A STUDY OF THE VARIOUS PROVISIONS AND CHALLENGES FOR RUSA

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ABSTRACT

There are basically three broad categories of higher education institutions in India, centrally funded institutions, state funded institutions and private institutions. Centrally funded institutions receive generous funds from the centre, but they have a limited coverage in terms of enrollment of students. While about 94% of the students enroll in state funded or state controlled private institutions which come under the state higher education system, and get only a small fraction of funds provided to central universities. Due to this, the quality of infrastructure and teaching is these universities is far below the acceptable level.

In the forthcoming decade, to harvest the benefits of demographic factors i.e. a huge working age population, there was a need for achieving an educated and productive workforce through intensive effort to improve quality and relevance of higher education. In this direction, this paper examines the provisions and objectives of Rashtriya Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA) and its implications on the status of higher education in India. The paper takes the form of an exploratory study and draws upon from the materials available in the various published papers and reports by UGC, AICTE, MHRD etc. to present an overview of the need, objectives, prescribed provisions of RUSA and the major challenges to overcome.

1. INTRODUCTION

International Labour Organization (ILO) has predicted that by 2020, India will have 116 million workers in the age bracket of 20 to 24 years, as compared to other countries like China, USA, Japan and Europe with a much elder working population then. Essentially what matters is not the size of population, but its age structure. It would be a lost opportunity if this opportunity cannot be converted into an advantage. Therefore, importance given to higher education is imperative. The 12th plan continues to focus on higher education in the country to make it more relevant to the global needs and make it accessible amongst various social groups. For accomplishing such objectives, apart from adequate inputs that need to be provided proper governance and regulatory reforms also need to be implemented. Greater emphasis on improvement of the quality of teaching and learning processes should be laid so that more employable and competitive graduate, post-graduates and Phds can be produced.
Planning commission proposed a significant paradigm shift in the area of funding of state higher education. Strategic funding of this sector was strongly proposed in order to make a significant difference in the overall deliverables of this sector.

2. PRESENT STATE OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN INDIA

As per “All India Survey on Higher Education, Ministry of Human Resource Development, 2010-11” the higher education system in India today suffers from many shortcomings. These are:

i. Only a small fraction of population between the age group of 18-23 is enrolled in higher education institutions as the Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) is only 18.8%.

ii. Wide disparities between various social groups like SCs, STs, and OBCs. Falling below average GER.

iii. There is also gender inequality, GER for males is 20.9% while that for females is only 16.5%.

iv. There is also difference in quality of institutions and enrollment between rural and urban areas and between developed states and not so developed ones.

v. Issues in universities arising from affiliation resulting in administrative burden on universities.

vi. Governance issues in universities such as lack of appropriate structures and limited autonomy.

vii. Financial constraints in higher education, particularly for state level institutions.

viii. Lack of clear regulatory framework for private sector participation in higher education.

ix. Significant levels of faculty vacancies in institutes and inadequate research opportunities.

x. Varying quality of education provided in institutes with inadequate focus on research in higher education and low employability and skills of graduates.

xi. Very few institutes get regularly accredited and lack adequate infrastructure and equipment.

Looking at the innumerable challenges, a radical change is required in the approach that was traditionally adopted for development of higher education in the country.

3. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To study the need for RUSA

2. To study the main objectives and provisions of RUSA

3. To study the major challenges for RUSA
4. NEED FOR (RUSA)

State universities catering to large number of students face severe constraints in terms of access to finances, particularly in comparison to central institutions and with state government support to state institutions being inadequate, the resources are spread thinly over an increasing numbers of institutions.

Though the state universities get some funds from the central government through UGC, however these funds are not for the entire state university system. UGC is not allowed to channelize funds through the state government or any entity other than educational institution, making it impossible for it to fund any planning and expansion activity of state level higher education.

There is a severe need for vision and planning for development of higher education focusing on the state as the basic unit. This planning can be done by an autonomous body that can raise and allocate funds from state as well as central government for higher education and also explore options of revenue generation through research, consulting and private and industry partnership.

Without access to adequate funds, affiliated institutions have become an alternative source of finance for universities, through their affiliation fees. Further, the increasing numbers of affiliated institutions has also had a negative impact in terms of quality of education as well as added administrative burden for universities. It has also resulted in reduced autonomy of affiliated institutions with respect to aspects such as teaching, curriculum development and research.

An optimum solution was be to create an alternate way of providing funding to a large number of institutions and channelize funds through a body that ensures cohesive and integrated planning at the state level. Therefore the need of the hour was to ensure that all colleges and universities must receive requisite state and central support in order to achieve required efficiency and infrastructure. Keeping in view such objectives the need for reforms in state higher education sector, using central funds in a strategic manner to ensure holistic planning at the state level and enhancement of allocation for the state institutions a new centrally sponsored scheme by the name of Rashtriya Uchchatar Siksha Abhiyan (RUSA) was proposed. This scheme would spread over two plan period i.e. 12th & 13th and would be an over arching scheme for funding the state universities and colleges to achieve the aim of equity, access and excellence.

5. OBJECTIVES OF RUSA

Central objective of RUSA was to achieve the target of GER of 30% by the year 2020. Other objective were:

1. Improving the overall quality of existing state higher educational institutions by ensuring conformity to prescribed norms and standards and adoption of accreditation as a mandatory quality assurance framework.
2. Correct regional imbalances in access to higher education through high quality institutions in rural and semi-urban areas as well as creating opportunities for students from rural areas to get access to better quality institutions.

3. Setting up of higher education institutions in un-served and underserved areas.

4. Improve equity in higher education by providing adequate opportunities to socially deprived communities; promote inclusion of women, minorities, SC/ST and OBCs as well as differently-abled persons.

5. Ensure adequate availability of quality faculty in all higher educational institutions and ensure capacity building at all levels.

6. Create an enabling atmosphere in higher educational institutions to devote themselves to research and innovation.

7. Integrate skill development efforts of the government with the conventional higher education system through optimum

6. PRINCIPLES OF RUSA

There are 3064 state universities and about 8500 colleges that can be covered under RUSA. The funding will be provided in the (Center:State) ratio of 90:10 for Special Category States i.e North-Eastern States, Sikkim, J&K, Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand and 65:35 for Other States and UTs. Private aided colleges will be entitled to some component but the funding ratio would be 50:50. Funding to such colleges would be decided based on their antiquity and relevance. Funding will be available to even private-aided institutions, for permitted activities based on certain norms and parameters, in a ratio of 50:50.

Under RUSA, socio-demographic variables like rural/urban distribution; proportion of SC/ST and vulnerable groups; districts with adverse education indicators; difficult, most difficult and inaccessible areas, left wing affected districts etc. would be considered while allocating resources to the districts.

In addition RUSA is structured on certain inviolable guiding principles. These tenets constitute the foundational premise and all the decisions taken under the scheme must be guided by them. It is necessary to list these principles clearly at the outset so as to ensure that this scheme does not degenerate into some kind of infrastructure support scheme. The states are expected to keep these principles as guiding posts while formulating their State Higher Education Plans and developing their strategies.

i. Performance based outlays and outcome based reimbursements
   ii. Incentivizing and disincentivizing
   iii. Apolitical decision-making
   iv. Disclosure based governance
   v. Autonomy to institutions & state
vi. Equity based development
vii. Quality and research focus

7. PREREQUISITES FOR RUSA

A cornerstone of RUSA will be the stipulation of a set of a priori prerequisites, or commitments that must be made by the state government as well as institutions in order to be eligible for receiving grants under RUSA. This is an essential element of strategic central funding. A cornerstone of RUSA will be the stipulation of a set of commitments that must be made by the state government as well as institutions in order to be eligible for receiving grants under RUSA. This is an essential element of strategic central funding.

8. PREREQUISITE FOR THE STATES
1. State Higher Education Council
2. State Perspective Plan
3. State contribution to higher education as a % of GSDP
4. State commitment to adhere to timelines for fund release
5. Agreement to create separate fund for RUSA
6. Filling faculty vacancies
7. Accreditation reforms
8. Affiliation and examination reforms
9. Governance and administrative reforms at State Level
10. Institutional governance (administrative) reforms

9. PREREQUISITES FOR THE INSTITUTIONS
1. Application of governance (administrative) reforms at Institute level
2. Academic reforms and facilitating inter-disciplinary learning
3. Examination reforms
4. Affiliation reforms
5. Separate project management teams
6. Perspective planning
7. Equity commitment (especially in aided sector)
8. Commitments on research and innovation efforts
9. Mandatory faculty recruitment and improvement
10. Establishment of Management Information System
11. Regulatory compliance

10. HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM: RUSA PROVISIONS FOR ACADEMICS
- Consolidating and developing through capacity addition, usage of ICT and distance learning

A STUDY OF THE VARIOUS PROVISIONS AND CHALLENGES FOR RUSA
10. MAJOR CHALLENGES FOR RUSA

- Model Colleges in each district and integration of various equity schemes currently in place
- States ensure faculty positions are filled in a phased manner
- Proactive steps for faculty recruitment and development
- Credit Based Credit System across HEIs
- Reform in admission process, curriculum development and examination process
- Provision of research and innovation grants/funds
- Support for state endeavors to create Research Universities

11. HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM: RUSA PROVISIONS FOR GOVERNANCE

- Reforms at state level and institutional level including ‘Accountability Frame-work for universities
- Provision for greater academic, financial and administrative autonomy for universities
- Limit on colleges affiliated to a university and creation of College Cluster Universities
- Funding to non 12B and 2(f) institutions as well
- Funding through State Councils
- Norm and performance based
- Infrastructure upgradation of existing institutions with focus on quality and equity

12. HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM: RUSA PROVISIONS FOR QUALITY IMPROVEMENT

- Three-tier institutional structure to monitor progress and implementation of reforms
- All institutions to be linked to a web-based Management Information System (MIS)
- Creation of state level accreditation agencies
- Requirement of mandatory accreditation for HEIs
- Establishment of appropriate regulatory framework to set quality standards
- Creation of enabling conditions to attract investments - aim to mobilize 50% of the state contribution through private participation

13. MAJOR CHALLENGES FOR RUSA

Most important task for RUSA is improvement in access, equity and quality across India. In other words, homogeneous improvement in all the three areas i.e. access, equity and quality across India would be a key challenge for RUSA.
Parts of India which is in the nascent stages of higher education may only be able to work on access and equity, while quality improvement may take some more time to be visible. Reaching out to rural India and socially and educationally backward class maybe also be another challenge.

According to the structure of the scheme coordination between RUSA Mission Authority and State Higher Education Council (SHEC) is proposed, which may also be a difficult task. A Management Information System (MIS) is proposed for all co-ordination between National, State and Institutional level. During the initial years, it would be a challenge to train and align each individual to comply and feed information into MIS system.

14. CONCLUSION

RUSA introduces a significant strategic shift in the approach towards developing the higher education system, by focusing on state level institutions which have been neglected over the years in relation to centrally funded institutions. It seeks to introduce measures such as performance and norm based funding as well as governance and academic reforms at the institutional and state levels to address some of the challenges in higher education in India. If implemented swiftly and efficiently, RUSA can be a turning point for the Indian higher education system as it seeks to achieve higher enrol-ment rates and address access, equity and quality related concerns.

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