



Rashtriya Uchhtar Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA) and its significance and challenges on inclusive growth of higher Education

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Abstract

RUSA will have a completely new approach towards funding higher education in state universities and colleges. It is based on key principles of performance-based funding, incentivising well performing institutions and decision making through clearly defined norms, which will establish and rely upon a management information system to gather the essential information from institutions. RUSA will aim to provide greater autonomy to universities as well as colleges and have a sharper focus on equity-based development and improvement in teaching-learning quality and research. It will be a new flagship scheme of the Government of India after successful implementations of SSA and RMSA in the primary and secondary levels of education respectively for overall development of the education system in India to compete with fast global changes. 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 Uchchar 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.

Keywords: RUSA, challenges, inclusive

Introduction

Rashtriya Uchchar Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA) is a centrally sponsored scheme proposed by the Ministry of Human Resources Development/ UGC to ensure holistic planning at the state level and enhancement of allocations for the state institutions, which will spread over the two plan periods (XIIth and XIIIth) and it will focus on state higher educational institutions.

There are 316 states public universities and 13,024 colleges that can be covered under RUSA. The funding will be provided in the (Centre: State) ratio of 90:10 for North-East States.

The draft proposal of RUSA was approved by the Hon'ble Human Resource Development Minister and the same copy has been placed on the Ministry's website www.mhrd.gov.in for discussion with various stakeholders. HRD Ministry in consultation with Tata Institute of Social Sciences prepared the current draft of RUSA which has been published in January 2013 for circulation. Higher education needs to be viewed as a long-term social investment for the promotion of economic growth, cultural development, social cohesion, equity and justice. The globalisation era has necessitated inculcation of competitive spirit at all levels. This can be achieved only by bringing quality of higher standards to every sphere of work. Therefore, the quality of higher education has become a major concern today.

On an average, about 94% of the students enrolled in state funded or state controlled private institutions come under the

state higher education system in India. In Manipur, there are altogether 71 colleges which include 28 Government colleges, 12 aided colleges and 31 private colleges. Enrolment of students in colleges during the last session were 22,968 students in Government colleges, 12,115 in aided colleges and 6,525 students in private colleges. It shows that 55.2% of the total enrolment was in Government colleges and more than 84% of students were enrolled in state funded Government and aided colleges. So, any efforts for development in this sector must recognise the importance of state higher education system.

An important element in ensuring quality and excellence in Higher Education is the need for adequate number of good faculty in Institutions of Higher Education. The number of existing teachers in government colleges is 1,019 and the number of sanction posts is 1,303. Thus, about 21.8% of the current faculty requirement remains vacant. However so, a shortfall of 248 teachers has not been appointed in Manipur due to financial constraints in addition to the current vacant posts of 284 teachers. In other words, a total of 532 posts of teachers are not filled up now. This can be treated as an insult to the higher education system in Manipur. Moreover, underpaid teachers under the nomenclature of Part Time Lecturers have been utilised in the Government colleges to make up the huge shortfall in the number of teaching faculty in the colleges since the last 15-24 years. This is a clear evidence of compromising our higher education system with poverty of the state.

Faculty shortage creates serious hurdles in the proper functioning of a college or University. All activities from the basic functions of teaching and research to curriculum development are compromised. The Supreme Court in its landmark judgment in T.M.A. Pai matter, had severely castigated institutions which do not employ full time qualified faculty.

RUSA gives emphasis to ensure adequate availability of quality faculty in all higher educational institutions and ensure capacity building at all levels of employment. It is one of the various goals of RUSA. "Faculty Planning" is one of its strategic focus of RUSA and recruitment and capacity building of faculty is one of the its 15 primary components.

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:

- 1) Only a small fraction of population between the age group of 18-23 is enrolled in higher education institutions as the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) is only 18.8%.
- 2) Wide disparities between various social groups like SCs, STs, and OBCs. Falling below average GER.
- 3) There is also gender inequality, GER for males is 20.9% while that for females is only 16.5%.
- 4) There is also difference in quality of institutions and enrolment between rural and urban areas and between developed states and not so developed ones.
- 5) Issues in universities arising from affiliation resulting in administrative burden on universities.
- 6) Governance issues in universities such as lack of appropriate structures and limited autonomy. vii. Financial constraints in higher education, particularly for state level institutions.
- 7) Lack of clear regulatory framework for private sector participation in higher education
- 8) Significant levels of faculty vacancies in institutes and inadequate research opportunities.
- 9) Varying quality of education provided in institutes with inadequate focus on research in higher education and low employability and skills of graduates.
- 10) 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.

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

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.

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 developments efforts of the government with the conventional higher education system through optimum

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.

- 1) Performance based outlays and outcome based reimbursements
- 2) Incentivizing and dis incentivizing
- 3) Apolitical decision-making
- 4) Disclosure based governance
- 5) Autonomy to institutions & state
- 6) Equity based development
- 7) Quality and research focus

Higher education system: RUSA provisions for academics

- 1) Consolidating and developing through capacity addition, usage of ICT and distance learning.
- 2) Model Colleges in each district and integration of various equity schemes currently in place.
- 3) States ensure faculty positions are filled in a phased manner
- 4) Proactive steps for faculty recruitment and development
- 5) Credit Based Credit System across HEIs
- 6) Reform in admission process, curriculum development and examination process
- 7) Provision of research and innovation grants/funds
- 8) Support for state endeavors to create Research Universities

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 up gradation of existing institutions with focus on quality and ♦ equity

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.

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 co-ordination 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.

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 enrolment rates and address access, equity and quality related concerns.

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