

Restructuring Indian Higher Education System through RUSA

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Abstract

Social transformation and human development are measured through education, it serves as a benchmark for both individual progress and overall societal shifts. Education is a dynamic aspect of the individual that influences the individual's mental, emotional, physical, and social growth. The growth and development of a nation are considerably enhanced by the higher education system. It facilitates the acquisition of lives for members of society, promotes healthy development, and enhances the overall potential of the nation. Higher education should be pursued with the goals of improving the lives of people and contributing to the overall strength of the nation. It is for the purpose of instilling in each individual member the high standards of behaviour and conduct as well as the integrity of their personality. During the past decade, the education sector has become increasingly important in the process of economic planning across the world's emerging nations. Due to strategic planning and a wider vision that correlated economic development to transformations in the education sector, in particular higher education and research, in order to become globally competitive, the economies of these countries progressed from developing to advanced during this time period. The higher education sector in India is in a state of transition despite the numerous new programmes and reforms that have been implemented by both the national and state governments with intervention from the private sector. The Rashtriya Uchchar Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA), also known as the National Higher Education Mission is a flagship programme by the government of India that was put into action as part of the 12th Five Year Plan for higher education in India. This initiative is being taken with the goal of elevating the standard of higher education across the country. The primary focus of this paper will be on the role of RUSA in restructuring Indian higher education system.

Key Terms: RUSA, Restructuring, Higher Education, Transformation, Planning.

1. Introduction

Education is central to development. It plays the most significant role in the life of the individual as well as in the growth and prosperity of a nation, particularly higher education. Higher education is of paramount importance for economic and social development. It has long been recognized as a major contributing factor to the social, cultural and intellectual life of society by providing and improving those skills, and competencies that are required in different spheres of human activity, ranging from administration to agriculture, business, industry, health and communication, and extending to the arts and culture. Though the contribution of higher education to development is quite significant, India, like many other developing countries, has been unable to pay adequate attention to it due to indulgence in other various unavoidable circumstances. As a result, higher education was either ignored in policy planning exercises or special

measures were initiated to reduce the intensity of public efforts in it, or both. It resulted in the deteriorating condition of Indian Higher education system. Quality assurance is one of the central issues in higher education today. Thus, there have been planned efforts at improving standards in higher education by the central agencies. These efforts are with respect to three dimensions of higher education, viz access, equity and quality. RUSA is the most recent effort in this direction.

2. Rashtriya Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA)

The twelfth (XII) five-year plan recommended strategic utilization of central funds to ensure comprehensive planning at the State level and recommended a new Centrally Sponsored Scheme (CSS) “Rashtriya Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA)” approved by Cabinet on 3rd October 2013. The Scheme would be spread over the two plan periods (XIIth and XIIIth), and would be an overarching scheme for funding the State Universities and Colleges in order to achieve the aim of equity, access and excellence. All funding under the RUSA was norm-based and future grants were outcome dependent. Centre-State funding was in the ratio of 90:10 for Special Category States and 60:40 for other States and Union Territories (UTs) with Legislature. UTs without Legislature were given 100% funding through Centre. For privately aided institutions funding was provided in the ratio of 50:50. The central funding flowed from MHRD to institutions, through the State Governments. The scheme has the following salient features:

- It is an umbrella mission mode project scheme that would subsume other existing schemes in the sector.
- The Central funding would flow from MHRD to institutions, through the State Councils of Higher Education.
- The funding to States would be made on the basis of critical appraisal of the State Plans for Higher Education. The Plans would describe each State’s strategy to address issues of equity, access and excellence in higher education.
- All funding under the RUSA would be norm-based and future grants would be outcome dependent. Certain academic, administrative and governance reforms will be a precondition for receiving funding under RUSA.

The key objectives of RUSA are to improve access, equity and quality in higher education through planned development of higher education at the state level. Such planning will include creating new academic institutions, expanding and upgrading the existing ones, developing institutions that are self-reliant in terms of quality education, professionally managed, and characterized by greater inclination towards research and provide students with education that is relevant to them as well the nation as a whole.

3. Scope of RUSA

All State Universities and colleges (both 12B and 2(f) compliant and non-12B and non- 2(f)) from all states and Union Territories (UTs) across the country would be eligible to be covered under RUSA. Subject to eligibility, an estimated 306 state universities and 850099 colleges will be covered under this initiative to improve the learning outcomes and employability of graduates and to scale up research, development and innovations. The project will also support these institutions to improve their policy, academic and management practices. RUSA will fund the institutions under a few key components. The yardstick for deciding the quantum of funds for the states and institutions will be the norms that will reflect the key result areas (access, equity and excellence), in addition to other monitoring and capacity-building

functions. The State Higher Education Councils will be the key institution at the state level to channel resources to the institutions from the state budget.

Strategic funding of state institutions must ensure that the issues of quality and access are addressed in an equitable manner. This would entail encouraging the states to prepare State Higher Education Plans duly keeping the following aspects in mind:

- Reforms – governance and academic
- Transparent and norm-based funding
- Equity interventions
- Spatial and regional planning after due mapping
- Infrastructure saturation
- Faculty planning
- Programme and discipline planning
- Outcome-based reimbursements
- Review of the affiliation system
- Mandatory accreditation and quality improvement
- Focus on research and innovation

RUSA will be implemented through the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) of the Government of India as a “Centrally Sponsored Scheme” with matching contributions from the state governments and Union Territories (UTs).

4. Objectives of RUSA

- ▶ To improve the overall quality of state institutions by ensuring conformity to prescribed norms and standards and adopting accreditation as a mandatory quality assurance framework.
- ▶ Usher transformative reforms in the state higher education system by creating a facilitating institutional structure for planning and monitoring at the state level, promoting autonomy in State Universities and improving governance in institutions.
- ▶ Ensure reforms in the affiliation, academic and examination systems.
- ▶ Ensure adequate availability of quality faculty in all higher educational institutions and ensure capacity building at all levels of employment.
- ▶ Create an enabling atmosphere in the higher educational institutions to devote themselves to research and innovations.
- ▶ Expand the institutional base by creating additional capacity in existing institutions and establishing new institutions, in order to achieve enrolment targets.
- ▶ Correct regional imbalances in access to higher education by setting up institutions in unserved & underserved areas.
- ▶ Improve equity in higher education by providing adequate opportunities for higher education to SC/STs and socially and educationally backward classes; promote inclusion of women, minorities, and differently-abled persons.

5. Components of RUSA

The following are the primary components of RUSA that capture the key action and funding areas that must be pursued for the fulfillment of the targets:

- ▶ 1. New Universities

- ▶ 2. Up gradation of existing autonomous colleges to universities
- ▶ 3. Conversion of colleges to Cluster Universities
- ▶ 4. Infrastructure grants to universities
- ▶ 5. New Model Colleges (General)
- ▶ 6. Upgradation of existing degree colleges to model colleges
- ▶ 7. New Colleges (Professional)
- ▶ 8. Infrastructure grants to colleges
- ▶ 9. Research, innovation and quality improvement
- ▶ 10. Equity initiatives
- ▶ 11. Faculty Recruitment Support
- ▶ 12. Faculty improvements
- ▶ 13. Research Universities
- ▶ 14. Vocationalisation of Higher Education
- ▶ 15. Leadership Development of Educational Administrators
- ▶ 16. Institutional restructuring & reforms
- ▶ 17. Capacity building & preparation, Data collection & planning
- ▶ 18. Management Information System

6. Conclusion

Under RUSA, the center aims at an ‘optimum’ solution to create an alternate way of providing funding to a larger number of institutions and channelize funds through a body that ensures cohesive and integrated planning at the state level. It has a sharper focus on equity-based development and improvement in teaching-learning quality and research. The far-reaching 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., RUSA has a holistic vision to revamp higher education in a comprehensive manner in spite of several challenges but still, many areas need to be comprehensively touched requiring sincere amalgamated approaches. However, we need to wait for the quantum of assistance and specific norms for receiving support from RUSA to state universities.

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