

New Model Degree Colleges under RUSA: A Boon to Educationally Backward Regions

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ABSTRACT

Education is a subject in the concurrent list of the Indian constitution. Therefore, improving the accessibility, equity and quality of education is the combined responsibility of both the central and state governments. Accordingly, the central government has implemented a number of educational schemes for supporting the state governments in improving the quality of education. Rashtriya Uchchar Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA) is one such ambitious scheme of the then Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India. It was launched in 2013 during XII Plan period whose aim was to achieve “faster, sustainable and more inclusive growth”. RUSA scheme is mainly designed to promote access, equity, and quality in the higher education sector. Based on Census 2001, 374 districts in the country have been identified Educationally Backward Districts (EBDs). They were having Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in higher education lower than the national average of 12.4 per cent. In January 2018, the Aspirational Districts Program (ADP) was launched. It aims to quickly and effectively transform 117 most under-developed districts across the country. The ranking is given based on 5 broad socio-economic themes including Education.

In order to enhance GER in higher education under RUSA 1.0 in EBDs and under RUSA 2.0 in aspirational districts a component was dedicated for the establishment of New Model Degree Colleges (NMDCs). As a result, under RUSA 1.0 and RUSA 2.0, 45 and 93 NMDCs were established in various states and 06 in Union Territories of the country. 1646.12 Crores was dedicated to establish 138 NMDCs. Under RUSA 1.0 and RUSA 2.0. Rs. 56 Crores was dedicated to establish 06 NMDCs in Union Territories under RUSA 1.0 and RUSA 2.0. But they were not evenly distributed across the country. Also, even after a decade of the implementation of RUSA scheme the GER and quality of Higher Education in backward districts is very low.

Thus, the main objective of this paper is to throw light on the efforts of the Central Government enhance access, equity and excellence in backward districts by establishing New Model Degree Colleges established under RUSA 1.0 and 2.0 in Educationally Backward Districts and Aspirational Districts respectively. It is also intended to give suggestions for the effective implementation of upcoming RUSA 3.0. This paper is based on secondary data.

Keywords: RUSA, Educationally Backward Districts, Aspirational Districts, New Model Degree Colleges

Introduction

“Education is the passport to the future, for tomorrow belongs to those who prepare for it today” said Malcolm X, the African American leader in the civil rights movement, minister, and supporter of Black Nationalism. This is true for all the countries and specially to the under developed and developing countries. Charles B. Rangel has rightly said, “Encouragement to Higher Education for our youth is critical to the success of our collective future”. Hence, after independence the visionary leaders of India gave significant importance to higher education sector. It is extremely important to provide cutting-edge, knowledgeable and highly skilled manpower for the growth of the nation. Due to these efforts since 75 years, now India’s higher education system has become the second largest in the world after China.

In India, the Department of Higher Education, Ministry of Education (erstwhile Ministry of Human Resource Development) is responsible for the overall development of the basic infrastructure of Higher Education sector. It is involved in policy making as well as planning. Under a planned development process, the Department looks after expansion of access and qualitative improvement in the Higher Education. The vision of the department is to realize India's human resource potential to its fullest in the Higher Education sector, with equity and inclusion. The department is working towards providing greater opportunities of access to Higher Education with equity to all the eligible persons and in particular to the vulnerable sections. It is supporting existing institutions, establishing new institutions, supporting State Governments and Non-Government Organizations/civil society to supplement public efforts aimed at removing regional or other imbalances that exist at present to enhance access to higher education.

After independence, to enhance accessibility to higher education, more emphasis was laid on the establishment of new Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in the country. Thus, the country has witnessed visible and substantial growth in the number of higher education institutions. New public and private HEIs were established in the country. As a result, the number of Universities and Colleges has increased substantially in the country which is shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Growth of Higher Education in India

Year	Universities	Colleges	Enrolment	Teachers
1950-51	28	578	1,74,000	24,000
1960-61	45	1,819	5,57,000	62,000
1970-71	93	3,227	19,56,000	1,90,000
1980-81	123	4,738	27,52,000	2,44,000
1990-91	184	5,748	49,25,000	2,71,000
2000-01	266	11,146	83,99,000	3,95,000
2004-05	348	17,625	1,04,81,000	4,72,000
2019-20	1,043	44,374	34,25,00,000	15,03,156

Source: <https://www2.deloitte.com/content/dam/Deloitte/in/Documents/public-sector/in-ps-ASHE-Report2021-noexp.pdf>

With the growth in number of HEIs, India’s higher education GER has improved over the years. But it still lags behind world average. More than that, enhancement of GER has not percolated to all the regions uniformly. Regional and social disparities still continue to exist in higher education sector to a greater extent. GER varied from 6.1% in Daman & Diu, 9.4% in Dadra & Nagar Haveli, 7.9% in Ladakh

and 7.5% in Lakshadweep to 75.8% in Sikkim, 52.1% in Chandigarh, 48% in Delhi, 46.6% in Puducherry etc in 2019-20. Therefore, there is need to establish a greater number of higher education institutes in the states and Union Territories with low GER. While doing this the districts with lowest GER in higher education located in the states/Union Territories with reasonably good GER should be taken into consideration to bridge this gap.

In this context, this paper is an attempt to unravel the efforts of the Central Government by establishing New Model Degree Colleges under Rashtriya Uchchar Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA) as it was intended to enhance accessibility to higher education to the students belonging to Educationally Backward Districts (EBDs) and aspirational districts of the country. It is also an attempt to give suggestions for the effective implementation of upcoming RUSA 3.0. This paper is entirely based on secondary data.

Rashtriya Uchchar Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA)

Education is a subject in the concurrent list of the Indian constitution. Therefore, improving the quality of education is the combined responsibility of both the central and state governments. Hence, the central government has implemented a number of educational schemes for supporting the state governments in improving the quality of education.

One such centrally sponsored scheme is Rashtriya Uchchar Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA). It is being implemented by the higher education department to promote access, equity, and quality in the higher education sector. It was initiated in the year 2013-14. Under this scheme, the Union government provides central assistance to states. Centre-State funding would be in the ratio of 90:10 for North-Eastern States, Sikkim, J&K, Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand. For other states and Union Territories (UTs) it was initially 65:35 and it was changed to 60:40 later on.

New Model Degree Colleges (NMDCs) under RUSA

There were 18 different components under RUSA 1.0 and 14 components under RUSA 2.0. Component 4 of RUSA 1.0 and Component 5 of RUSA 2.0 were dedicated for the establishment of New Model Degree Colleges.

Based on Census 2001, 374 districts in the country have been identified Educationally Backward Districts (EBDs). They were having Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in higher education lower than the national average of 12.4%. The Eleventh Five Year Plan emphasized on the need to increase the 'accesses to higher education, especially in the EBDs. Therefore, UGC appointed an expert committee consisting of eminent educationists to address the said issue. The report submitted by the Committee envisaged the establishment of a Model College (post senior secondary) in each of the 374 EBDs. It mentioned that rural areas, reasonably well connected by transport facilities, may be accorded priority while setting up Model Colleges. The Committee also suggested that, a location which does not have a college within a radius of 10 kilometers may also be given preference. The main objective of the Scheme was to enhance the access to degree courses in EBDs of the country, so as to achieve expansion in higher education with inclusion, equity and quality. The Scheme was essentially a motivational mechanism for

State Governments to uplift under-served districts educationally by providing appropriate financial assistance.¹

Criteria for the sanction of New Model Degree Colleges under RUSA 1.0

RUSA 1.0 guidelines states that Districts that are listed as Educationally Backward Districts under the existing 374 Model College Scheme and have not been supported so far would be considered for funding. 60 new model colleges will be sanctioned during the current Plan period.

The criteria for the sanction of New Model Degree Colleges under RUSA 1.0 are given below:

Funding Priorities: “Educationally Backward Districts” will be graded into category A & B on the basis of following criteria; Category A districts will be given priority

- District with 0 - 1 colleges – Category A
- District with 2- 4 college – Category B

Districts in Category A will be given priority over Category B. However, within Category B priority will be given on the following basis:

- Low CPI (College Population Index, No of Colleges per 1,00,000 students of 18- 23 25 age group).
- High proportion of socially and economically backward population
- Low GER for female students.
- Low GER (SC/ST).²

Criteria for the sanction of New Model Degree Colleges under RUSA 2.0

In January 2018, the Aspirational Districts Program (ADP) was launched. It aims to quickly and effectively transform 112 most under-developed districts across the country. The broad contours of the program are Convergence (of Central & State Schemes), Collaboration (of Central, State level Nodal Officers & District Collectors), and Competition among districts through monthly delta ranking; all driven by a mass movement. The ranking is based on the incremental progress made across 49 Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) under 5 broad socio-economic themes - Health & Nutrition, Education, Agriculture & Water Resources, Financial Inclusion & Skill Development and Infrastructure.³ Hence, during the second phase of the Centrally Sponsored Scheme of Rashtriya Uchchar Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA), central assistance was provided for opening of new Model Degree Colleges (MDCs) in ‘Aspirational Districts’ identified by NITI Aayog and in unserved & underserved districts in North Eastern and Himalayan States.⁴

RUSA 2.0 guidelines states that, “Support will be provided for creation of colleges with requisite infrastructure (class rooms, library, laboratory, faculty rooms, toilet blocks and other essential requirements with technological advanced facilities) in 70 Aspirational Districts and identified by the NITI Aayog and un-served and under-served areas in north east and Himalayan regions. This component

¹https://www.ugc.ac.in/oldpdf/xiplanpdf/newmodelcollegesebd_16nov09.pdf page 7

²<https://kshec.karnataka.gov.in/storage/pdf-files/RUSA%201%20Guidelines.pdf> pp 24-25

³<https://www.niti.gov.in/aspirational-districts-programme>

⁴<https://pib.gov.in/Pressreleaseshare.aspx?PRID=1541802>

setting up of a NMDC by way of new construction the proposed college is eligible for a funding of Rs. 12 crore (maximum) for the plan period and any over and above amount is to be borne by the State Government. Those aspirational districts which have received a model degree college under RUSA 1.0 will not be eligible for funding consideration.”

Funding priorities: Aspirational districts categorized into:

- Category 1: with 0 Model Degree College
- Category 2: High proportion of socially and economically backward population → Un-served and under-served areas in north east and Himalayan regions⁵

Establishment of New Model Degree Colleges under RUSA 1.0 & RUSA 2.0

In the following table the details regarding State wise and Union Territory wise New Model Degree Colleges established under RUSA 1.0 and RUSA 2.0 is given:

Table 2: Details regarding State wise New Model Degree Colleges established under RUSA 1.0 and RUSA 2.0

State	Physical units approved		Total amount approved (Rs. in Crore)		Central share approved (Rs. in Crore)		Total Physical Units approved	Total amount Approved (Rs in Core)	Total Central Share Approved (Rs in Crore)
	RUSA 1.0	RUSA 2.0	RUSA 1.0	RUSA 2.0	RUSA 1.0	RUSA 2.0			
Andhra Pradesh	6	2	69.32	24	41.5	14.4	8	93.32	55.9
Arunachal Pradesh	0	2	0	24	0	21.6	2	24	21.6
Assam	0	5	0	60	0	54	5	60	54
Bihar	7	4	84	48	50.4	28.8	11	132	79.2
Chhattisgarh	5	7	60	84	36	50.4	12	144	86.4
Goa	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Gujarat	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Haryana	0	1	0	12	0	10.8	1	12	10.8
Himachal Pradesh	2	1	24	12	21.6	10.8	3	36	32.4
Jharkhand	0	10	0	120	0	72	10	120	72
Karnataka	0	2	0	24	0	14.4	2	24	14.4
Kerala	0	1	0	12	0	7.2	1	12	7.2
Madhya Pradesh	5	8	60	96	36	57.6	13	156	93.6
Maharashtra	0	2	0	24	0	14.4	2	24	14.4
Manipur	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Meghalaya	0	2	0	24	0	21.6	2	24	21.6
Mizoram	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Nagaland	1	1	12	12	10.8	10.8	2	24	21.6
Odisha	8	6	96	72	57.6	43.2	14	168	100.8
Punjab	2	1	24	12	14.4	7.2	3	36	21.6

⁵<http://rusa.nic.in/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/Final-Guidelines-Copy.pdf> Page 72

Rajasthan	0	5	0	60	0	36	5	60	36
Sikkim	0	2	0	24	0	21.6	2	24	21.6
Tamil Nadu	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Telangana	4	3	45.2	36	27.12	21.6	7	81.2	48.72
Tripura	4	0	45.3	0	40.8	0	4	45.3	40.8
Uttar Pradesh*	0	26	0	312	0	187.2	26	312	187.2
Uttarakhand	1	2	10.3	24	9.3	21.6	3	34.3	30.9
West Bengal	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	45	93	530.1	1116	345.5	727.2	138	1646.12	1072.72

* RUSA 1.0 & RUSA 2.0 Data Combined, **Source:** Compiled from the data available in <http://rusa.nic.in/states/>

Under RUSA 1.0 and RUSA 2.0, 45 and 93 new model degree colleges were established in educationally backward and aspirational districts of various states of the country. Rs. 1646.12 Crores was dedicated to establish 138 new model degree colleges.

Table 3: Details regarding Union Territory wise New Model Degree Colleges established under RUSA 1.0 and RUSA 2.0

Union Territory	Physical units approved		Total amount approved (Rs. in Crore)		Central share approved (Rs. in Crore)		Total Physical Units approved	Total amount Approved (Rs in Core)	Total Central Share Approved (Rs in Crore)
	RUSA 1.0	RUSA 2.0	RUSA 1.0	RUSA 2.0	RUSA 1.0	RUSA 2.0			
Andaman and Nicobar Islands	1	0	12	0	12	0	1	12	12
Chandigarh	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Delhi	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Jammu and Kashmir	0	5	0	44	0	39.6	5	44	39.6
Ladakh	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Lakshadweep	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Puducherry	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	1	5	12	44	12	39.6	6	56	51.6

Source: Compiled from the data available in <http://rusa.nic.in/states/>

Similarly, under RUSA 1.0 and RUSA 2.0, 01 and 05 new model degree colleges were established in various Union Territories of the country. Rs. 56 Crores was dedicated to establish 06 new model degree colleges in Union Territories.

Table 4: Statewise details of NMDCs established in EBDs and Aspirational districts

Sl. No	State	No. of EBDs identified	NMDCs established under RUSA 1.0 in EBDs	No of Aspirational Districts	NMDCs established under RUSA 2.0 in Aspirational Districts	Total NMDCs established under RUSA
1	Andhra Pradesh (erstwhile)	11	6	3	2	8
2	Arunachal Pradesh	11	0	1	2	2
3	Assam	12	0	7	5	5
4	Bihar	25	7	13	4	11
5	Chhattisgarh	15	5	10	7	12
6	Goa	0	0	0	0	0
7	Gujarat	20	0	2	0	0
8	Haryana	7	0	1	1	1
9	Himachal Pradesh	4	2	1	1	3
10	Jammu & Kashmir (erstwhile)	11	0	2	5	5
11	Jharkhand	12	0	19	10	10
12	Karnataka	20	0	2	2	2
13	Kerala	4	0	1	1	1
14	Madhya Pradesh	39	5	8	8	13
15	Maharashtra	7	0	4	2	2
16	Meghalaya	5	0	1	2	2
17	Manipur	0	0	1	0	0
18	Mizoram	7	0	1	0	0
19	Nagaland	1	1	1	1	2
20	Odisha	18	8	10	6	14
21	Punjab	13	2	2	1	3
22	Rajasthan	30	0	5	5	5
23	Sikkim	4	0	1	2	2
24	Tamil Nadu	27	0	2	0	0
25	Telangana*		4	3	3	7
26	Tripura	4	4	1	0	4
27	Uttar Pradesh	41	0	8	26	26
28	Uttarakhand	2	1	2	2	3
29	West Bengal	17	0	5	0	0
	Total	367	45	117	98	143

* Number of EBDs in Telangana are included on erstwhile Andhra Pradesh

During RUSA 1.0 only 45 NMDCs were established in various states. The states like Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Jharkhand, Gujarat, West Bengal, Karnataka, Arunachal Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir, Assam, Mizoram, Meghalaya, Kerala in spite of having EBDs were not able to get grants under Component 4 of RUSA 1.0 for the establishment of NMDCs. During RUSA 2.0 the states of Gujarat, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal did not get even a single NMDC in spite of having aspirational districts. When compared to RUSA 1.0 more priority was given for the establishment of a greater number of NMDCs in aspirational districts.

Table 5: Union Territory wise detail of NMDCs established in EBDs and Aspirational districts

Sl. No	State	No. of EBDs identified	New MDC established under RUSA in EBDs/Aspirational Districts	No of Aspirational Districts	NMDC established under RUSA 2.0 in Aspirational Districts	Total NMDCs established under RUSA
1	Andaman & Nicobar Islands	2	1	0	0	1
2	Chandigarh	0	0	0	0	0
3	Dadar & Nagar Haveli	1	0	0	0	0
4	Daman & Diu	2	0	0	0	0
5	Lakshadweep	1	0	0	0	0
6	Puducherry	1	0	0	0	0
	Total	7	1	0	0	1

Though, there were seven EBDs under RUSA 1.0, only one NMDC was established in Union Territory of Andaman and Nicobar Islands. No NMDC was established under RUSA 2.0 in any of the Union Territories.

The Way Forward

National Education Policy 2020 and

National Education Policy 2020 envisages broad based, multi-disciplinary, holistic Under Graduate education with flexible curricula, creative combinations of subjects, integration of vocational education and multiple entry and exit points with appropriate certification is being implemented across the country. It also envisions to add 3.5 crore seats in higher education.

One of the key objectives of National Education Policy 2020 aims to increase the Gross Enrolment Ratio in higher education to 50 % by 2035. Gross enrolment ratio in higher education is calculated for the 18-23 age groups. It is the ratio of enrolment in higher education to the population in the eligible age group. As per All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) 2019-20 report Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in higher education in India was 27.1 per cent has revealed. The GER of female students is at 27.3 per cent, which is higher than 26.9 per cent for male students. Therefore, to achieve the goal of increasing the Gross Enrolment Ratio in higher education to 50 % by 2035 the Governments need to take at most care towards strengthening Higher Education System in aspirational districts. This policy document

intends to enhance access to higher education by establishing more high-quality HEIs in aspirational districts and Special Education Zones containing larger numbers of Socio-Economically Disadvantaged Groups (SEDGs).

RUSA 3.0

The Government has approved the scheme of RUSA 3.0 for continuation till 31.03.2026 or till further review, whichever is earlier. This is being designed to implement some of the recommendations and aims of the New Education Policy 2020.

The proposal of RUSA 3.0 entails an expenditure of Rs. 12929.16 crore out of which Central Share is Rs. 8120.97 crores and the State Share is of Rs. 4808.19 crores. It has been envisaged to support around 1600 projects under the new phase of the scheme.

As per the government release, RUSA 3.0 targets to reach out the unserved, underserved areas; remote/rural areas; difficult geographies; LWE areas; NER; aspirational districts, tier-2 cities, areas with low GER etc., and to benefit the most disadvantaged areas and SEDGs. It has been stated that, under RUSA 3.0 State Governments will be supported for Gender inclusion, Equity Initiatives, ICT, Enhancing employability through vocationalization & skill upgradation. State Universities will be supported for Multi-Disciplinary Education and Research. Grants will be provided for strengthening both accredited and non-accredited Universities and Colleges for undertaking various activities including teaching-learning in Indian languages. More than that it has clearly mentioned that States will also be supported for creation of new Model Degree Colleges.⁶

Hence, we can expect the establishment of New Model Degree Colleges under RUSA 3.0 in aspirational districts of the country which will be conducive for their overall development.

Conclusion

After the implementation of RUSA in 2013-14, the GER in higher education has increased from 23.0% to 27.1% in 2019-20. But it is only a marginal growth and also, it is not evenly distributed across the country. Even today, regional disparity exists in all socio-economic sectors. Higher education is not an exception to this.

The new schemes like National Mission on Education through Information and Communication Technology, Pandit Madan Mohan Malviya National Mission on Teachers and Teaching, various Scholarship schemes, etc. and initiatives like, Massive Open Online Courses, Study Webs of Active-Learning for Young Aspiring Minds (SWAYAM), SWAYAM Prabha etc are being implemented to enhance the quality of Higher Education. On SWAYAM portal, online courses are provided to learners free of cost in 11 Indian languages whereas 34 Educational TV channels are provided under SWAYAM Prabha.⁷ The above-mentioned schemes and initiatives are a boon to all the students and faculty members. Awareness should be generated specially among the students of aspirational districts to get the maximum benefit of these schemes and encouragement to enroll to HEIs. Priority should be given for the establishment of New Model Degree Colleges and the existing higher education institutions should be upgraded to realize the objectives of NEP 2020.

⁶<https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1799301>

⁷<http://164.100.24.220/loksabhaquestions/annex/176/AS290.pdf>