and learning processes
- A lack of adequate funds.
- Around half of the sanctioned faculty positions of professor, associate and assistant professors. Data about the number of students opting for doctoral studies were also submitted to the committee.
- The challenges of political interference and the appointment of higher authorities by political institutions that were faced by the institutions.
- Economic difficulties faced by students and the role of financial institutions in augmenting resources.

HYDERABAD

Deliberations were held with the Vice Chancellors of the University of Hyderabad and the Centre for English and Foreign Languages along with the authorities of the State Government of Telangana.

The **initiatives** taken for ensuring quality education and path-breaking research :

- The **Internal Quality Assurance Cell** which closely monitors the academic performances of various departments.
- Continuous assessment through **semester evaluation, state-of-the-art research laboratories and Junior Science Club and research club** for undergraduates to promote research.
- The University also has a provision for **summer research training and fellowships for UG/PG** students and encourages them to apply for summer projects in IITs and other institutions as well as prepare for various such as NET/SET, JRF, etc.
- Advisory Bureau to enhance the job opportunities for the students.
- There are now more than 240 research projects totalling 230 crore rupees and the University has currently requested 42 patents, of which 17 have been approved.

Challenges :

- 156 vacant faculty positions at the University of Hyderabad.
- Insufficient grants and funds.
- **Delay in release of fellowships** against sanction letters and need for a more liberal policy in education loans.
- Lack of competitive nature of quality in our Higher Education system on account of a **shortage of qualified faculty** and the pedagogue quality adopted by the existing faculty.
- Lack of proper Performance Appraisal system for teachers
- Engineering colleges are mostly stand-alone and do not have a multi-disciplinary approach which impacts the creative and innovative capabilities.
- Research in State Universities has been declining.
- **Declining quality of the remote education programmes** offered by the colleges.
- Confusion among stakeholders regarding the genuineness of the degree awarded for distance education as to which agency should give approval and authentication.

CHANDIGARH

Initiatives :
- Practical sessions on soft skills, career guidance, Academic Industry Guidance, etc,
- Non-credit courses for the final year students by the placement cell or the skill development centre in association with industry.
- **Personality Development**, Quantitative Aptitude, Business English, etc for which separate certificates were issued by the Punjab University.
- Research Promotion Cell, Research Centers and Internal Quality Assurance Cell.
- Students were encouraged to **Learn by Doing initiative** and were involved in the Management of the library, computerization, Hospitality, Restructuring of the Examination System, E-governance and leveraging IT to improve delivery systems.

Challenges :
- Relatively poor standards, especially in rural areas. Thus higher education institutions in rural areas have to deal with a different quality of students compared to urban areas.
- The courses approved by UGC are devoid of Diploma Programs which are currently relevant as the government is prioritising skill development.
- Unavailability of **quality faculty in rural universities**.
- Horizontal growth in terms of an increased number of institutions as well as vertical growth in terms of quality improvement is required.
- With the introduction of Choice Based Credit System, there's a **requirement for an increased number of faculty.** Punjab has more than 55% vacancies of faculty for various reasons out of which one is an unwillingness to join rural and remote areas.
- Due to strict standards, a shortage of faculty and infrastructure, and a preference for established institutions and universities, a huge number of **institutions are not accredited.**
- To compete with the top universities of the world there's a need for the provision of **higher amounts of grants to universities**.
- Delay in salaries of faculty
- Schemes which provided research collaborations and incentives to the faculty for promoting research have been stopped, leading to a decline in research.

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

The representatives of the Central University of Kerala and other stakeholders discussed certain concerns :

- Need for **standardization of the degrees** of different categories of universities across India to benefit the students.

- Students and teachers of universities located in rural areas do not receive good exposure even though they are intellectually at par with those in urban areas.

- Students from SC/ST studying in the Central Universities haven't been receiving their scholarships from their respective states. There is no provision for them to receive scholarships from Central University.

- Given that it has merely resulted in the accumulation of publications and certifications in greater numbers, the **quality evaluation criteria for teachers based on API scores decreased the quality of teaching**.

- The **intellectual aspect has been undermined** as the rating institutions like NAAC and NCTE give more value to tangible and material measures like infrastructure, etc.

- There is a **need for the institutionalization of pre-service teacher training** for college and university teachers because how a well-learned person transfers his or her knowledge is important.

VISAKHAPATNAM

The deliberations discussed the initiatives being intended by the University

- Concentration on **launching PG programmes** and centres for conducting research leading to a PhD.

- It has introduced **new P.G. courses** namely **M. Tech (Marine Technology and Management) and M.Sc (Commercial Shipping and Logistics) and offers PhD in Naval Architecture and Ocean Engineering**.

- Plans to turn all its campuses into centres for research leading to PhD and start innovative modular courses or distance learning programmes for seafarers.

- **Performance-based Reward Scheme** for meritorious students.

- Online modes for entrance tests, counselling, recruitment tests, etc.

BHOPAL, UJJAIN and INDORE

The representatives discussed their vision to nurture a **holistic environment for practical and innovation-based learning**. To encourage brilliance and quality in research, the university has started several **initiatives.**

- Online Practical Examination under CBCS
- "Technical Teachers Eligibility Test" on a national level
- Research Fellowships, University Research and Innovation Fund
- The signing of MoUs with top universities and businesses around the world to share expertise and debate new prospects for innovations to stimulate global research
- The University partnered with the Tokyo Institute of Technology, Japan for joint research in the area of the Cross Linear Concentrated Solar Power Project (a solar thermal endeavour) on its campus to pursue excellence in research.
- A Venture Capital Fund of Rs 10 Cr has been established to promote entrepreneurship among students.
- Scholarships and research fellowships for economically weaker students and also for those with permanent disabilities.
- Teachers Welfare Policy to support families
- Instill e-governance which infuses accountability and transparency in the system using modern technologies.
- Two distant technical institutes with a significant tribal presence.
- The Scindia Oriental Research Institute at Vikram University is an internationally renowned centre with a collection of more than 2000 manuscripts. There is also an Internal Quality Assurance Cell which monitors the assessment of quality parameters emphasising on practical-oriented teaching and learning, regular revision of syllabus, case-based content, etc.
- Separate allocation from the university budget towards R&D work.
- Collaborations with IIT Bombay for the Development Initiative Scheme through ICT Module Courses and Spoken Tutorial Courses under the NMEICT project of MHRD, Government of India.
- Under Make in India and Skill India Initiatives postgraduate diplomas in yoga education and philosophy are offered by the University.

CHALLENGES

- The **inadequacy of funds for infrastructural development** and maintenance.
- No boy's hostels and residential quarters have been constructed due to a **lack of financial support** and 13 out of 60 new affiliated government colleges do not have their own building.
- Delay in the preparation of the roster for recruitment of teaching posts due to changing policies.
- Thin allocation to research in social sciences.

GOA & PUNE

CHALLENGES
- UG education lacks both breadth and depth without any research component.
- Lack of quality teachers in colleges who can excite students not only in science but also help them in preparing for a world beyond academics.
- The **gap between theory and experiments in science and teaching** is closely linked with broad evaluations of students' abilities. The UG science education curricula needs to be redesigned to broaden the development of science-based societal skills, at the same time mentoring highly talented ones to take up careers in research.
- Majority of universities **lack research infrastructure even for PhD programs**, let alone for UG and PG programs.
- Syllabus and teaching methods in UG and PG courses in most universities are highly teacher-centred and exam-oriented and **not learner-centred and concept-driven.**
- More than 10,000 faculty positions are not filled up because of the **non-availability of the right candidates for faculty,** in addition to several administrative blockades and most government institutions are lagging behind due to outdated and highly bureaucratic recruiting systems and poor leadership.
- The **Indian educational system neglects comprehensive faculty development** with a need to continue providing the teachers with new information through well-defined methods and redefine the education program to encourage quality teachers.
- The quantification of performance through numbers should be disbanded, instead should be done through competent committees that are unbiased.

- The number of scholarships offered by CSIR/UGC is decreasing in numbers and many students in universities do not get sufficient money under scholarships.
- Inadequate industry-academic relations.
- Lack of unified control of higher education on account of the **multiplicity of statutory authorities**, a policy framework that encourages and incentivises interactions/collaborations with leading foreign institutions,
- Higher concentration of enrollment in urban areas and lower in rural areas due to low access.
- Increased burden of the affiliation system, lacking skill development components in the curriculum and the quality and impact of research being a concern.

DELHI

CHALLENGES
- The issue of **employability of engineers and MBAs** and the dimensions of readiness of the graduates to take up responsibility in the industry and possessing skills and competitiveness needed by recruiting organizations and availability of jobs in the industry and Government.
- The **crippling regulatory framework**, and the affiliation system should be discontinued as it does not give any academic autonomy.
- The problem of a **poor examination system** across various state universities and affiliated colleges. This can be attributed to the exponential growth of college affiliations in the last 15-20 years.
- The NAAC accreditation system needs to change its design and process as the **evaluation criteria is not defined objectively**.
- State governments have established different Boards for purposes of appointment of teachers and the political expediency does not allow the government to remain impartial and due to this incompetent individuals get appointed.
- **Irregularities in fee reimbursement** and scholarship fee reimbursement by the social welfare department of states.
- **Outdated teaching methods** lead to a decline in quality of pedagogy.

ALL INDIA COUNCIL FOR TECHNICAL EDUCATION (AICTE)

Research in the required fields of study in Technical Education is affected because of shortage of funding from the Ministry.

- Funding for the **Research Park Scheme** along with Industry which share 50% of funds required for the innovation centre to encourage research at the undergraduate level.
- **Trainee Teacher Scheme** was approved by the AICTE Council to identify bright graduate-level (B-Tech Level) students who would be admitted to the post-graduate programme and whose stipend will be paid by the AICTE in exchange for a minimum teaching assignment during PG Education. Following PG completion, they will be hired as faculty members to conduct regular classes.
- The Council is providing **grant-in-aids to AICTE approved Technical Institutes** to maintain quality of education and also develops the model curriculum of engineering, management, pharmacy, architecture and town planning courses at degree level and engineering courses at diploma level.

UNIVERSITY GRANTS COMMISSION (UGC)

Initiatives undertaken for Equity and Inclusion.

- Steps to ensure access of higher education to the underprivileged and their entry into mainstream civic-public life.
- The Scheme of Women's Hostel, Post Doctoral Fellowship of SC/ST, Rajiv Gandhi National Fellowship for ST, Maulana Azad National Fellowship for Minority Community, etc., to address principles of equity and inclusion.
- The UGC has also laid out a number of schemes, awards fellowships, assistance to enable institutions of higher education as well as the faculty members to undertake quality research.
- It has introduced CBCS as a measure to enhance academic standards and quality in higher education through innovation and improvements in curriculum, teaching-learning process, examination and evaluation systems.
- UGC also framed the guidelines for the empanelment of **Adjunct Faculty** in Universities and Colleges to enable higher educational institutions to access the

eminent teachers and researchers who have completed their formal association with the University/College. University Grants Commission is the National MOOCs Coordinator for the Non-Technology PG Courses and has notified the Credit Framework for Online Learning Courses through SWAYAM Regulation, 2016.

- UGC has launched guidelines for establishing **University-Industry Interlinkage Centres in Universities**.
- Schemes for imparting skill based vocational courses.
- UGC has framed guidelines for the scheme of **Joint Appointment for Exchange of Human Resources** between universities and other Institutions/Organisations.

INITIATIVES UNDERTAKEN BY BANKS FOR STUDENTS

BANK	INITIATIVE
ALLAHABAD BANK	**Concession in the rate of interest** as low as MCLR for premier institutes like IITs/IIMs/ISBs further giving a rebate of 0.5% to girl students and also a 1% concession in case interest is serviced during the moratorium period
UNION BANK OF INDIA	**Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Rin Yojaya** for pursuing skill development courses. Education loan on the basis of **Model Education Loan Scheme**
PUNJAB NATIONAL BANK	**PNB-Saraswati** : student friendly educational loans for studies in India **PNB- Pratibha**: Loans for admission in IIT/IIM/ govt. Medical colleges **PNB-Udaan** : Abroad studies **PNB-Kaushal** : Loans for skill development courses in India **PNB Ladli** : promote and popularize education among girls of rural/semi-urban India.

ANDHRA BANK	**Concession in rate of interest** of 0.50% on educational loans to women, meritorious students with 90% and above in intermediate and 80% marks at degree level

OBSERVATIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS

- It was observed that there could only be two possibilities of acute shortage in faculty in higher educational institutes: either students were not attracted towards the teaching profession or the recruitment process was prolonged and involved many procedural formalities. The Department being the nodal authority needs to take a proactive role, to expedite the **filling up of existing vacancies**. The Ministry and Institutions should begin the hiring process well in advance of the position being vacated so that, upon retirement, the newly hired individual can start in their new role right away and in order to **increase the appeal of the teaching profession, faculty members should be encouraged to pursue consulting opportunities and receive financial assistance for their start-up costs**.

- About the schemes for the **students from the marginalised section** helping them to complete their higher education and get gainful employment , the schemes need to be administered in the real sense with the benefit reaching the targeted beneficiaries.

- The lack of employable skills in technical education students has been a major concern and to benefit from a large youth population it needs to be ensured that they have the right skills to meet the challenges of knowledge based economy. Possible approaches like **establishing finishing schools, courses for enhancing employability and other strategies which are faculty-centric or student-centric to increase the employability factor,** eg. Skills Requirement Assessment Revitalizing the Diploma Education, Lateral Entry of ITIs to Diploma programme, Vocation based Certification Programme,Industry-Institute Continuous Interaction Scheme-Faculty, Intensive Interaction-Trained Teachers, Industry Training Programme and Support Scheme, Centre for Qualified manpower, National Employability Portal, tax Benefit for Teaching Laboratory Support, etc.

- The **initiatives taken for integrating the differently-abled students towards mainstream higher education** will have more impact if awareness of such facilities is created among the targeted students. Efforts have to be made to sensitize students towards the kind of opportunities waiting for them such as **mandatory displaying of schemes for differently abled students on the websites of UGC,** the regulatory bodies as well as all categories of universities and institutions. There is also a need for **strict and constant monitoring of the initiatives**.

- Another area of concern was the **quality of education being imparted** in our universities, colleges, etc. and notes that at present there is no mechanism for ensuring the **accountability and performance of the teachers**. The Committee believes that in order to ensure quality teaching, asystem of Performance Audit of teachers may be evolved which would be based on the feedback given by the students and peers of teachers.

- Higher Education has been considered as an increasingly global enterprise and Indian institutions should embrace **internationalization of education** that could provide them with new opportunities. There is also a need to ensure that the country has several institutions of higher education that strive to achieve excellence in both teaching and research and engage more intensively than before with wider society to contribute to local and regional development and provide intellectual leadership to society.

- Certain universities and **Institutions should be converted or upgraded by creating centres of excellence** within the campus, **accreditation** should be at core of regulatory arrangement having clear incentives and consequences and there should be **more funding for university** based research and policies that create right incentives for quality research and promote collaboration among institutions.

- A **robust rating system** to give rise to healthy competition amongst the universities/ institutions, **allocation of research funds** based on student strength, **funds for ICT infrastructure** to promote better research and more **scholarship** scheme for basic and applied research.

- A **need for quality assurance agencies** crucial to guarantee **basic minimum standards** of technical education to meet industry demand for quality manpower and NBA should act as a catalyst towards quality enhancement and quality assurance of higher technical education.