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# COLLEGE POST

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**Whispers of self-discovery- A Tribute to Womanhood**
**Ceramic and metal wire creation: 180cm x 90 cm**
**by Ela Mukherjee**

*See about cover on page 30*

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CHEST

# Online Courses on Ethics, Values & Life Skills

## Course -1

Introduction to Ethics – 2 Credits

**Module -1: DEFINITION AND MAJOR THEORIES**

**Unit 1:** The definition
**Unit 2:**Major Theories of Ethics and Brief description of theories
**Unit 3:** Ethical Framework and Approaches
**Unit 4:**Key Distinction between Ethics, Morals, and Values

**Module - 2: SCOPE OF ETHICS AND ETHICS IN DIFFERENT DISCIPLINESAND PROFESSIONAL ETHICS**

**Unit 1:** Scope**Unit 2:** Scope of Ethics in Different Disciplines
**Unit 3:** Professional Ethics**Unit 4:** Challenges of Application

**Module – 3: ETHICSIN MODERN TIMES**

**Unit 1:** Ethics in Modern Times**Unit 2:** Future Challenges

## Course - 2

Introduction To Values – 2 Credits

**Module - 1: VALUE ORIENTATION**

**Unit 1:** The Definition **Unit 2:** Norms and Values**Unit 3:** Perennial Values

**Module - 2: VALUES IN MODERN SOCIETY**

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**Unit 3:**The Revivalist or the Orthodox Model**Unit 4:**The Radical or the Revolutionary Model

**Module - 3: TYPES OF CONTEMPORARY SOCIETIES**

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**Unit 4:**Post-Modern Societies**Unit 5:** Indian Unity and Diversity Value
**Unit 6:** UGC Guidelines Value Pravesh 2.0 **Unit 7:**Changing Societies under the Tech. Revo.

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## EDITORIAL

### IMPLEMENTATION OF NEP-2020 - WHERE DO WE STAND ON THE KEY POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS?

It has been five years since the announcement of the National Education Policy (NEP), 2020. The policy was widely celebrated for its forward-looking and "out-of-the-box" recommendations aimed at transforming Indian higher education. Among the most ambitious was the consolidation of more than 42,000 higher education institutions into about 10,000 by 2030. Central to this vision was granting autonomy to colleges, converting them into multidisciplinary institutions, and creating a three-tier university system:

1. Research and Teaching Universities
2. Teaching and Research Universities
3. Degree-granting autonomous colleges

The third category-autonomous degree-granting colleges-was particularly innovative and path-breaking.

**The Origins of College Autonomy in India**

The idea of autonomy for colleges is not new. It was first experimented with in the early 1980s under Professor Malcolm Adiseshiah, then Vice-Chancellor of the University of Madras. Fourteen colleges affiliated to the University of Madras were granted autonomy, enabling them to design curricula, conduct examinations, and evaluate students-while the university retained the role of awarding degrees. This shift liberated colleges from the colonial-era affiliated model where universities exercised complete control over curriculum, assessment, and certification. Importantly, the government continued to fund these institutions, ensuring that autonomy did not mean self-financing.

The potential of this reform was immense. By freeing institutions from rigid centralized control, it created scope for innovation and responsiveness to changing social, economic, and technological needs. Recognizing its significance, the University Grants Commission (UGC), under the leadership of Professor Yash Pal, initiated a nationwide study through the National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration (NIEPA). The study, involving 21 college principals across India, strongly recommended granting autonomy to colleges. These recommendations informed the National Policy on Education, 1986, and subsequently, the UGC framed guidelines and provided incentives for colleges seeking autonomy.

However, the reform encountered resistance. Universities feared a loss of power, government directorates worried about losing administrative control, and many teachers perceived it as a step towards privatization. Faculty also felt burdened by the additional responsibilities of curriculum design, semester-based teaching, and evaluation. Students, meanwhile, were apprehensive about comparability of results with university rankings. Despite UGC's persuasion and even state-level advocacy, progress was slow. Rajasthan, for instance, granted autonomy to five government colleges, which performed exceptionally well-only for their autonomy to be revoked by the next government.

**Progress and Continuing Challenges**

Four decades later, these challenges persist. Out of the vast number of colleges in India, only about 1,658 enjoy autonomous status today, with the majority concentrated in southern and western states. A significant proportion of them are self-financing institutions, raising concerns about equity. Although UGC guidelines now allow colleges to directly apply for autonomy, in some cases universities have been reluctant to recognize or notify such status, thereby stalling progress.

The NEP's recommendation to grant autonomy and empower well-performing colleges as degree-granting institutions remains one of its most innovative features. Yet, it has not received the necessary legislative and executive push from either the Ministry of Education or state governments. Part of the delay lies in the need to amend the UGC Act, 1956, and secure parliamentary approval-steps that are politically and administratively complex.

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**Editor**
G.D. Sharma
**Co-editor**
Baldev Mahajan

Under the revamped structure of Indian Colleges Forum first meeting Executive Committee of respective state chapters has been held for 17 Sate Chapters to congratulate and institute their Executive Committee. During the meeting several issues were raised by members of EC of respective states. During the meeting following were briefly discussed.

1. Implementation of four year degree programme in particular option to third year pass out students opting for fourth year and corresponding requirement of Faculty, Infrastructure and curriculum details and it implementation and evaluation of students.
2. Provisions and process of internship and values and life skills and evaluation of these programmes
3. Autonomy to colleges by UGC but resistance of affiliating university to grant of autonomy to colleges.
4. Need for detailed scheme of implementation of Policy along with requisite funding and time frame. Also suggestion for mission mode approach to implement various aspects of Policy.
5. Orientation and capacity development of faculty members in colleges and Universities.

EC of ICF of Kerala Chapter also conducted a one day online discussion meeting about implementation of fourth year in Colleges. The programme was inaugurated by Professor G. D. Sharma, former Secretary, UGC and President, SEED-ICF. Principals of colleges shared their experience and challenges of implementation of fourth year programme.

First meeting of National EC of ICF was also held. Where Secretaries of EC of ICF of respective states participated. The following were key resolutions of the meeting:

## REPORT ON AGENDA DISCUSSIONS AND RESOLUTIONS

1. Election/Nomination of State ECs to the National EC of ICF
   - " Discussion: Options considered - (i) Nomination based on seniority, (ii) Election ensuring regional representation. Most members favoured nominations based on seniority while ensuring regional diversity. The proposal for a Secretary General from among State EC Secretaries was also discussed.
   - " Resolutions:
     - o Secretaries of State ECs will be nominated to the National EC based on seniority and willingness, keeping regional balance in mind.
     - o The President SEED-ICF will nominate the Secretary General of ICF.
2. Proposal for Holding the National Annual Conference of ICF
   - " Discussion: Members agreed to resume the Annual Conference after the COVID gap. Delhi was proposed and accepted as the venue for the 26th Conference in December 2025.
   - " Resolution: The 26th Annual National Conference of ICF will be held in Delhi in December 2025, with the final theme and dates to be announced in advance.
3. Plans for Conducting State-Level ICF Meetings
   - " Discussion: State ECs to organize local meetings/mini-conferences addressing regional concerns, especially related to NEP 2020.
   - " Resolution: State EC Secretaries will plan and conduct state-level meetings before the national conference.
4. Financial Matters: Subscriptions, Fees, and Fund Sharing
   - " Discussion: Dues from 2020-2024 waived; only pre-2020 and 2025 dues applicable. 50% of collections and new membership fees to be shared with State ECs. Challenges in collection acknowledged.
   - " Resolutions:
     - o State EC Secretaries and members will engage with colleges to realize pending dues.
     - o All members will pay the 2025 subscription.
5. Membership Expansion in States
   - " Discussion: Need to strengthen State ECs by enrolling new colleges.
   - " Resolution: Each State EC will enrol at least five new colleges in 2025.
6. National-Level Issues to be Taken Up with Apex Bodies
   - " Discussion: Focus areas - NEP 2020 implementation, four-year degree programs, credit systems, and student internships. Members shared experiences and concerns on credit recognition, with a suggestion for tripartite MoUs among colleges, universities, and SEED-CHEST.
   - " Resolutions:
     - o State ECs will identify and recommend policy issues to the ICF National Office for submission to apex bodies.
     - o State ECs will share best practices and innovations for mutual learning.

## CONCLUSION

The meeting ended with a vote of thanks to members for their participation and to the Chair for convening the inaugural meeting of ECs of ICF State Chapters.

# BALANCING IDEOLOGY AND PROGRESSIVISM: RETHINKING MANAGEMENT IN INDIAN HIGHER EDUCATION

PROF. KARANAM PUSHPANADHAM & DR. POLAKSHI BHATTACHARYYA BARUAH *

*Ideological orientations often shape the organization and governance of education systems. This paper explores the influence of different ideologies on higher education governance and argues for a **balanced approach** that promotes both efficiency and inclusivity in institutional management.*

## INTRODUCTION

Management in higher education has increasingly become a political and value-laden arena, shaped by the interplay of global trends, national policies, and institutional priorities (Deem & Brehony, 2005). Universities today operate in contexts defined by globalization, where international mobility, the knowledge economy, and global rankings strongly influence institutional strategies (Bertolin, 2016). Simultaneously, the forces of marketization have redefined higher education, positioning students as consumers, research as an economic commodity, and universities as competitive enterprises (Sarker, 2015; Sahoo, 2023). Accountability pressures-evident in performance audits, accreditation regimes, and outcome-based funding-add further complexity, while increasing diversity among students and faculty demands inclusive and equitable governance frameworks (Biswas, 2024; Suresh, 2023).

Within this dynamic environment, contrasting ideologies shape how higher education management is understood and practiced. Ideological orientations represent foundational belief systems that guide institutional policy and governance (Ideologies shaping university competition, 2024). Neoliberal and managerialist perspectives prioritize efficiency, competition, and measurable outcomes, often resulting in hierarchical governance and market-oriented reforms (Deem &Brehony, 2005; Chattopadhyay& Sharma, 2019). Conversely, traditions that treat higher education as a public good stress the role of universities in advancing democratic citizenship, fostering critical scholarship, and ensuring equitable access (Mandell& Jelly, 2020). From a social justice standpoint, governance must address structural inequalities and guarantee inclusion in academic leadership and institutional practices (Tiwari, 2022; Bijukumar, 2022).

Progressive perspectives advance this debate by foregrounding equity, inclusion, participative governance, and democratic engagement (Lall & Anand, 2022). Rejecting the corporate model of leadership, these approaches promote shared decision-making, transparency, and recognition of diverse voices across the academic community (Three perspectives on leadership in higher education, 2024). The goal is to reconcile institutional efficiency with ethical commitments, ensuring that universities remain accountable to broader social missions of human development, cultural cohesion, and sustainability (Mathur, 2022).

*The tension between ideological and progressive approaches is particularly pronounced in the contemporary era of globalization, massification, and technological disruption.*

In India, these competing perspectives make higher education a contested domain. On one side, neoliberal and managerialist frameworks increasingly drive universities toward market-oriented practices emphasizing efficiency, accountability, and competitiveness (Sahoo, 2023; Sarker, 2015). On the other, progressive views envision universities as public goods that promote social justice, democratic participation, and holistic student development (Biswas, 2024; Suresh, 2023). These divergent logics profoundly shape institutional policies, governance structures, leadership styles, and academic culture.

The tension between ideological and progressive approaches is particularly pronounced in the contemporary era of globalization, massification, and technological disruption. Market-driven reforms-such as privatization schemes, performance-based funding, and ranking competitions-have transformed how universities are financed and assessed (Bertolin, 2016; Chattopadhyay & Sharma, 2019). At the same time, demands for inclusion, academic freedom, and participatory governance continue to resist narrow, efficiency-oriented logics (Mandell & Jelly, 2020). In India, this conflict is especially visible: while private universities and ranking pressures embody neoliberal tendencies, public-good traditions persist in institutions like Jawaharlal

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Nehru University (JNU), Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS), and Ambedkar University, which continue to champion inclusive and transformative higher education (Lall & Anand, 2022; Mathur, 2022).

This essay therefore explores ideological and progressive perspectives in higher education management. It examines the tensions between efficiency and equity, centralization and collegiality, and competition and collaboration. By analyzing these contrasting yet interrelated frameworks, the discussion highlights how universities can navigate competing pressures while safeguarding their academic and social missions. Ultimately, it argues that institutions must embrace "creative tensions" to remain both globally competitive and socially transformative.

## IDEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION MANAGEMENT

One dominant ideological framework in recent decades has been neoliberalism, which emphasizes efficiency, competition, measurable outcomes, accountability, and privatization. This ideology, borrowed from corporate and economic models, treats universities less as communities of scholars and more as competitive enterprises in the global knowledge economy. Within this framework, managerialism-especially in the form of New Public Management (NPM)-has exerted a powerful influence, reshaping governance, leadership, and everyday practices in higher education.

Universities are increasingly run like businesses, adopting performance metrics, audit regimes, and consumer-oriented models of education. For example, in the United Kingdom, the Research Excellence Framework (REF) requires universities to demonstrate the impact of their research through measurable outputs, leading to a culture where academic work is often evaluated by citation counts and journal rankings rather than intrinsic intellectual contribution. Similarly, in Australia, the introduction of performance-based funding ties institutional budgets to graduate employability outcomes, student satisfaction surveys, and industry partnerships, aligning university activities with market-driven priorities.

The student-as-consumer model illustrates another neoliberal shift. In the United States, rising tuition fees and student debt have pressured universities to "brand" themselves strategically to attract enrolments. Institutions invest heavily in marketing, amenities, and student experience packages, framing education as a private investment for future career success rather than a collective public good. This consumerist orientation alters teaching and learning relationships, where students are positioned as clients purchasing a service, and faculty are expected to deliver measurable "value" in return.

Governance structures have also been transformed under neoliberal managerialism. Decision-making has become more centralized, often shifting power from academic senates to executive management teams. For instance, in many European universities, the authority of rectors, vice-chancellors, and boards of trustees has expanded at the expense of collegial, faculty-led governance. Hiring, promotions, and budget allocations are increasingly tied to quantifiable performance indicators-such as research grants won, publications in high-impact journals, and student evaluations-rather than broader academic contributions.

Even curriculum design is shaped by market logics. Universities worldwide have introduced industry-aligned programs in fields like data science, business analytics, and biotechnology to attract students and secure funding, sometimes at the cost of reducing investment in humanities and critical social sciences. This reflects a utilitarian prioritization of disciplines that promise immediate economic returns over those that cultivate critical citizenship or cultural understanding.

In essence, neoliberalism and managerialism reconfigure universities into competitive, hierarchical, and market-oriented organizations. While these approaches may promote efficiency, accountability, and global competitiveness, they also raise concerns about eroding academic freedom, narrowing educational purposes, and undermining the collegial ethos that historically defined universities.

## CONCEPTION OF HIGHER EDUCATION: PUBLIC GOOD VS. COMMERCIAL SERVICE

Another important ideological dimension concerns the very purpose of higher education: Is it a public good-an institution that serves society, fosters democratic citizenship, advances humanistic scholarship, and reduces inequality-or is it primarily a commercial service, valued for its contribution to economic output, employability of graduates, revenue generation, and global competitiveness?

In India, this debate has become sharper in recent decades. On one hand, the country has a long tradition of viewing higher education as a public good. Institutions such as the Banaras Hindu University (BHU) and Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) were historically envisioned as spaces for nurturing critical thinking, social responsibility, and national development. JNU, for instance, has emphasized inclusivity and critical scholarship, offering subsidized education to students from marginalized backgrounds and encouraging debate on social justice, democracy, and equity. Similarly, public institutions like the Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs) and Indian Institutes of Management (IIMs) were created with state funding as part of a nation-building agenda, producing human capital for scientific, technological, and administrative advancement. These reflect a vision of higher education that prioritizes collective national and social benefit.

On the other hand, neoliberal reforms since the 1990s

have encouraged a commercialized orientation in higher education. The rise of large-scale private universities and colleges-such as Amity University, Lovely Professional University (LPU), and Shiv Nadar University-illustrates this trend. These institutions often adopt corporate-style governance, invest in world-class infrastructure, and market themselves as providers of employability and global opportunities. Their appeal lies in offering professional programs (engineering, management, law, design) that promise high returns on investment. For many students, education is seen less as a civic or intellectual pursuit and more as a pathway to lucrative careers and upward mobility.

Government policy has also reflected this tension. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 envisions higher education as a driver of innovation, entrepreneurship, and global competitiveness, aligning with the commercial service model. At the same time, it emphasizes equity, inclusion, and holistic education, echoing the public good tradition. However, implementation challenges arise: while premier institutions may pursue cutting-edge research and internationalization, many state universities and rural colleges struggle with underfunding, threatening the ideal of higher education as a socially inclusive public service.

The privatization of higher education has also widened inequalities. According to All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) data, a significant proportion of higher education enrollment is now in private institutions, which charge high fees, thereby limiting access for students from disadvantaged backgrounds. Reservation policies in public universities help counterbalance these inequalities, but with the growing weight of private providers, the principle of education as a right is increasingly undermined by affordability barriers.

Thus, in India, those aligned with neoliberal or conservative views often emphasize efficiency, market competition, and employability. Private universities, skill development initiatives, and industry partnerships represent this outlook. Conversely, those with progressive or left-leaning orientations argue for higher education as a public good-insisting on affordable access, social justice, cultural enrichment, and knowledge for its own sake. Movements to protect subsidized education at JNU, debates over fee hikes in central universities, and student activism for social inclusion all exemplify this progressive stance.

Ultimately, India's higher education sector embodies this ideological duality: the public good tradition rooted in nation-building and equity coexists, and often conflicts, with the market-oriented logic of privatization and commodification. The way this tension is navigated will shape not only the future of universities but also the broader democratic and developmental trajectory of the country.

## PROGRESSIVE VIEWS IN INDIAN HIGHER EDUCATION

Higher education in India has long been envisioned not only as a means of producing skilled professionals but also as a transformative force for social equity, democratic participation, and national development. Rooted in constitutional values and the legacies of leaders such as Mahatma Gandhi, Rabindranath Tagore, and B.R. Ambedkar, the progressive vision of higher education emphasizes social justice, inclusivity, community engagement, and critical inquiry. Institutions shaped by progressive ideals often challenge the commodification of knowledge and resist reducing education to a tool of the market. Yet, they operate within a policy and social environment that increasingly privileges efficiency, accountability, and competition. This essay examines progressive views in Indian higher education, explores their critiques, and analyzes the tensions they face in practice.The following are the progressive views in Indian Higher education.

### 1. Education as a Public Good

Progressive thinkers argue that higher education should be regarded as a public good that benefits society as a whole, not merely as a private investment. This perspective emphasizes higher education's role in building democratic citizenship, fostering critical awareness, and addressing structural inequalities. Public institutions such as Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) and Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS) embody this commitment by linking academic learning with social engagement and by promoting policies of reservation, gender equity, and inclusivity.

### 2. Social Justice and Equity

Social justice lies at the heart of progressive higher education. Affirmative action through reservations for Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Other Backward Classes, and Economically Weaker Sections reflects the constitutional mandate to redress historical disadvantages. Progressive institutions emphasize diversity in classrooms, enabling students from marginalized communities to access resources and opportunities. For example, Ambedkar University Delhi explicitly positions equity and inclusion as part of its institutional mission.

### 3. Democratic Leadership and Collegial Governance

Progressive views stress participatory governance, where decision-making is shared among faculty, students, and staff. Student unions in universities like JNU have historically played a significant role in shaping debates on equity, freedom of expression, and national policy. Such participatory spaces stand in contrast to hierarchical, managerial approaches that centralize power in university administrations.

**4. Community Engagement and Holistic Learning**
Progressive institutions emphasize student-centered and experiential pedagogy, where education extends beyond classrooms into communities. TISS's fieldwork-based curriculum, which immerses students in real-world social issues, illustrates this model. Similarly, AzimPremji University integrates interdisciplinary learning with social sector engagement, preparing graduates to work in education, sustainability, and development.

**DESPITE THEIR VISION, PROGRESSIVE INSTITUTIONS FACE SIGNIFICANT CHALLENGES AND CRITIQUES:**

- Progressive universities often struggle with funding shortages, bureaucratic controls, and increasing competition from private institutions. Reduced public investment in higher education has made many socially engaged institutions vulnerable to resource constraints, threatening their capacity to sustain inclusive programs. In a globalized environment, universities are judged by rankings, employability outcomes, and research metrics. These criteria often disadvantage disciplines and approaches rooted in critical pedagogy, community engagement, or social sciences. For example, performance metrics may reward patents and publications over teaching quality or community service, undermining the progressive mission.
- Progressive institutions have often faced political resistance due to their critical stance on state policies and their promotion of academic freedom. Protests at JNU or the scrutiny of critical scholarship at TISS highlight how progressive spaces can be delegitimized as "anti-national" or "elitist." Such pressures can stifle democratic debate and weaken the legitimacy of progressive models. Mandell and Jelly (2020) describe the "creative tensions" progressive institutions face: balancing inclusivity with efficiency, innovation with sustainability, and mission with accountability. In India, these tensions are visible when inclusive admission policies meet the demand for high-quality infrastructure and teaching, creating strain on already limited resources.

Sustaining Progressive Institutions in Indian Higher Education: Navigating Pressures While Preserving Mission

Progressive institutions of higher education in India play a vital role in advancing social justice, inclusivity, and democratic citizenship. Unlike market-driven universities that prioritize rankings, employability, and commercialization, progressive institutions emphasize critical inquiry, community engagement, equity, and academic freedom. Yet, in the face of globalization, privatization, accountability pressures, and political interventions, these institutions face growing challenges to their survival and relevance. To sustain their transformative mission, progressive universities must learn to creatively engage with external demands while safeguarding their foundational values.

A cornerstone of progressive higher education is the recognition of education as a public good rather than a market commodity. However, declining public funding has left many Indian universities struggling to provide inclusive opportunities. Progressive institutions often cater to marginalized communities-students from Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Other Backward Classes, and economically weaker sections-who rely heavily on subsidized education. Expanding public investment is therefore essential to ensure equitable access, reduce dependence on privatized models, and maintain the diversity that enriches higher learning.

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 aims to increase the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) to 50% by 2035, but this target cannot be met without robust state funding, especially for rural and socially disadvantaged students. Sustained investment in scholarships, infrastructure, and support services would allow progressive institutions such as Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) and Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS) to continue their mission of widening access.

Contemporary quality assurance systems-such as NAAC accreditation or the National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF)-often rely heavily on quantifiable indicators like research publications, placements, and patents. While these measures provide important benchmarks, they risk undervaluing teaching innovation, community engagement, and social impact. For progressive universities, whose missions extend to addressing inequality, fostering critical debate, and serving local communities, such narrow definitions of quality are limiting.

Redefining quality metrics to include civic engagement, interdisciplinary pedagogy, inclusivity, and outreach programs would provide a more holistic assessment of institutional effectiveness. For instance, TISS's fieldwork-based learning or Ambedkar University Delhi's emphasis on equity-focused research should be recognized as central contributions, not peripheral activities.Progressive higher education relies on an atmosphere of academic freedom, open debate, and democratic governance. Yet, in recent years, institutions in India have faced growing political pressures, often stigmatizing critical scholarship as "anti-national" or curbing student activism. Such tendencies undermine the ability of universities to act as spaces of dissent, dialogue, and democratic learning.

Safeguarding these freedoms requires both institutional autonomy and participatory governance. Universities must resist excessive centralization of authority in vice-chancellors or governing boards and

instead promote collegial decision-making that values faculty, student, and staff voices. Strengthening faculty senates, encouraging student unions, and maintaining transparent governance processes would align with the progressive ethos.

The realities of contemporary higher education-financial accountability, global competition, and technological change-require efficiency and strategic management. At the same time, progressive institutions cannot afford to abandon their participatory traditions. The solution lies in hybrid leadership models that combine managerial efficiency with democratic engagement. While leaders must oversee budgets, partnerships, and compliance with regulatory bodies, they should also cultivate inclusive practices such as consultative decision-making, transparent communication, and shared vision-building. Hybrid leadership ensures that progressive institutions remain responsive to external demands without compromising their commitment to equity and academic freedom.

## CONCLUSION

Progressive institutions in Indian higher education stand at a crossroads. Their missions of inclusivity, social justice, and democratic citizenship are more vital than ever, but they face immense pressures from marketization, accountability regimes, and political interference. Sustaining their relevance requires creative engagement with external demands while safeguarding their core values. By expanding public investment, redefining quality metrics, safeguarding academic freedom, and developing hybrid leadership models, progressive universities can remain resilient. Ultimately, their ability to navigate these "creative tensions" will determine whether higher education in India continues to function as a space of democratic transformation and social equity or succumbs to narrow market logic.

Progressive views in Indian higher education emphasize inclusivity, social justice, democratic governance, and community engagement. They stand as counterpoints to market-driven and managerial ideologies that increasingly dominate policy and institutional practice. However, progressive institutions face structural and political challenges that test their sustainability and legitimacy. The future of Indian higher education depends on striking a balance between efficiency and equity, accountability and autonomy, global competitiveness and local social responsibility. By navigating these tensions, progressive higher education can continue to act as a catalyst for democracy, critical inquiry, and social transformation in India.

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# ANUSANDHAN NATIONAL RESEARCH FOUNDATION: STRATEGIZING SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH FOR NATION BUILDING

SAUMEN CHATTOPADHYAY AND SATENDRA KUMAR *

*The paper examines how the establishment of the **Anusandhan National Research Foundation (NRF)** as part of higher education reforms has contributed to strengthening research in both the sciences and social sciences. It also offers recommendations on measures needed to further enhance research and development (R&D) within higher education institutions.*

The National Education Policy 2020 (NEP) rightly noted that India does not spend enough on Research and Development. India allocated 0.64 percent of GDP for Research and Development (R and D)in 2020-21which should be considered to be on the lower side compared to the allocations made by some of the developed countries in the West and a few Asian countries. Further, given India's huge size of the higher education sector, in fact, the second largest in the world, India can leverage R and D not only to spur growth but also to improve quality of growth which is both sustainable and equitable. Though India ranks fourth in the world in terms of papers published, no Indian university as yet has been able to feature in the top 100 in the world ranking. The specialized research institutions which are funded by the Ministries other than the Ministry of Education are also engaged in doing dedicated research. The Ministry of Science and Technology, the Department of Bio-Technology (DBT),Space Research and the Ministry of Defense fundnotable research institutions. The Department of Science andTechnology (DST) funds more than half of total extramural funding going to Indian HEIs for research projects, followed by Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) and DBT(DST, 2020). As per the Research and Development Statistics 2022-23, the shares of funding in gross expenditure on R and D (GERD) (in percentages) of the Central government, private sectorindustry, state sector, public sector industry, and higher education sector were 43.7, 36.4, 6.7, 4.4, 8.8 respectively for 2021-22.What is a matter of concern is the inadequacy in funding research compared to in the context of increased allocation for research by China (2.43% of GDP), South Korea (4.91%) and the Western World in 2021(UNESCO UIS).

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## THE NEP'S VISION

The rationale behind setting up of the Anusandhan National Research Foundation (ANRF) needs to be understood in the context of the vision of higher education as articulated in the NEP. The pathway as envisioned by the NEP 2020 marks an attempt to reorient Indian higher education to serve the economy, and expectedly, the society in a more explicit and direct manner. It has been felt that the Indian universities had remained under-utilized in terms of their contributions to R and D and therefore to economic growth and development. The idea is to strengthen and widen the scope of interface between the industry and the Indian higher education institutions (HEIs). With the proposed restructuring of the UG and PG curriculum and institutionalizing of the Academic Bank of Credit (ABC) as proposed in the NEP, the graduates are now expected to be suitably employable in the sense of responding to the changing demand for skill driven by an increased application of digital in particular in the industry. The second aspect of this interface is to ensure knowledge production in tune with the national needs as to be determined by the state and the industry. This is where thesetting up of the ANRF assumes importance. The NEP has suggested three categories of HEIs. These are Research-Intensive University, Teaching-Intensive University and Autonomous Degree Granting Colleges. The focus on internationalization in the NEP and in the ANRF indicates an attempt to position India's knowledge producing sector at the global level through collaboration with foreign universities in a highly competitive world of science.Yet, the final Science, Technology and Innovation Policy (STIP Draft 2020) report is still awaited, which would, expectedly, further layout the roadmap of India's STI system.

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## THE ANUSANDHAN NATIONAL RESEARCH FOUNDATION (ANRF)

The ANRF was established by an Act of Parliament (ANRF Act, 2023) subsuming the erstwhile SERB (the Science and Engineering Research Board which was established in 2008). The ANRF is mandated to act as an apex body to provide strategic direction to undertake research in line with the national priorities while encouraging industry to route their funding through the ANRF. It is stated that the "ANRF represents India's pioneering efforts to unleash Indian research and innovation talent to achieve global and technological excellence". The ANRF Governing body reiterates that the ANRF strategies should align with the goals of Vikshit Bharat 2047.The ANRF schemes proposed include preparation of a roadmap for R and D; seeding, growing and facilitating research at academic and research institutions particularly to be directed towards the universities and colleges which are at their nascent stage; funding competitive peer-reviewed grant proposals; facilitating setting up of research infrastructure to support scientific pursuit to address national goals and priorities and the task of coordination among the Central government, the state governments, public authorities and industry and research institutions to foster collaboration across the national boundaries to nurture and enrich the Indian scientific ecosystem.At the moment, a total of 7679 number of ongoing projects are being funded by the ANRF (Source: https://dst.dashboard.nic.in/DashboardF.aspx (accessed on 10.09.2025).

We discuss below some of the salient policy features as envisaged in the ANRF:

## THE HUB AND SPOKE MODEL

There are intrinsic differences in the capacities of various HEIs to do good research and at the same time, there is a need to develop the relatively weaker institutions mainly in terms of inadequate infrastructure but potentiated with talent and expertise. In this model, this set of institutions are categorised as Spoke and the other set of institutions are categorized as Hub who are required to play a lead role in developing an ecosystem of knowledge production by directing and allocating funding to the Spoke category of HEIs. The objective is therefore to foster collaboration between the Hub and the Spoke HEIs while mentoring the Spoke to grow and contribute in pursuit of science together with the Hub. This is provided under the scheme PAIR (Partnership for Accelerated Innovation and Research). The Hub institutions include (i) institutions within 25 NIRF overall rankings in the preceding two years and (ii) institutions of national importance within the range of 26 to 50 NIRF overall rankingin the preceding two years. The Spoke consists of three categories of institutions. The Category-I consists of central and state public universities with 200 NIRF overall and university ranking; the 100 NIRF state public university rankings, and the NITs and IIITs and any other central or state public university. This model is argued to be working on pull-push approach as it pulls together the available human resources available with the Spoke HEIs while at the same time, pushing advancement and excellence achieved in the course of doing research back into the Spokes for them to achieve accelerated progress.

## CHANNELING PRIVATE FUNDING FOR R&D THROUGH ANRF

The ANRF envisages nearly 50 percent of total funding at the disposal of the ANRF is to be contributed by the industry. This formal channeling of funds from the industry to the academia through the ANRF marks a departure from the past where industry funding was getting directed to the academia mostly directly as there could be a few cases of private and public funding for science getting blended for funding the same project.Many researchers fear that funding projects under ANRF (for private players) should not be at the expense of - already constrained - funding of public universities.As the table below indicates that as yet there has been no increase in funding of the DST, with considerable amount of under-utilisation of funds, since the year before the Covid-19 crisis.

Historically, India has seen only a limited number of significant academia-industry collaborative research successes (except Aerospace, Biotech and Medical Science) and over the past decade, the private sector has contributed only about one-third of the country's GERD. Therefore, envisioning more than 50% of the ANRF funds coming from industry seems too ambitious.Private

**Table 1: Financial Allocation for the DST**

| | Budgeted Expenditure (BE) | Actual Expenditure (AE) | Under-utilisation ((BE-AE)/BE) *100) |
|---|---|---|---|
| 2019-20 | 5600.11 | 5452.06 | 2.6 % |
| 2020-21 | 6313.63 | 4911.25 | 22.2 % |
| 2021-22 | 6071.59 | 5157.73 | 15 % |
| 2022-23 | 4907.17 | 4744.48 | 3.3 % |
| 2023-24 | 4892.98 | 4113.11 | 16 % |
| 2024-25 | 5661.45 | 5118.02 | 9.6 % |

*Source: https://dst.dashboard.nic.in/DashboardF.aspx*

firms - both Indian and foreign - are often reluctant to trust public institutions in India with their proprietary data or trade secrets . This keeps many academia-industry collaborations confined to short-term consultancy projects that avoid sharing sensitive information, and truly long-term joint research projects are uncommon, not forgetting the complex processes and delays in releasing project funds further limit private participation. One factor behind this distrust can be India's relatively weak IPR (intellectual property rights) regime, some firms - especially foreign pharma - objected to provisions like India's Patents Act, Section 3(d), which limits drug patents, undermining their IP rights3 and have led to bitterexperiences.

## STRATEGIC ALLOCATION OF FUNDS

The very objective behind setting up of the ANRF is to ensure strategic allocation of research funds so as to direct scientific endeavours primarily to address the national priorities as decided by the ANRF Governing Board. Knowledge generation has long ceased to be determined autonomously by the scientists under the pressure of publications in the selected list of journals determined by the imperatives of the university ranking parameters along with the infusion of industry funding to the realm of university research. The ANRF will now further restrict the available spacefor the faculty and researchers for exercising discretion and autonomy in doing research. The ANRF will now take a call on the areas of research which needed attention from the state and accordingly guide allocation of funds to promote and nurture those areas ostensibly for the sake of national interest.

Moreover, globally, including in India, scientists already spend a substantial share of their time preparing project proposals. With ANRF emerging as the single major funding body and competition increasing, researchers may be compelled to invest even more time for drafting proposals, thereby directly reducing the time and focus available for conducting the research itself.

## INVOLVING HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

Science is primarily for society and science cannot deliver without any interface with society. While the ANRF is meant primarily for funding natural sciences, some areas have been identified which demand attention from the humanities and social sciences (HASS). The objective as stated is to gain from 'contextual insight of social sciences and humanities'.Under the program entitled, Convergence Research Centres for Excellence (CoEs),the policy intention is therefore to forge alliance between the two domains, the HASS and the natural sciences for dealing with the set of emerging societal challenges which are 'complex and systemic'. Some of the areas identified are artificial intelligence, robotics, and big data analytics. This collaborative research is expected to be trans-disciplinary and inter-disciplinary in pursuit of pushing the frontiers of knowledge collectively by the researchers cutting across their disciplinary boundaries. This may lead to the process of further reorientation of HASS for their instrumental value measured and reflected in economic growth at the expense of their intrinsic values.It has to be seen to what extent would the proposed centralized funding cultivate and promote inter and trans-disciplinarity in view of the diversity in the vast ecology of doing research.

## FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR INDIVIDUAL SCIENTIST

The ANRF has also made provisions for extending financial support to individual scholars for travel abroad, for professorship under the scheme PM Professorship, J C Bose grants, National Post-Doctoral fellowships, the PM-Early Career Research Grants, PM-ECRG, and Ramanujan fellowship.For the purpose of ensuring inclusivity, there is a scheme called Inclusivity Research Grants. The researchers, junior and the seniors, who are not part of the collaboration under the Hub and Spoke model and other collaborative arrangements can avail themselves offthe financial support to further their research interests. This may support research apparently outside the categories which are of strategic importance but in practice, the discretion of the ANRF would continue to matter.

## FOCUS ON INNOVATION

The latest initiative is the joint call for Consortia Proposals to establish 2D Material Research Fab and Innovation Hub under the Innovation Hub for Advancement in High Impact Areas (MAHA). One of the purposes of ANRF is to nurture entrepreneurship and innovation through strategic funding of select areas which are gaining traction rapidly. This is in line with the increased focus on innovation as reflected in the credit framework designed and support for start-ups even at the school level. This again seeks to enhance the instrumental value of doing science. In fact, India's S and T policy in the past gave priority to national development and in fostering a culture of innovation. The policy departure is in terms of a strategic allocation of funding for research which entails centralized funding.

As a part of strategic funding, Union Budget 2025-26 earmarked 20,000?crore rupees for a private-sector-led Research, Development and Innovation (RDI) scheme (with a Deep-Tech Fund) for energizing industry funding and collaboration (Union Budget Speech 2025-26, paras 79-80) . This is indicative of immediate prioritisation as revealed by the Union Government in terms of the focus area and who the investor is.

Possible implications for research in science and technology

## SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY ARE TWO DIFFERENT REALMS

As pointed out by Dasgupta and David (1997) that the two realms, science and technology are differently organized and it should be so ideally. The reorganization of the field of research in Science and Technology in the wake of higher education reform world over is blurring the distinction between the two further. Technology (techne or practical knowledge) is largely market driven and thus enforced by law whereas in science, behavior is community driven and thus enforced by norms. Science includes episteme (speculative, theoretical or abstract knowledge). It is important that doing science remains autonomous to the extent possible in this age of academic capitalism, a term coined by Slaughter and Leslie (1987) to refer to the increasing influence of market forces in fund allocation decisions of research and propertization of research output in terms of patenting and managementization of research processes (Rider et al, 2013). Of course, for doing advanced scientific research, help of the technology has become an imperative, a pre-requisite, say, for example in Astrophysics and Space Research. This difference can also referred to as Mode-I and Mode-II of knowledge productionwhere the former refers to research in fundamental science which is largely autonomous as compared to applied science to make it useful as in Mode-II. The issue is whether an emphasis on Mode-II as the present reform implies, would affect the conduct of science in Mode-I. The ANRF has a provision of giving support to mathematical sciences under the scheme ARG-MATRICS which aims to provide support for mathematical sciences, theoretical sciences and quantitative social sciences. The issue is whether the support for Mode-I would prove to be adequate in the long run and how the strategic allocation as decided by the ANRF Board and industry funding routed through the ANRF would interfere with the decision making by the scientists and in the process, curb their autonomy and creativity. Undeniably, independence of Mode-I, the domain of Scienceor epistemeis a hallmark of a universityas the sphere of knowledge generation remains immune to the pressure of marketforces.

In an article published in the Indian Express, dated 13 September (Kris Gopalakrishnan and Ashish Dhawan: Ease of Doing Science) , it has been argued that a limited number Focused Research Organisations (FROs) can be set up as Section 8 companies with at least 51 percent participation from industry to create public-private-academy partnership. We are of the opinion that the conceptualisation of Hub as in the Hub-Spoke model is more inclusive which is necessary to nurture the widely spread-out system of science research in India and the Hub's contribution to the institutions included in the Spoke keeping in mind the imperative of creating a sound base for doing science in India and ensure capacity build-up in the holistic sense. Channelling private funding through ANRF is still a better idea because of the overall allocation for R and D by both public and private sectors can be strategic while at the same time it can help maintain the independence of two domains of science and technology to the extent desirable and possible for the sake of long-term interests of the nation.

## LIMITED ACADEMIC AUTONOMY

This institutional reform for funding science which seeks to allocate resources in accordance with the national priorities and market forces would circumscribe the academic autonomy or the space for exercising discretion by the scientists and researchers. The faculty would have to compete for funding which infuses uncertainty in doing research as the ANRF is mandated to evolve as the only body for funding research. Not only this, competitive funding entails considerable time costs to be incurred by the faculty for applying for research grants. There are, of course, provisions for individual scientists to receive funding for their pursuits but funding again is likely to be a part overall strategic allocation. The pressure of ranking parameters and the UGC requirements has already led to a shrinkage of autonomous academic space in choice of research areas and its dissemination. It is lamentable that there has been a proliferation of journals with concomitant decline in the quality of papers published. The role of market which articulates the interests of the industry is likely to remain monitored and subdued as private funding is routed through the ANRF unlike typical academic capitalism as noted by Slaughter and Leslie (1997). It seems that this is a step towards tempered academic capitalism and not a full-fledged one.

## WEAKENING FOUNDATION FOR DOING SCIENCE

The foundation for doing science is getting weaker due to inadequate funding for the colleges and universities, particularly it is true for the state government funded ones of course in varying extent. The ongoing restructuring of the UG and PG curriculum in line with the recommendation of the NEP has added to this process of decline. To do justice to the vision of making UG a four-year program, the foundation at the college level has to be strong and robust but it appears unlikely, given resource constraint and capacity constraint. The suggestion to make PG of one year duration is also going to restrict the teaching of optional papers which are essentially the specialized areas of the university teachers weakening the linkage between teaching and research.

Maintenance of laboratory expenses, and an increased emphasis on skill education in the NEP are also likely to contribute to the possible dilution of rigour expected in doing science globally. Given the three categories of HEIs as suggested by the NEP, there is a possibility that research funding will be mostly directed towards the Research-Intensive Universities, accentuating thereby the existing differentiation that already exists in the Indian HE sectorsas evident in the concentration of research among the top HEIs. This will leave a large population of students enrolled in lower-ranked and state universities and colleges with low to medium quality of education and research skills, creating a serious challenge for any aspiring knowledge-intensive society.

There is a clear distinction between codified knowledge, which is publicly accessible, and tacit knowledge, which resides within individuals or researchers. Tacit knowledge is difficult to transfer but is crucial for technological advancement (Tyfield, 2013). Moreover, new and unique knowledge is 'stickier,' embedded in people, and therefore, harder to transport, internalize, recombine, and master. A shortage of individuals possessing such tacit knowledge limits the effective use of knowledge as a driver of the knowledge economy. The transfer of information also requires prerequisites such as proficiency in specific software tools and basic competencies. Consequently, moving knowledge from one context to another in a usable form is costly (Foray, 2004). A large population with low to medium-quality skills and knowledge will further increase the costs of knowledge transfer and absorption.

## THE FUTURE OF HEIS

With a weakening base of higher education commensurate with the reorientation of the universities towards industry and widening the options for imparting skill training through formal and through involving the Ed-Techs, the universities are in the process of undergoing a transformation. The traditional concept of a university where the drive for knowledge is primarily determined by the scientists themselvesis transiting to a stage where both the state and the industry are keen to leverage science as an instrumentfor achieving higher growth and making profit. This is not to deny that the proposed funding mechanism as encapsulated in the ANRF mandate for R and D would not serve the society. The question is how science and society are conceptualized, how the purpose of science has been envisioned by the policymakers and whether funding for R and D can at all be increased given fiscal constraint and industry's reluctance to spend on R and D. This is particularly so when import of successful technology is easier and the struggling MSMEs constitute a large portion of the Indian industry. Further, the question remains whether the increased private funding for science in the universities, if at all it rises, would compromise with the public good character of knowledge supposedly produced by the HEIs

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# ACADEMIC BANK OF CREDIT (ABC) IMPLEMENTATION: CHALLENGES AND INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSES

VIMAL VERMA *

*The paper examines the **Academic Bank of Credits (ABC)**, a key reform under the **National Education Policy (NEP) 2020**, designed to make the higher education system more flexible. It assesses the functioning of the ABC, identifies challenges in its implementation, and offers suggestions to improve its effectiveness.*

## NEED OF ACADEMIC BANK OF CREDIT

The success of India's higher education reforms, as envisioned in the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, depends critically on the effective implementation of the Academic Bank of Credit (ABC). At its core, the ABC is not merely a technological repository of credits; it is a structural mechanism for skill reorientation, designed to liberate students from rigid institutional pathways and enable them to craft life trajectories responsive to dynamic labour market demands. This design reflects the logic of human capital theory, which emphasizes perpetual learning as a response to changing socio-economic needs.

India's higher education system has long faced two pressing problems: skill mismatch and the consequent rise of graduate unemployment and underemployment. By allowing students to pause, re-enter, and realign their learning without penalty, the ABC offers a pathway to reduce wasted human potential. Equally, by integrating online and blended learning at scale, it supports the NEP's ambitious goal of raising the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) to 50% by 2035, with half of all learners expected to gain vocational exposure by 2050. Expansion on this scale is inconceivable without the digital backbone that ABC provides. In this sense, the ABC is indispensable not just for academic flexibility, but for building an adaptive, skill-responsive education which is perceived to be an important policy measure to address the problem of skill-mismatch resulting unemployment andunderemployment.

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Simply put, the ABC can be viewed as a digital credit wallet thatempowers learners to build, pause, and restart their education across institutions andplatforms, from anywhere, at any time.As of September 2025, more than 2,424 higher education institutions have registered on the platform, and nearly 1.69 crore unique Automated Permanent Academic Account Registry (APAAR) IDs have been generated suggesting a growing importance of the ABC. This is a nationwide student ID system under the 'One Nation, One Student ID' initiative, introduced in line with the National Education Policy 2020, to track and consolidate students' academic records, credits, and achievements across institutions.The ABC represents a major step toward promoting flexibility, mobility, and the integration of information and communication technology in higher education. In alignment with the National Credit Framework (NCrF) and Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL), it is envisaged as a transformative policy instrument capable of shifting Indian higher education away from a rigid, uniform structure toward a more adaptive, learner-centric system that fosters lifelong learning and resilience in response to socio-economic change.It does so by allowing students to seamlessly carry forward their credits, accumulate diverse learning experiences across institutions, and reskill or upskill in response to changing job market and societal needs.

## ABC INTEGRATION WITH NCRF AND RPL

In conventional higher education structures, dissatisfaction with institutional programmes often led to substantial sunk costs, with students left with limited options. The ABC mitigates this problem through two critical interventions: (i) recognition of credits across diverse forms of learning, whether through formal institutions, MOOCs, or other informal recognized learning with the help of RPL guidelines. This marks a significant step in formally recognizing skills acquired beyond the classroom (e.g., workplace, community centres, apprenticeships), thereby broadening access to varied learning opportunities; and (ii) the introduction of an 'exit option', permitting learners to discontinue studies at defined stages while obtaining a credential commensurate with accumulated credits. The Curriculum and Credit Framework for Undergraduate Programmes (UGC, 2022) institutionalize this flexibility by allowing student exits after one year with a certificate, two years with a diploma, three years with a bachelor's degree,

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and four years with a bachelor's honours degree. By doing so ABC helps in making higher education system more fluidcompared to rigid traditional higher education system where students was not allowed to move between courses, institutions and learning modes. This framework significantly reduces the sunk costs associated with withdrawal and facilitates re-entry into higher education, either at the same institution or another, within a seven-year window through seamless credit transfer and utilization. The ABC marks a major structural innovation in India's higher education system, designed to expand students' freedom in charting their own learning pathways and achieving desired outcomes. This flexibility directly supports the interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary approach envisioned by the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020.Its alignment with the NCrF and Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) extends its scope even further by validating informal and non-formal learning, thereby enhancing employability and inclusivity. As NCrF guidelines suggests 'students/learners/persons/workers to formalize their previous formal, non-formal informal learning and provide them the opportunities for personal and career development through career progression and skill upgradation by their integration into formal education and skilling ecosystem' (GoI 2023, 85).

A central feature of the ABC is its integration of online and blended learning, which expands access through MOOCs and other digital platforms, with UGC regulations permitting up to 40% of credits to be earned online and securely stored for transfer (GoI, 2021b). Complemented by dual degree and hybrid programme, these reforms highlight the growing role of digital education in meeting enrolment and flexibility goals. At the same time, the ABC enables both vertical mobility, progression across institutions and credit levels, and horizontal mobility, allowing students to combine courses across departments, universities, or platforms. By broadening choice and blurringboundaries between general and vocational education, it fosters a skill-oriented, multidisciplinary ecosystem and advances India's shift toward a more global, flexible, and learner-centric higher education system. Yet, the implementation of ABC is fraught with hurdles, which the next section examines in detail.

## CHALLENGES IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF ABC AND INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSES

The implementation challenges of the ABC can be categorized under four major headings, each closely linked to the processes of credit accumulation, validation, and transfer.Therefore, all four major challenges have been discussed below and how institutions are responding to these challenges is also examined using institutions website and published documents by institutions on NEP reforms implementation.

## CHALLENGE OF CREDIT RECOGNITION

The ABC is closely linked to the Curriculum and Credit Framework for Undergraduate Programmes (CCFUP), which reorganizes courses into core and non-core categories (GoI, 2022). While the ABC system enables students to take courses from other institutions or platforms, it also promotes standardization by ensuring that courses meet defined quality benchmarks. However, this push for uniformity has raised concerns that excessive standardization may limit academic and pedagogical innovation, reducing the flexibility available to institutions and educators (Madhusudhan, 2022). In practice, many universities have adjusted the guidelines to safeguard academic depth. For instance, institutions such as Sharda University (2023) and the University of Rajasthan (2024) require that at least 50% of core courses be taught by their own faculty rather than outsourced or substituted. To ease challenges, some institutions allow non-core subjects to be taken online, as reflected in Panjab University's undergraduate programme guidelines, thereby reducing teaching burdens while retaining in-person instruction for core subjects. These adjustments suggest that universities are actively negotiating the implementation of ABC to balance flexibility with disciplinary rigor and institutional priorities. However, the degree of freedom granted to students still largely remains in the hands of institutions. Multiple entry and multiple exit options: social and practical concerns

The CCFUP promote a flexible four-year undergraduate programme with multiple entry and multiple exit (ME-ME) options, supported by the ABC, which enables students to save and transfer credits within a seven-year window. While this framework is intended to accommodate diverse learner needs and enhance flexibility in higher education, its implementation faces significant challenges. Conflict between central and state policies , along with institutional regulations, often dilute the policy's intent. Many universities impose conditions such as re-entry examinations, seat availability criteria, or merit-based prioritisation, which restrict the promised openness.

For instance, the ordinance of Gurugram University, following the NEP curriculum framework, specifies that re-entry depends on eligibility, merit, and available seats. This reflects a broader tension between the inclusive goals of policymakers and the realities of institutional autonomy within India's federal structure, where education falls under the Concurrent List. Moreover, the ME-ME model carries social risks: by making exit relatively easy but re-entry uncertain, it may inadvertently contribute to higher dropout rates and future unemployment (Bhushan, 2023). There is also concern that the framework overlooks structural inequalities, as students from disadvantaged economic, social, or regional backgrounds are less able

to benefit from re-entry opportunities. Data from IIT Bombay (2023) highlights this issue: nearly 90% of students who opted for early exit from the B.Tech-M.Tech dual degree and BS programmes were from OBC, SC, and ST categories, while representation from the General category was minimal. Consequently, while exit is framed as an individual choice, the unequal re-entry within system can create asymmetry that undermines the equity objectives of the system. Asymmetry arises because not all students willing to re-enter can do so, particularly disadvantaged learners who face economic constraints and competing responsibilities. The re-entry into the institutions will ultimately be determined by the admission policy of the institutions and availability of seats in the programmes where the students are seeking admission.

## ONLINE AND BLENDED LEARNING

Despite its promise, the integration of online education under the ABC faces significant practical and structural challenges. Only institutions with a National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) score of 3.26 or higher, or ranked in the National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF) top 100 for two consecutive years, can offer online programmes without UGC approval (GoI, 2020b). Those with a NAAC score between 3.01 and 3.25 must obtain approval from University Grant Commission (UGC) to provide online programmes. This is creating a tiered system that privileges elite institutions while limiting opportunities for others. While such restrictions are intended to safeguard quality, they also entrench inequalities across institutions. Moreover, even many reputed central and state universities struggle with inadequate infrastructure for full implementation of online guidelines, often defaulting to listing national MOOCs from platforms such as Study Webs of Active-Learning for Young Aspiring Minds (SWAYAM), with course allocation driven more by availability and eligibility than by genuine student choice.Beyond these logistical and institutional hurdles, concerns remain about the educational quality of MOOCs. Scholars caution that over-reliance on online education can weaken critical student-teacher engagement, a key driver of intellectual growth. As Bhasin and Rehman (2025) argue, courses offered through platforms such as SWAYAM or private providers may inadvertently erode creativity and hinder the development of self-forming individuals. While the ABC enhances flexibility by legitimising online credits and making them portable across institutions, its benefits risk being unevenly distributed, favouring students at well-resourced institutions while leaving others at a relative disadvantage.

## CREDIT TRANSFER: PROMISE VERSUS PRACTICE

Although credit transfer was introduced through the ABC to promote greater mobility, its use over the past four years has been minimal, largely because students lack adequate information and institutions have been slow to adapt or provide clear guidance. Technical and practical concerns have also impacted credit transfer. Vertical mobility is constrained by India's merit-based admissions system, which, while ensuring fairness, limits transfers between institutions and reinforces existing hierarchies.Horizontal mobility is similarly hindered by logistical and institutional barriers. Many universities impose restrictive conditions, such as requiring 70-80% alignment between external courses and their own curriculum (Central University of Punjab, n.d.; Sambalpur University, n.d.). If content is nearly identical, students have little incentive to study elsewhere, except for perceived prestige. Other barriers include seat availability, merit-based restrictions, faculty shortages, and infrastructural limitations. While MOOCs offer a practical avenue for horizontal mobility, adoption is uneven, with many institutions limiting students to a narrow set of approved courses. A broader challenge is the lack of standardized credit transfer policies, diversity in institutional mandates, and complex UGC regulations. Consequently, universities often impose additional conditions on both vertical and horizontal mobility to maintain autonomy and protect institutional identity, thereby undermining the full potential of the ABC reforms. Larger implication of ABC for the higher education reforms The Academic Bank of Credit (ABC) is a pivotal intervention in India's effort to reconfigure higher education in line with the NEP 2020. By enabling credit transfer, supporting multiple entry-exit pathways, and integrating online and vocational learning, it provides a structural mechanism to expand enrolment, foster multidisciplinary education, and democratize access. Its alignment with the National Credit Framework (NCrF) and Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) further extends its scope, making institutions more accessible those seeking to return and reshape their careers. At the same time, concerns remain that excessive freedom may encourage a consumerist mindset, where credentials outweigh genuine learning (Nixon et al. 2011, cited in Chattopadhyay 2020).

Yet, the promise of ABC is not automatically realized. India's federal structure, with overlapping authority between the Centre and states, produces conflicting policies and uneven implementation across central, state, and private universities. Elite institutions are generally better positioned to adapt, while resource-constrained state universities struggle to operationalize reforms. For students, navigating credit transfers, online learning, and exit-re-entry options remain complex. Institutional regulations, curriculum alignment requirements, and infrastructural disparities further restrict flexibility, curtailing the policy's inclusivity goals. Evidence also shows that disadvantaged students are more likely to

exit early and less likely to re-enter, raising concerns that ABC could deepen rather than reduce inequalities. These contradictions highlight the policy trade-off between expanding choice and safeguarding quality. The ABC can transform higher education into a more flexible, inclusive, and lifelong learning system, but its success depends on balancing institutional autonomy, student equity, and infrastructural readiness. Future research must examine how credit transfer works across different types of institutions, who benefits most from the system, and the long-term impact of integrating informal and vocational learning into formal credit structures. Only then can the transformative aspirations of the ABC be measured against the realities of India's diverse higher education landscape.

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# INTERNATIONALIZATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION: NEW (TRUMP) US POLICY- A DESPAIR OR CHALLENGES BEFORE INDIA

KAVITA SHARMA *

*The article discusses the impact of the **new U.S. (Trump-era) policies** on the internationalization of higher education. It highlights how these policy shifts have affected higher education within the United States, influenced U.S. aid programs in other countries, and altered the patterns of international student migration-particularly those of Indian students pursuing studies in America. The author offers recommendations to strengthen Indian higher education in response to these changes and to position India as an attractive destination for foreign students.*

## INTRODUCTION

While there are many aspects to the internationalization of higher education, I would like to focus on the declining admissions to US universities under the current administration and its policies. While Indian students are affected, there seems to be a widespread attack on the higher education system in America. Billions of dollars of funding have been cut from the grants of Ivy League and other universities. This includes student related grants as well as research grants. This has been estimated to be in the range of $6.9 billion to $8.2 billion. As far as students are concerned, the primary targets are diversity, equity, and inclusion programs, as well as the admission of foreign students.[1]

The consequences of these decisions include the layoff of faculty members engaged in both research and teaching in American universities. Research grants have been yanked away with little or no explanation. Additionally, the cash cow of international students is under threat, leaving budgets out of balance. This has compelled even the most renowned institutions to reduce their expenses.[2] Some, like Harvard, are in court over these policy decisions, while others are simply acceding to the demands being made of them. The most severely impacted are the STEM subjects, in which cutting-edge research has made America a leader in the world.

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## SHIFT FROM OPEN DOORS TO DISRUPTION

According to Open Doors, a publication of the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs and the Institute of International Education (IIE), foreign students in America reached an all-time high of 1.1 million in 2023/2024, a 7% increase from the previous academic year. They contributed 50 billion dollars to the US economy in 2023. India sent 331,602 students in 2023/2024, representing a 23% increase from the previous year and surpassing China. China sent 277,398 students, a 4% decrease from the prior year. However, it remained the top sending country for undergraduate study and non-degree students, with 87,551 and 5,517, respectively. Indian students were mainly concentrated in postgraduate courses. The number of Chinese students pursuing Optional Practical Training (OPT) increased by 12% to reach 61,552.[3] The number of Indian students pursuing OPT in 2023-2024 was 97,556, a massive increase from 69,062 in 2022/2023.[4] The OPT has become popular as it is seen as a gateway to H-1 B visas and eventual absorption into the US workforce. It is worth noting that, as of today, approximately 78,000 foreign students study in India, thanks in part to COVID-19 and the New Education Policy 2020, among other factors, which represents a rise from around 46,000 in the 2020-2021 academic year. As of 2021, there were 255,720 full-time international students studying in China.

## WHY THE USA - A FAVOURED DESTINATION FOR INDIAN STUDENTS?

More options and Clear Visa rules: The question arises, why do Indian students flock to the USA to study? For one, the USA has been welcoming to foreign students. US officials conduct several events in India to attract students. They are also not subject to changing visa rules, which creates uncertainty. Furthermore, the choices and opportunities are vast, with over 4,000 educational institutions offering more than 4,000 degree programs. Several institutions do not require the International English Language Test, although proficiency in English is a must.[5]

Land of Opportunities: Moreover, the USA is regarded as a land of opportunities and an earning haven, particularly for individuals from Punjab. This may be related to the historical connection between Punjab and

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the USA, as people from Punjab were among the early migrants to America. The success rate for visa applications also increased to 20% in 2023, up from the earlier average of 15%. The USA offers more affordable accommodation than Canada, which is another popular destination for Indian students in North America.[6]

## THE IMPACT OF NEW (TRUMP) POLICY:

The impact of the recent policy announcements has left Indian students and their families in a state of shock. Many families have saved for their entire lives to make the American dream come true for their children and, through them, for themselves. Therefore, apart from quality education, enrollment in an American university has been seen as a pathway to life in the USA, which is perceived as vastly better than in India, and also paves the way for future generations to rise to the higher echelons of society. However, families can no longer afford to risk uncertain policies because if something goes wrong, not only would the investment be wasted, but more money would not be available.[7]

Uncertainties and sudden Policy Shift: Some of the uncertainties facing international students are more scrutiny of OPT and a limit on its duration, increased uncertainty of visa and its sudden and arbitrary revocation without any explanation, fear of sudden policy shifts, greater risk of not being able to return if they travel out of USA, greater deportation policies, H-1B visa challenges, safety concerns, and others.[8]

The Shift: This is prompting Indian students to consider alternative locations, particularly Germany, for studying STEM subjects. The other locations under consideration are Ireland, France, the Netherlands, Sweden, and even the Middle East for undergraduate education. The Middle East has the advantage of being closer to home and less expensive than the West. France, Germany, Sweden, and the Netherlands pose a challenge in learning the language. However, this can be overcome. Apart from these, Australia is a familiar destination that also offers a variety of scholarships, both governmental and non-governmental, and hence becomes more popular. The U.K. has been popular for over 150 years and was the preferred destination before the USA.

## POLICY IMPACTING THE US ECONOMIC SYSTEM:

While students from countries like India and China would certainly be impacted, the USA itself would not escape unscathed from the current policies. The talent leadership of the USA could be affected, and the talent pipelines choked. Many first-generation immigrants have founded leading companies. To take a few examples, Elon Musk founded Tesla and SpaceX. Jensen Huang, a Taiwanese American, co-founded Nvidia and has been its CEO and President since the company's founding in 1993. AravindSrinivas has been the cofounder of Perplexity AI,[9] and Alexander Wang, the son of Chinese immigrants has been the cofounder of Scale AI. Examples can be multiplied. According to the National Foundation for American Policy (NFAP), 77% of top AI companies have been founded or co-founded by first or second-generation immigrants. Immigrants founded more than half of the US startup companies valued at 1 billion dollars or more, many in AI or related technologies. Most first generation immigrants entered the US as children or international students. This is not surprising because they comprise up to 70% of full-time graduate students in AI-related fields.[10]

## CHALLENGE BEFORE INDIA:

American policies are a long-overdue wake-up call for India's higher education system. Instead of lamenting, this presents itself as a challenge to create a higher education system that is more equitably accessible and quality-conscious, ultimately enabling it to compete with the best in the world and attract foreign students to India on its terms. The challenges facing the Indian higher education system are daunting. Still, the Centre and the States would have to work seriously together to raise both access and quality of education. Unless India develops the capacity to provide quality higher education and employment opportunities to its young population, it will continuously face challenges in retaining its best talent. Alternatively, if it faces the hurdles that the current American policy poses, it will jeopardize their bright future at home.

## STRATEGIES TO MEET CHALLENGES:

There are several key factors that can contribute to revamping the Indian higher education system. In terms of students, India is now the second-largest higher education system in the world, after China. According to the 2023 World Bank Report data, the GER has risen to 33%, although elsewhere it is reported to be around 27%, from 6% in 1995. The GER at the secondary school level has gone from 46% in 1995 to 79% in 2023. This is important because without a high level of secondary school enrolment, the GER of higher education cannot increase. The GDP per capita has increased from $375.2 in 1995 to $2,480.8 in 2020 and to $2,696.66 in 2024. A higher income has enabled more people to send their children to college and university. However, India's total population has increased by 50% since the mid-1990s to approximately 1.4 billion today.

## EXPAND QUALITY HIGHER EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES:

India has the potential to reap an enormous youth dividend. But there are two significant hurdles. One is the lack of availability of seats in quality institutions and

programmes. The second is the problem of finding employment after graduation.

The Indian higher education system has not kept pace with the enrollment growth. This prompts students with some means to seek admission abroad. Additionally, the competition for seats in top institutions is so fierce that it is easier to gain admission to an Ivy League university than to one of them. Having written the history of the University Grants Commission, I was always puzzled about its resistance to the expansion of higher education and constant emphasis on consolidation. It is only in the last 12 to 15 years that serious efforts have been made to increase the GER. This, together with the opening of the economy, which provided many more employment opportunities, created a faculty shortage. If India had established more institutions, many people would have opted to pursue a career in higher education rather than the corporate sector.

Open door to Global Faculty: India also became more inward-looking, unlike China, which opened up its higher education sector in 1978 to invite quality faculty from some of the world's best universities to teach alongside Chinese faculty. Gradually, internationalization was frowned upon in India. This was puzzling, given that India had sought the help of the USA to establish some of its premier institutions, such as IIT Kanpur and the Agricultural University in Punjab, among others. Faculty members from the USA had spent a vast number of teaching hours in these and other institutions. India also sought assistance from the then Soviet Union. The Bombay IIT was set up with Russian help. Examples can be multiplied, but gradually India closed its doors.

## REVAMP ACCESS, QUALITY, FINANCE, AND GOVERNANCE:

As the higher education sector has become increasingly massified in recent decades, the quality of institutions and programmes has not kept pace. According to The World Bank's 2023 report, India has one of the most significant and fastest-growing tertiary education systems in the world. It enrols 37 million students across 50,000 institutions. The NEP 2020 aims to further double the GER from 26.3% to 50% by 2035. Despite its size and growth rate, as well as the emphasis policymakers have placed on tertiary education in recent times, the system has faced issues with access, quality, governance, and financing, with the quality of inputs and outputs not keeping pace with the sector's expansion. The World Bank has supported tertiary education in India through a series of engagements in technical education at the national level and in specific states, with a focus on general tertiary education. The NEP's proposal for a broad-based tertiary education strategy aligns with the World Bank's global tertiary education strategy. The World Bank is now working in the field of higher education with policymakers and implementers. However, one of the challenges in implementation is the lack of both academic and physical infrastructure.

Growth of Private Universities and issues of Quality and Affordability: It is the public sector institutions that have lagged in the growth of enrolment. This has prompted private institutions to step in, but most of them are of poor quality with marginal reputations, as Philip Altbach points out. However, there is a glimmer of hope as some non-profit, high-quality universities are emerging. Most of them are likely to be out of the reach of the general population, exacerbating the gulf between the education received by the haves and the have-nots.

Therefore, the public institutions must be strengthened throughout the country. But improvements take time, and perhaps the short-term suffering of bright students cannot be avoided.

## ENHANCE EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES:

Equally problematic is the employment prospect that graduate students face. According to the Ministry of Labour and Employment, the unemployment rate of higher education graduates was 13.4% in 2022-2023. This is in contrast to 2.3% in the USA and 4.2% in Canada. The International Labour Organisation (ILO) places it at around 30%. What is even more disturbing is that people with higher education are more likely to be unemployed than those without any schooling.

This means that relevant job creation has not kept pace with the number of young Indians entering the job market, and that there is a poor alignment between higher education and the jobs for which they are required. It speaks volumes about the planning of higher education, its quality, and the growth and development of the economy. Apart from academic quality, what is lacking is the development of soft skills, such as collaboration and teamwork, critical thinking, and ethics. These skills are not part of any curriculum, and when introduced, they meet with resistance from both faculty and students. Indian students want to go abroad not only for education but also for work experience and to become more employable in today's work environment. [11]

## STRATEGIZE THE CHANGE:

Finally, the Indian higher education system faces a herculean task ahead if it is to make up for lost time, become more diverse, accessible, and equitable, while improving in quality, and also attract more foreign students. To begin with, it must build on its societal strengths that have been neglected so far by the higher education system, strengthening its traditional arts and cultural ties. It must learn to capitalise on the country's culture and traditions, offering programmes, educational trips, and exposure to the country's diversity. It needs to appoint chairs or research professors or professors of

practice primarily in the area of indigenous technologies. Internships should be established in areas connected to local knowledge systems and the development of new products. Far more scholarships have to be provided for students from developing countries and for Indian students to pursue quality education and research. [12]

## TO SUP UP:

In short, the Indian higher education system has its work cut out for it if it wants to deal with the long-term crisis facing its young, aspiring students due to current American policies. Other favoured destinations could also adopt such policies. The Indian higher education system must develop strengths in quality, diversity, and accessibility, while synchronizing with the job market and becoming strong enough to attract foreign students, particularly from developing countries. Without this, India's demography is unlikely to yield dividends. It can, on the contrary, become a significant social problem.

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Similarly, the proposed restructuring of the UGC into a Higher Education Commission of India (HECI) has not materialized, nor have the promised Multidisciplinary Education and Research Universities (MERUs). These were intended to serve as models of innovation and excellence but remain on paper even after five years.

### Areas of Progress

Despite these challenges, some reforms have advanced through UGC's regulatory framework. Over the past five years, the Commission has issued around 15 guidelines/ regulations covering:

- Multidisciplinary orientation of institutions
- Outcome-based education linked to the National Higher Education Qualification Framework
- Multiple entry and exit options through the Academic Bank of Credits (ABC)
- Restructuring of degree programmes into flexible three- and four-year formats with majors, minors, internships, and credits for value-based and life-skills courses
- Internationalization of higher education, including collaborations with foreign universities and proposals for foreign campuses under SEZ regulations.

These reforms, though incremental, represent significant changes in teaching, learning, and evaluation processes.

### Funding Commitments: An Unmet Promise

Perhaps the most critical gap lies in funding. NEP 2020 promised to increase public spending on education to 6% of GDP by 2030, with incremental annual increases of 20%. Yet, in reality, expenditure has remained below 4% of GDP throughout this period. Sustainable financial support is crucial to reassure teachers, students, and institutional leaders that autonomy will strengthen, not weaken, higher education.

To conclude, the NEP 2020 is undoubtedly a visionary document, offering transformative and bold solutions for India's higher education system. However, translating its recommendations into reality requires more than guidelines- it demands a mission-mode approach, legislative clarity, political will, and robust financial commitment.

The resistance from entrenched practices and vested interests is understandable but not insurmountable. What is essential now is imaginative process of implementation, sustained investment, and proactive leadership to ensure that NEP 2020 does not remain merely a statement of intent but becomes a true catalyst for change in Indian higher education.

# GROWTH, DIRECTION AND DISCIPLINARY PREFERENCES OF INBOUND INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS IN INDIA

HASSAN AHMAD & FURQAN QAMAR *

*The paper focuses on the issue of **international students coming to India for higher studies**, analyzing trends in their enrollment growth and subject preferences. It provides insights into the factors influencing their choice of India as a study destination and offers recommendations to enhance India's appeal to international students.*

## THE ISSUE:

The National Education Policy (NEP 2020), provides for extensive as well as deeper focus on internationalisation of higher education. On the higher education import front, India has notified an enabling policy and associated procedure to permit entry and operation of foreign universities in India and many have either already entered or have shown inclination to have their campuses in India.

Also, the number of Indian students going abroad for higher education has continued to increase exponentially. So has been the outflow of foreign exchange on account of higher education. India has also become a major importer of higher educational services including international accreditation.

On the export front, higher education in India has continued to lag far behind its target and much more so in comparison with it potential. Indeed the number of international students now come to India from as many as 161 countries. but the number of such students is much below expectations. Over the past decade, the numbers have hovered at about 50,000. In contrast, initiatives like the Study in India target to enrol around 200,000, which will be raised to 500,000 in the short term. Consequently, the balance of trade in the higher education sector has been rather adverse for India.

There have, however, been some visible shift in the program preferences of the limited number of international students that come to India. While there are many studies on the internationalisation of higher education in India, most are focused on the inflow and outflow of international students to and from India. More work needs to be done to show the changes in the program preferences of international students and their implications for higher education institutions in India.

This paper analyses this dimension of internationalisation of higher education in the country using the All India Survey of Higher Education data for 2011-12 to 2021-22, the latest years for which the official data in this regard is available. The moot question is if India is ready to respond to such changes in the preferences of the international students.

*The cross-border mobility of students and scholars searching for knowledge and wisdom is as old as the evolution and history of higher education itself. Most of the oldest universities in the world claim to have hosted international students and scholars on their campuses.*

## THE GENESIS :

The cross-border mobility of students and scholars searching for knowledge and wisdom is as old as the evolution and history of higher education itself. Most of the oldest universities in the world claim to have hosted international students and scholars on their campuses.

The oldest modern university, the University of Bologna, established in 1080 in Italy, drew students from far and wide. Its archive displays the portrait of Nicolaus Copernicus, a Polish Pomeranian (Roya Prussia), as one of its illustrious students during the 15th-16th century. Jamia-al-Azhar, originally an Islamic seminary in Egypt founded in 970 CE, was a magnet for scholars and students desirous of learning Islamic jurisprudence. This tradition has continued and flourished even today, albeit across many disciplines.

Nalanda Mahavihara, a Buddhist Monastery and seat of learning in India that operated from 427 CE to 1400 CE is known to have attracted disciples and scholars from many parts of the world. Xuanzang, Faxian and Yijing, besides hordes of others from China, studied at Nalanda during the 7th century. This is also true of Vallabhi University (600-1400 CE) and Vikramashila (783-820 CE). Going back to the 4th centre BCE, the Takshashila (Taxila)

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in undivided India attracted scholars from across the border.

Even when no universities existed, disciples roamed worldwide to take lessons from renowned scholars. History is full of people trotting the globe to be with polymaths who had become famous in their areas. Therefore, the cross-border mobility of students has been and shall continue to remain vital as long as humans persist in acquiring knowledge and broadening their horizons (Chan et al., 2021).

## THE SHIFT- TRADE IN EDUCATION:

Over time, the reasons and motivations for cross-border mobility have changed from scholarly pursuits to economic and financial gains. Students are lured to foreign soils for better prospects and placements. It is proven that students with higher education abroad not only earn higher salaries but also contribute significantly to economic development (Kratz & Netz, 2018). Besides, the presence of international students on the campuses also adds to the reputation of universities and improves their world ranking (Stanciu et al., 2019).

Overseas students make financial contributions to local economies by paying tuition fees, living expenses, and expenditure on goods and services (Yeravdekar, 2016). Universities and their countries go overboard to attract international students for revenue generation and economic development. Including education in the General Agreement of Trade in Services (GATS) under the World Trade Organisation (WTO) is a testimony to this approach (Tilak, 2011).

In a globalised economy, internationalisation has become essential for a skilled workforce (Minocha et al., 2018). It is no wonder that proactively seeking to attract international students has now become a significant priority for many countries. The USA, UK and Australia are the market leaders (Jacob & Gokbel, 2018),but higher education destinations have become more diverse with emerging economies entering the fray (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2012). Consequently, for example, more Australian students now choose to study in Asian countries rather than their traditional choices of North America and Europe (Tran et al (2021). Similarly, it is indicated that students from OECD countrieshave started moving towards the south (de Wit et al., 2021).

As the number of students leaving their home country to study abroad increases, India must be able to stay caught up. It aspires to have a decent market share, and why not? India is believed to offer a unique opportunity for cultural immersion and exposure to linguistic, religious and geographical diversities. (Curtis & Ledgerwood, 2018).

## INDIA HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM:

As the world's second-largest higher education system in terms of institutions and enrolment, India has a significant comparative cost advantage, making it a cost-effective destination for budget-conscious or budget-constrained students. The Indian higher education system is characterised by a vast number of small, poor-quality institutions and programmes. Nevertheless, it has plenty of high-quality institutions (Agarwal, 2011). These institutions offer a diverse range of academic programmes in subjects beyond the conventional fields of engineering, medicine, and business. Besides, many Indian academics, faculty members and researchersare renowned for their exceptional research abilities. At the same time, students on these campuses consistently achieve on par with the top performers worldwide (Perez-Encinas et al., 2021).

India also has the added advantage of a large diaspora worldwide. These Non-Resident Indians (NRIs), Persons of Indian Origin (PIOs), and Overseas Citizens of India (OCIs) may want their wards to pursue higher education in India. India could capitalise on this sentimental market to become a flourishing hub for higher education. These advantages notwithstanding, India has, till now, been a net importer of higher education, but it has the potential to become a leading destination for international students.

## THE POLICY PLANNERS VISION:

The policy planners believe India was once a world leader in higher education and that there is no reason it cannot become a Vishwaguru (a master educator for the world) once again. Viksit Bharat (Developed India) motto envisions India as a developed nation by 2047, when it celebrates its centenary of Independence. Attracting international students in large numbers, establishing overseas campuses of Indian higher education institutions and enticing foreign higher education institutions to establish their branch campuses in India are crucial components of this vision. The National Education Policy (NEP, 2020) also acknowledges the importance and possibilities of India becoming a global hub for higher education. It believes its institutional, regulatory and curricular reform recommendations would make India a more attractive study destination (Varghese & Mathews, 2021).

## THE INITIATIVES:

These aim to reduce the large gap between the outflow from and the inflow of students to make India a net exporter of educational services. Laudable as the goal may be, it is a challenge. In 2022, the number of Indians studying abroad exceeded 1.3 Million, significantly surpassing the number of overseas students who chose to study in India (Qamar, ….). To realise its full potential, India initiated many programmes, like the Promotion of Indian Higher Education Abroad (PiHEAD) in 2004 and the Study in India programme in 2016. Higher education institutions in India have been allowed to admit up to 10

percent of their sanctioned seats by international students on a supernumerary basis. The limit has recently been enhanced to 25 percent.

Against this backdrop, the present paper examines the growth and changes in the number of inbound international students in India, including changes in the composition and direction of international students pursuing higher education in India. It further highlights the shifts in the choice of programmes of studies and the disciplinary preferences of such students. The analysis is based on data compiled from the All India Survey on Higher Education Data (AISHE) annual reports publishedby the Ministry of Education (earlier, the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD)), Government of India, for the period 2011-12 to 2021-22.

The existing littérature on the subject primarily focuses on the patterns in the movement of international students, destination preferences, and governmental efforts to attract international students. It offers valuable insight but does not fully comprehend the composition and ramifications of international student mobility in the Indian setting. As the government takes steps to attract foreign universities and promote internationalisation, understanding the trends in international students' disciplinary choices becomes increasingly essential (Varghese, 2020).

## STUDENTS CHOICES:

The decision of international students to pursue higher education abroad is complex and is influenced by many factors. As the global education landscape becomes increasingly interconnected, the motivations and experiences of these students have become subject to greater scrutiny. The international student mobility environment is characterized by ongoing changes influenced by a complex interplay of several forces.

Immigration policies have a significant impact, serving as either an attractive force or a hindrance (Jacobs, 2022). Students must deal with complicated visa requirements while searching for study-abroad opportunities that match their academic aims and connect with their future job objectives (Hercog & van de Laar, 2017). There is an intriguing transition as Western traditionally held power institutions face challenges. Yu et al. (2022) assert a noticeable increase in student interest in the growing educational systems of China, South Korea, and West Asian countries (Ahmad & Hussain, 2017; Iqbal et al., 2021; Kim & Zhang, 2022). A convergence of various causes propels the shift towards the east and south.Government activities are essential in drawing talent from throughout the world.

Socio-Economic Background: In addition to economic reasons, decisions made by students are influenced by various factors. Students' socio-economic background exerts substantial influence (d'Hombres & Schnepf, 2021). The host country's perceived image and the student's intended self-image play a key role in making decisions (Fakunle, 2021; King & Sondhi, 2018; Le Huu Nghia, 2019; Nghiêm-Phú & Nguy?n, 2020; Yang et al., 2018).

Marketing:Emerging economies proactively promote their educational offerings through focused campaigns (Samokhvalova, 2017).The pursuit of enhancing life experiences and supervisors' perception also substantially influences determining destination preferences (Yang et al., 2018). Notably, gender may also impact these choices, as research indicates possible variations between male and female pupils (Donkor et al., 2020). In addition, Rensburg et al. (2015) and Varghese (2015) also propose that there needs to be more mobility among BRICS states, as students from these countries tend to study in destinations outside of the BRICS countries.

The economic advantages of international students are indisputable. Research conducted by Van Bouwel (2014) indicates that graduates with international experience tend to receive better initial and intermediate incomes.

Zheng (2014) conducts a thorough examination, investigating several factors such as wealth, population, and bilateral connections that impact the patterns of student movement. Comprehending these factors and the amount of money spent per student ( de Wit et al., 2015) is essential for recruiting international talent.Shields (2019) offers an insightful viewpoint on the ecological consequences of global student mobility. Given the ongoing evolution of student mobility, it is imperative to adopt a comprehensive approach that considers the economic, educational, and environmental advantages. Obviously, the factors that drive the movement of international students are complex and continuously changing.

Multiple Factors: Although economic issues are significant, student choices are influenced by a multifaceted interaction of elements such as government policies, educational options, cultural encounters, career ambitions, and self-perception. The worldwide education environment transforms as traditional migration patterns change and developing economies gain prominence. This transformation results in a dynamic tapestry influenced by policy, preference, and perception. Though abundant research exists on the movement of international students, there still needs to be a significant gap in our understanding of the precise variables that attract students to choose India as their destination.

Qamar, 2022 offers a valuable analysis of India's higher education policies and programmes and their influence on foreign reserves. Nevertheless, the inquiry into the

factors that genuinely attract overseas students to India's borders needs to be examined more. The shifting directions and disciplinary choices of international students in India reflect the evolving dynamics of the country's higher education system and the broader socio-economic and political landscape (Nataraja & Raju, 2011).

## DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION:

**Analysis by Level of Studies:**

Recent trends in the composition and preferences of international students in India shows that among all levels of education, the share of certificate programs is lower among international students, followed by those in other categories, which include traditional and vocational courses.Talking about inbound students based on level of study, those in certificate courses have shown an increase from 2011-12 to 2019-20, since then falling to a meagre 0.1% students from a peak of 1.0% in the year 2018-19, while those falling in others category, the numbers have shown a zig-zag movement (Table 1).

The mammoth share of international students is in Undergraduate courses, which accounts for every 3 in 4 total inbound students. The second highest share is for Postgraduate students, with 1 in 6 students studying at this level. The share of Undergraduate students increased to 78.2% in 2015-16 from 75.9% in 2011-12, then decreased to 75.7% in 2020-21. For postgraduate ones, their numbers have declined from 17.2% in 2011-12 to a low of 13.2% in 2016-17, then increased to 15.2% in 2020-21, but remained below the year 2016-17.

## ANALYSIS BY SUBJECTS:

It is apparent from Table 2 that thought the lowest share of International inbound students in India is in agriculture, with a meagre value of 0.1% in 2011-12,buthas increased significantly to 1.1% in 2020-21. The highest jump was in engineering and technology, which saw a threefold rise in the study period from 15.6% in 2011-12 to 32.3% in

**Table 1 : Distribution of International Students by Level of Programmes**
(Figures in Percentage)

| Years | Level of Programmes | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Certificate | Diploma | UG | PG | Integrated | Doctoral | Other |
| 2011-12 | 0.2 | 2.0 | 75.9 | 17.2 | 0.7 | 3.5 | 0.4 |
| 2012-13 | 0.5 | 2.4 | 76.8 | 15.9 | 0.8 | 3.1 | 0.5 |
| 2013-14 | 0.8 | 2.5 | 76.5 | 15.9 | 1.0 | 2.8 | 0.5 |
| 2014-15 | 0.5 | 2.8 | 77.1 | 14.9 | 0.7 | 3.5 | 0.3 |
| 2015-16 | 0.5 | 3.1 | 78.2 | 13.3 | 1.0 | 3.5 | 0.3 |
| 2016-17 | 0.6 | 3.5 | 76.5 | 13.2 | 1.0 | 4.5 | 0.7 |
| 2017-18 | 0.4 | 2.8 | 77.1 | 13.3 | 1.1 | 4.8 | 0.5 |
| 2018-19 | 1.0 | 4.6 | 73.1 | 14.6 | 1.3 | 4.8 | 0.6 |
| 2019-20 | 1.0 | 3.7 | 74.0 | 15.3 | 1.1 | 4.5 | 0.5 |
| 2020-21 | 0.1 | 3.4 | 75.7 | 15.2 | 1.4 | 4.0 | 0.3 |

*Source: Computed by the authors from data obtained from AISHE Annual Reports for different years*

**Table 2 : Distribution of International Students by Discipline of Studies**
(Figures in Percentage)

| Years | Disciplines | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Agriculture | Commerce & Management | Engineering & Technology | Liberal Arts | Medicines | Sciences | Other |
| 2011-12 | 0.1 | 20.9 | 15.6 | 16.1 | 24.9 | 17.1 | 5.2 |
| 2012-13 | 0.1 | 19.4 | 13.9 | 17.5 | 28.0 | 16.3 | 4.8 |
| 2013-14 | 0.2 | 19.0 | 17.2 | 15.5 | 26.3 | 16.4 | 5.5 |
| 2014-15 | 0.2 | 21.0 | 17.2 | 17.3 | 22.6 | 16.0 | 5.8 |
| 2015-16 | 0.2 | 20.8 | 20.3 | 15.1 | 21.7 | 16.0 | 5.8 |
| 2016-17 | 0.2 | 21.0 | 21.7 | 14.0 | 20.1 | 15.5 | 7.6 |
| 2017-18 | 0.4 | 18.0 | 24.8 | 13.7 | 20.1 | 16.5 | 6.6 |
| 2018-19 | 0.5 | 16.6 | 27.4 | 13.0 | 17.6 | 15.6 | 9.4 |
| 2019-20 | 0.5 | 16.1 | 28.0 | 12.9 | 17.8 | 16.7 | 7.8 |
| 2020-21 | 1.1 | 18.9 | 32.3 | 11.7 | 13.4 | 16.2 | 6.4 |

*Source: Computed by the authors from data obtained from AISHE Annual Reports for different Years*

2020-21. The area of commerce and management studies declined from 20.9% in 2011-12 to 18.9% in 2020-21. The students enrolled in the area of medicine also declined from 24.9% in 2011-12 to 13.4% in 2020-21. Students in science and liberal arts also witnessed a marginal decrease, from 17.1% to 16.2% and 16.1% to 11.7%, respectively. For unspecified areas which do not fall into any of these categories, there was also a littlerise from 5.2% to 6.4%

## ANALYSIS BY REGIONS:

The Table 3 reveals that India draws fewest students from South American countries among all continental regions. Asia sends the largest contingent of international students to India, with a more than seventy percent shareover this the study period. However, their numbers have decreased from 72.8% to 70.8%. The students coming from Africa has increased from 20.7% to 22.5% during the study period. This reaffirming India's position in providing quality education at affordable and competitive costs.

The share of North America also continues to be low, at 3.9% to 4.7%, and that of Europe decreased from 1.9% to 1.3% over the period of this study. However, the number of inbound students from Oceania has decreased from 0.8% to 0.2%, although their share is negligible.Table:3.

## ANALYSIS BY GENDER COMPOSITION:

Table 4 shows the gender composition of inbound international students in India. The share of male international inbound students has increased to 67.9% from 62.8% over the period of this study. Further, Table 4 shows that the Female to Male Ratio (FTMR) has remained low, indicating lower participation of female students than males. Their share in total number has

**Table 3 : Distribution of International Students by Region**
(Figures in Percentage)

| Years | Regions | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Africa | Asia | Europe | North America | Oceania | South America |
| 2011-12 | 20.7 | 72.8 | 1.9 | 3.9 | 0.8 | 0.1 |
| 2012-13 | 23.8 | 70.2 | 1.5 | 3.4 | 0.5 | 0.5 |
| 2013-14 | 24.6 | 69.4 | 1.2 | 4.2 | 0.1 | 0.1 |
| 2014-15 | 25.2 | 69.5 | 1.2 | 3.5 | 0.1 | 0.1 |
| 2015-16 | 25.2 | 69.0 | 1.7 | 3.5 | 0.1 | 0.1 |
| 2016-17 | 24.7 | 68.2 | 1.6 | 4.2 | 0.3 | 0.3 |
| 2017-18 | 24.7 | 68.4 | 2.5 | 3.8 | 0.1 | 0.1 |
| 2018-19 | 23.8 | 70.0 | 1.2 | 4.4 | 0.1 | 0.1 |
| 2019-20 | 22.5 | 70.8 | 1.3 | 4.7 | 0.2 | 0.2 |
| 2020-21 | 22.6 | 69.4 | 1.8 | 5.7 | 0.4 | 0.1 |
| 2021-22 | | | | | | |

*Source: Computed by the authors from data obtained from AISHE Annual Reports for different Years*

**Table 4 : Distribution of International Students by Gender**
(Figures in Percentage)

| Years | Male | Female | Female to Male Ratio |
|---|---|---|---|
| (FTMR) | | | |
| 2011-12 | 62.8 | 37.2 | 59.1 |
| 2012-13 | 62.8 | 37.2 | 59.1 |
| 2013-14 | 64.7 | 35.3 | 54.6 |
| 2014-15 | 65.9 | 34.1 | 51.6 |
| 2015-16 | 66.4 | 33.6 | 50.7 |
| 2016-17 | 66.8 | 33.2 | 49.7 |
| 2017-18 | 68.0 | 32.0 | 47.0 |
| 2018-19 | 68.3 | 31.7 | 46.4 |
| 2019-20 | 66.5 | 33.5 | 50.3 |
| 2020-21 | 67.9 | 32.1 | 47.3 |
| 2021-22 | | | |

*Source: Computed by the authors from data obtained from AISHE Annual Reports for different Years*

**Table 5 : International Students to Gross Enrollment in Higher Education Ratio in India**

| Year | No. of International Students | Gross Enrollment in Higher Education | International Students to GE Ratio (Figures in Percentage) |
|---|---|---|---|
| 2011-12 | 33,151 | 1,96,23,510 | 0.17 |
| 2012-13 | 34,774 | 2,33,37,942 | 0.15 |
| 2013-14 | 39,517 | 2,71,81,300 | 0.15 |
| 2014-15 | 42,293 | 3,05,63,678 | 0.14 |
| 2015-16 | 45,424 | 3,13,64,400 | 0.14 |
| 2016-17 | 47,575 | 3,24,05,484 | 0.15 |
| 2017-18 | 46,144 | 3,26,96,116 | 0.14 |
| 2018-19 | 47,427 | 3,27,71,899 | 0.14 |
| 2019-20 | 49,348 | 3,40,15,894 | 0.15 |
| 2020-21 | 48,035 | 3,58,51,374 | 0.13 |
| 2021-22 | | | |

*Source: Computed by the authors from data obtained from AISHE Annual Reports for different Years*

continuously decreased over the period of this study, decreasing to 47.3% from a high ratio of 59.1% in 2011-12 and 2012-13

## ANALYSIS BY RATIO:

Data in Table 5 shows that the ratio of International Students to Gross Enrolment in higher education in India has consistently remained negligible. Although the actual numbers of international students have increased during the study period, their share in overall higher education enrolment has decreased from a highratio of 0.17% in 2011-12 to 0.13% in 2020-21.

## SUMMARY, FINDINGS, AND CONCLUSION:

International student mobility has both positive and negative implications for higher education. Although studying abroad promotes cultural interchange and intellectual development (H. De Wit & Hunter, 2015), it also presents students with obstacles such as cultural assimilation, visa intricacies, and financial limitations (Kirloskar & Inamdar, 2021). India must directly confront these concerns as it strives to attract international students. Although it is commendable to aim for more enrolment, a narrow emphasis on numerical growth should consider crucial considerations such as the quality of education and the availability of enough resources. Conducting a thorough assessment and implementing strategic enhancements is crucial before initiating a vigorous expansion.

Statistics indicate a persistent pattern in student demographics despite variations in the actual figures. 92% of the group are Asians and Africans. However, there has been a significant increase in the proportion of individuals from North America.

Most students (78%) are enrolled in undergraduate programmes, whereas postgraduate and PhD programmes are experiencing decrease in enrolment. The demand for Engineering and Technology programmes has increased by 32%, while interest in Humanities and arts has fallen.

There has been a shift in the equilibrium of scientific disciplines. Applied and Pure Sciences currently garner a more significant number of students than Medicine, which encompasses paramedical and AYUSH programmes. Engineering has emerged as the predominant preference, exceeding both Medicine and Sciences.Liberal Arts programmes have experienced a notable decline in enrolment, resulting in a loss of appeal.

Asia is the primary region from which overseas students originate, but its proportion has slightly decreased. Africa has experienced a slight rise. Europe, Oceania, and South America have a limited impact, whereas North America is the most significant contributor. There has been a notable decrease in female students, reducing the ratio of females to males.

The sluggish response to internationalization of higher education in India might be attributed to multiple factors. Potential students may be deterred by domestic, cultural, political, and socio-economic reasons. In addition, Indian universities have demonstrated inflexibility in adjusting to a globalised academic environment. A significant concern is the restricted number of institutions with the authority to admit international students. This imposes limitations on accessibility and inclusivity.

In addition, although there has been significant development, the enrolment of overseas students in Agriculture and fundamental Sciences programmes is lower compared to Engineering and Medicine. Indian higher education system may be disregarding the potential benefits that international students might provide. Systemic limitations may also impede their endeavours to expand globally.

Individual universities' need for more independence is occasionally viewed as a hindrance to global expansion. Insufficient knowledge of Indian campuses and programmes can also discourage students. Furthermore, more infrastructure, physical resources, and self-imposed inflexibility in teaching and learning approaches can help global aspirations.By leveraging their global proficiency, private universities can have a pivotal impact in enticing and assisting a heterogeneous student population. We must recognize the evolving patterns in the locations where resources originate and the options available for programmes.

It is crucial to carefully examine these changes and adjust the services institutions provide to achieve a continuous increase in the number of international students. By promoting "hidden gems," ?colleges providing specialised programmes or unique offers can attract students seeking specific information and experience. International student mobility offers a promising prospect for India's higher education sector. Nevertheless, to genuinely establish itself as a favoured location, India must confront its internal obstacles, improve the standard of its institutions, and simplify its visa procedures. Indian institutions must abandon their inflexibility, adopt innovation, and actively access the international student population. India can establish a unique position in the constantly changing field of international education by creating a hospitable atmosphere that addresses the varied requirements of international students.

## POLICY IMPLICATIONS:

The appeal of luring international students to India is unquestionable. However, other challenges need to be carefully evaluated and revised to achieve the goal of becoming a leading global education centre. Although India is typically praised for its cost-effectiveness, a more detailed examination reveals a more complex and nuanced situation.

Indeed, an analysis of tuition prices and living expenditures could portray India as a cost-effective option. Nevertheless, this benefit is much reduced compared to the financial assistance options provided by prominent higher education destinations. In contrast to other countries where scholarships, teaching assistantships, and on-campus jobs are commonly available, India provides limited financial assistance beyond a few minor tuition concessions under the "Study in India" programme.

India's perceived intellectual excellence needs to improve its attractiveness. Although India has famous institutions, they comprise a tiny portion of the entire higher education system. Most universities fall significantly short compared to global leaders, resulting in a significant disparity in quality that discourages discerning students.

How can India narrow these disparities and attract global intellect? Here are some essential factors to consider. It is crucial to prioritise the upgrading of a substantial number of universities. Expanding the range of institutions that provide excellent education will draw on a broader variety of overseas students. We need to go beyond the remittance-centric approach. Increasing opportunities such as teaching assistantships and part-time employment will offer crucial financial assistance to international students. Streamlining the application procedure, visa prerequisites, and scholarship details is crucial.

An integrated and transparent framework will minimise obstacles for potential students. India's diverse cultural heritage, stunning natural scenery, and distinctive educational opportunities should be shown alongside its academic prowess. However, tackling these difficulties necessitates a fundamental change in approach. Scholarship programmes should be meticulously crafted to appeal to the most talented individuals and deter potential abuse.

In India, post-study employment permits, commonly found in other nations, need to be revised. Providing this possibility will motivate overseas students to view India not only as a destination for education but also as a starting point for their professional endeavours.

To successfully attract international students, it is necessary to employ a comprehensive and diverse strategy. By recognising the limitations of the existing system, making substantial investments in comprehensive education, and offering strong financial and career opportunities, India has the potential to surpass its competitive advantage and become a preferred destination for international students seeking a top-notch education and a culturally immersive experience.

The National Education Policy (NEP 2020) recommends many such policy and procedural changes which could make India a lucrative destination for higher education. As the policy completes five years of its pronouncement, it would have been interesting to analyse the changes in the number, direction and composition of International students in India. Sadly, however, the post policy data is not available as yet. The All India Survey of Higher Education (AISHE), the only data source on higher education, including the inflow of international students, used to be released annually with a time lag of one year. The latest available edition of the AISHE is available only up to 2021-22.

Till the post policy data are available, it may only be said that India's aspiration to become a global hub for higher education has many hurdles to cross. Attracting

international students demands a deep understanding of the country's appeal and complexities. Nevertheless, there are obstacles to overcome to establish itself as a leading centre for education globally (Pawar & Dasgupta, 2024). A significant challenge that needs to be addressed is how India is seen. India's brand image in the worldwide education business is less developed than established countries like the US and the UK. In addition, intricate visa procedures and bureaucratic obstacles can discourage prospective students (Urias & Camp Yeakey, 2009).

Imagine a Vietnamese student wanting to study in India encountering a maze of visa applications and confusing information. This resentment could derail his aspirations. Cost worries many students, especially those from developing nations. The US and UK, famed for their top universities, occasionally need significant investments. However, India offers globally recognised degrees at reduced prices.

Adopting a comprehensive and multifaceted strategy is crucial to conquering these problems (Yeravdekar, 2016). By optimising visa procedures and implementing focused promotional activities that highlight the advantages of Indian institutions, a hospitable atmosphere can be established (Urias & Camp Yeakey, 2009). In addition, cultivating robust industry linkages can provide overseas students with lucrative internship and employment prospects after they complete their studies. This approach examines the consequences of luring international students to India, focusing on affordability, excellent education, and a distinctive cultural experience.

By comprehending the enticing opportunities and complex obstacles, India can significantly transform and become a prominent education hub in the global marketplace.However, discounting India's educational potential is a mistake. The nation has many untapped potentials.

The path towards becoming a prominent centre for global education is filled with potential and challenges. Still, the journey has obstacles. Although well-intentioned, the "Study in India" programme requires additional thrust. Implementing a more efficient visa process, providing scholarships similar to those offered by ICCR and Nehru Trust, and actively promoting India's academic prowess internationally are essential measures.

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*About Cover Page:*

Whispers of self-discovery:

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The drawings on the tapestry symbolize whispers of self–discovery, strengthening identity, and intertwining varied life experiences-

- Ela Mukherjee - Jyotsna Bhatt awardee

# IMPLEMENTATION NEP-2020: GOVERNMENT, UGC, AND UNIVERSITIES INTERFACE - A REVIEW

G D SHARMA *

*Effective implementation of **NEP 2020** requires strong coordination between the **Government, the University Grants Commission (UGC), and universities**. This paper highlights the UGC's role in operationalizing the policy through various guidelines and regulations, identifies areas where government action is still pending, and discusses challenges faced by universities in translating the policy into practice.*

## THE UGC INITIATIVES:

Since 2014, the UGC has issued approximately 70 guidelines, and during 2020-25, 47 Guidelines specifically addressed to NEP 2020 governance and university functions. Fourteen additional Regulations since 2021 focus on management standards in higher education. To understand UGC's support and monitoring of NEP-2020-its mandate to coordinate and maintain standards-we must examine the nature and purpose underlying these guidelines and regulations.

*In a system of governance, there have always been two approaches: one was based on supporting, guiding, and facilitating the constituents of the system, and the other one based on control, regulation, threat, and punishment to make the constituents fall in line.*

Before analyzing the impact of Guidelines and Regulations on higher education standards and NEP-2020 implementation, it is vital to understand why the University Grants Commission was created. As its name implies, UGC was meant to fund universities to coordinate, maintain, and enhance standards of higher education. While the concept had a UK precedent, in India, it was rooted in the Constitution, assigning responsibility for higher education standards to the Central Government within India's federal system.

**The UGC:** University Education Commission, set up in 1948, headed by S. Radhakrishnan, made recommendations for setting up of body for ensuring standards and quality of higher education. The University Education Commission also laid several standard operating procedures for the functioning of the university system. The guiding principle under the federal structure was setting up a body that inspires confidence among the centre and states and is professionally governed to achieve its aims and objects.

Accordingly, the structure of governance of it was conceived as autonomous, more academically oriented through an Act of Parliament, and to make it accountable to the parliament. The one and only governing body was titled as "Commission "and its composition had 12 members, two official members, namely, Chairperson, Vice Chairperson from within the Commission, and two official members -one each from the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Finance, in particular, Expenditure Secretary. The rest were academics - the Vice Chancellor and eminent academics. In my personal view, this is the best system of autonomous professional system of governance, and it has stood the test of time for nearly six decades or so. Although NEP-2020 proposes to change it by setting up a body titled "Higher Education Commission of India "(HECI), that has not happened as yet.

**Approaches:** In a system of governance, there have always been two approaches: one was based on supporting, guiding, and facilitating the constituents of the system, and the other one based on control, regulation, threat, and punishment to make the constituents fall in line. The former is more enlightened and democratic, and the latter is doubting/suspecting, and controlling even in a democratic framework. The composition of governance and approach of the UGC was of the former type. Hence, many academics, even my mentor Professor Amrik Singh, the then Secretary of the Association of Indian Universities (AIU), used to say UGC does not have enough teeth to regulate academics. And I used to differ with him always.

**The Guidelines:** Broadly adhering to the former approach, it carried out its two distinguished functions, namely, guiding, consulting, visioning, and providing funds for the implementation of its vision. Which is often formulated through the National Policy on Education and five-year development plans (This was till 2014, when the Planning Commission and planning process were dismantled.) For guidance, it formulated Guidelines on a particular aspect as Standard Operating Procedure, which every constituent was advised to follow, and funds were provided for implementing the guidelines, as most of the guidelines were for carrying out policy and plan implementation. Examples are: guidelines for Autonomous Colleges, Guidelines for Centres of Advanced Studies in universities, Guidelines for providing development grants

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to state universities and colleges, and so on.

**The Regulations:** Then there was a regulation that was meant to regulate the system to ensure the standards are maintained by the institution during its operation. One of the examples of regulation is academic qualifications, the process of recruitment and remuneration- pay scales, service conditions of teachers and other academic staff in institutions of higher education. This regulation was also supposed to be implemented by the state government institutions in consultation and with financial support from the Central Government to implement its regulation with a proviso of difference in Dearness allowances as per state government provisions. However, academic qualifications were required to be adhered to by the central as well as state-governed institutions of higher education. This applied to partially funded by state or central governments and by" not-for-profit run institutions". Since teachers were vital to the maintenance of standards in the system, regulations issued by the UGC with approval and Gazette Notification became sort of binding as far as the academic aspects were concerned.

Having reflected on the concept and approach of Guidelines and Regulations, let us examine the kind of Guidelines and Regulations issued during the last 10 years and in particular after the announcement of NEP-2020. Let me briefly reflect on the framing of national policy on education, in particular higher education, so as to enable us to understand and appreciate the purpose of the Guidelines and Regulations issued during this period.

The efforts for framing of education policy were on since the setting up of two committees. One entitled Knowledge Education Commission, headed by Sam Pitroda, a technocrat located in the USA ,but close to the then ruling party in power. There was another committee set up under the Chairmanship of the former Chairman of UGC and an eminent scientist, Professor Yaspal. Even at the fag end of the then government under UPA, an attempt was made to set up an education commission to formulate the national policy on education. But that did not happen.

**The Initiative by NDA:** The present government, headed by NDA, has also started work on framing the policy. Detailed deliberations were made all over the country, and a committee was set up under the Chairmanship of Shri Subramanian former IAS officer, which produced a report. However, this report was not carried through by the government. Followed by this a committee headed by Dr. K. Kasturi Rangam,eminent scientist and the then Chairman of Indian Space Research Organization, was set up. This committee produced a report, and the new education policy was framed based on this report by the Ministry of Education. The earlier policies were placed in the Parliament and approved by the Parliament, but this policy was not placed in parliament for its consideration. Hence, no consensus was reached on the policy under the federal structure of governance of India. Nevertheless, policy, as far as higher education aspects are concerned, has several out-of-the-box recommendations.

Key Aspect of NEP-2020: We may reflect on some of the key aspects of NEP 2020 to relate to UGC Guidelines and Regulations. These can be grouped in five categories, namely, Structural, Curricular, Quality Assurance, Internationalization, and Financing.

## I. STRUCTURAL REFORMS:

1. Setting up the Higher Education Commission of India (HECI) with three verticals, General Education, Research, and Funding, and consolidating several agencies, namely, UGC, AICTE, NCTE, and so on.
2. Three types of Universities, namely, Research-intensive and Teaching, Teaching and Research, Granting status of eminence to select Universities, and Degree Granting Autonomous Colleges. The last one is a new concept and setting up of a Multidisciplinary Research University (MERU) of Global standards.
3. Degree Programmes: Three and Four-Year Undergraduate degrees with the flexibility to leave and re-enter after every year, with a proviso of a time period. One-year master's programme after a four-year UG degree, also the possibility to do research after a one-year degree programme

## II. CURRICULAR REFORMS:

1. Multidisciplinary and outcome-based education
2. Introduction of soft skills, namely, values, life skills, and internship,
3. Introduction of the credit system and accumulation and recall of credit through the Academic Bank of Credit

## III. QUALITY ASSURANCE:

1. National Eligibility Test for recruitment of Teachers in higher Education
2. Qualifications and service conditions of teachers, academic administrative, and other staff in higher education
3. Professional Development and Orientation of Teachers
4. National Accreditation and Assessment Framework - NAAC and other accredited assessment bodies, and the National Institutional Ranking system

## IV. INTERNATIONALIZATION:

1. Promotion of Foreign University Campus in India and Indian University Campus abroad
2. International Collaboration- Research, Teaching -dual and joint degree programme and faculty exchange

## V. FINANCING OF HIGHER EDUCATION:

1. Enhancing allocation on education and higher education -leading to 6 % GDP over the period of five years and increasing at the rate of 20 % every year. Corresponding increase in higher education and research

Let us examine how UGC Guidelines and Regulations have responded to these key policy aspects. We will take up these aspects one by one.

## I. ACADEMIC STRUCTURAL REFORMS:

The first aspect (HECI) falls under the domain of the Ministry of Education, and so far constitution has not been placed. The second reform of classifying universities as Research Intensive, Teaching and Research, both at centrally and state-sponsored universities, has not been classified. Degree degree-granting status of colleges has yet to be accorded. The same is true of setting up MERU. These aspects require amendment or enactment of a new Act of Parliament. These have not taken place as yet. These do not fall under the domain of the UGC.

The concept of Institutions of Eminence falls under the UGC domain. The UGC issued a regulation in 2017. UGC (Institutions of Eminence Deemed to be Universities) Regulations, 2017, even prior to the announcement of NEP 2020. Under the regulation and Guidelines, 10 public Institutions with Administrative and Financial autonomy and with financial support of Rs. 1000 Crores, and 10 Private Institutions with administrative and financial autonomy and without financial support were proposed to be given the status of eminence. Over the period and till 2023, 10 Public Institutions and 10 Private institutions were given the status of eminence. There was an allocation of Rs. 10,000 crores for public institutions. The utilization of funds varied among the institutions. It ranged from 40 to 90 percent. Allocation on this project has been reduced by 75% in 2025 due to underutilization. The Empowered Expert Committee (EEC) has been inactive since 2021. There is tension between the Central and State governments about the implementation. IISC Bangalore had a high absorption, i.e., 90 percent, and attained a higher international rank. The lowest absorption was in Delhi University. It had governance and absorption challenges. UGC needs to look at its SOP -Guidelines, and also needs to make implementation effective by activating EEC. Reduction in budgetary allocation to the tune of 76 Percent indicates that challenges of implementation led the project to fall apart.

## DEGREE GRANTING STATUS TO AUTONOMOUS COLLEGES:

A brief mention of the concept of Autonomy to Colleges and degree-granting status to autonomous colleges is pertinent here. The concept of Autonomous Colleges was introduced in the 1986 National Education Policy and was reiterated in 1992. The University Grants Commission Issued revised Guidelines on Autonomous Colleges in January 2018 and provided support to colleges that sought and declared autonomy. But the concept moved at a very snail's pace. It ran into conflict between the university and colleges, the state government, and the teacher union and colleges. As of 2023, there are 750 Autonomous Colleges. The public sector accounts for 400 colleges and the private sector for 350 colleges. This compares very poorly with nearly 43 thousand affiliated colleges in the higher education system. The UGC issued Regulations in 2023 titled UGC (Conferment of Autonomous Status upon Colleges and Measures for Maintenance of Standards in Autonomous Colleges) Regulations, 2023. The UGC became proactive by allowing colleges to submit the proposal directly to the UGC for granting autonomy to colleges. It also granted autonomy to colleges. However, some colleges in Madhya Pradesh are experiencing resistance from the affiliating university.

This is one of the major "out of the box "reforms that would make the system of higher education more responsive to challenges of curricular reforms, the system of evaluation, and innovations. As a large part of higher education is being done through colleges (86 % of students are enrolled in Colleges), this single reform can change the landscape of human resource development and quality of contribution to economic and social development by the colleges in India. But alas, it is waiting for decades. The Government of India needs to act as early as possible to amend the Act of UGC Act or bring out a new Act to allow a third tier of higher education with degree-granting status.

## DEGREE PROGRAMMES:

One of the important structural changes recommended by NEP-2020 was a three and four-year undergraduate degree programme. UGC has come out with guidelines for implementing the change by the institutions of higher education. It issued "UGC (Minimum Standards of Instruction for the Grant of Undergraduate Degree and Postgraduate Degree) Regulations, 2025". Through these regulations UG programme was made of four years with flexible entry and exit and accumulation of credits at each level. It made provision for the award of a certificate after completion of one year, and Diploma after completion of two years, and degree after completion of three years, and ahonours degree with provision of research work on completion of four years. From 2025, it proposes to make it mandatory for admission to PG courses. Post-graduate degree is for two years. But by making it mandatory that future PG programmes would be of one year only. The mandatory clause for this structural change undermines the "flexibility "concept and also severely impinges on the autonomy of institutions of higher education. It also impinges on the federal structure and the constitutional

provision of Education being on the concurrent list. On the ground, hasty implementation has posed several challenges pertaining contents of courses for the fourth year. Need for creation of extra classrooms and infrastructures, labs, and so on in the undergraduate colleges. Faculty recruitment and their reorientation and the system of evaluation, capturing skills and research aspects, structure change.

## CURRICULAR REFORMS:

The curricular reforms have been one of the key recommendations of NEP-2020. Introduction of interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary courses, flexibility in terms offer of the programmes, thereby breaking silos of disciplines and clearly defining the credits for Major, Minor, Multidisciplinary, and values and life skills, and internships. The UGC has come up with at least 7-8 guidelines on various aspects of curricular reforms. It issues clear guidelines on structure and credit system for three and four-year degree programmes and transforming institutions into a Multidisciplinary orientation. It issued guidelines for values and life skills. It issued the Higher Education Qualification Framework and credit framework. Guidelines for the internship and apprenticeship embedded degree programme, guidelines for the introduction Indian Knowledge system and Indian Heritage and culture. Guidelines for recognition of Prior Learning in higher education, and also for the introduction of environmental education. Academic Bank of Credit-ABC, which was initiated even prior to the announcement of NEP-2020, gave technological support to implement curricular reforms. The UGC has been very active in issuing guidelines on curricular reforms after 2022 and continued to do so till 2025. This appears to have left little scope for imagination, innovations, and evolutions at the institutional level. It has yet to be seen how much of it has been adopted and implemented at the ground level. It may be mentioned that these are guidelines and have some scope for modification and adoption, yet suggestions coming from the apex organization are often viewed as a mandate. It is learnt that UGC has often made institutions implement its Guidelines as it holds the purse of central universities and colleges affiliated to central universities. The positive aspect is space of implementation is not left vacant owing to a lack of information, suggestions, and SOPs. Yet tends to snatch initiative and possibly the scope of innovations and commitment at the institutional level.

## QUALITY ASSURANCE:

As part of quality assurance, along with other aspects, the UGC has been conducting the National Eligibility Test for those who are seeking recruitment and research fellowships in higher education. It has also issued Regulations for the conduct of such tests at the respective state level for the recruitment of teachers in government and other institutions of higher education.

It has issued regulations for qualifications and service conditions for the recruitment of teachers and other academic administration staff in institutions of higher education amendment in 2024. These regulations, however, ran into controversy as they outlined the composition of the committee for the appointment of Vice Chancellors in Indian universities. Earlier regulations did not have this provision, as recruitment is governed by the Act of the respective university, and this act specifies the composition of the selection committee. Besides, regulations also opened the scope for other than academic persons to get selected from other professions or industry without having the requisite teaching experience in the University.

## PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF TEACHERS IN HIGHER EDUCATION:

Like the concept of autonomous colleges, a concept of professional development and orientation of teachers was introduced a part of the implementation National Policy on Education, 1986. Initially, under the name of Academic Staff Colleges, set up in several Universities. Later on, it was renamed the Human Resource Development Centre, as part of the career and professional development of teachers. It had two sets of programmes of three weeks' duration. One was for the orientation of young teachers, and the other was three weeks of professional development in their respective subjects. These programmes were residential and face-to-face.NEP 2020, while retaining the system, also introduced online faculty development programmes. UGC issued guidelines in 2019. It launched a large-scale online programme of one week about the NEP-2020 with designed curricula. About a hundred such centres. MMTP centre, along with HRD Centres in universities, was identified to carry out such a programme online. Through online programmes conducted by these centres, it appears to have reached a large number of teachers in higher education and made them aware of key aspects of NEP 2020 and the strategies to implement it in their respective institutions. This was done by HRDC and the 111 Malviya Mission Teacher Training Programme for continuous professional development through structured modules. It emphasizes digital tools, Indian languages, and inclusiveness.

The National Assessment and Accreditation Council was set up by UGC in 1994 as an external quality assurance organization for institutions of higher education. It worked on Institutional quality assurance and assessed universities and colleges, and awarded grades based on criteria and formula of grading formula and peer review recommendations. Recently, it has run into a problem owing to alleged corruption in the system. Yet it has been able to grade universities and Colleges in

the country. Now it is being thought of as a binary system of assessment and accreditation, namely accredited or not accredited, instead of grading. The NEP-2020 has envisaged expanding the role of assessment and accreditation by setting up such a system through accredited bodies and the assessment and accreditation of colleges. However, no such change has taken place as yet. Hence implementation of this aspect of NEP-2020 is still awaited.

## INTERNATIONALIZATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION:

The government of India and the UGC have been engaged in responding internationalization of higher education even prior to the issue of NEP-2020. In fact, a new concept of internationalization started when the recruitment of students by foreign universities began in India. This activity gained legitimacy with the Formation of the World Trade Organization (1995) -A multilateral arrangement as part of liberalizing trade in goods and services. Education was one of the 19 services listed under the trade in services. The Ministry of Education set up a committee for the regulation and promotion of higher education globally. Some of the foreign universities wanted to set up a campus in India. But the law of the land provides that only universities set up under state or central legislation or section 3 of the UGC Act could award a degree to students. Hence, there was an issue of recognition of degrees. WTO -GATS provided for mutual recognition by institutions of respective countries. The progress on internationalization was, or to say so, one-sided. A large number of students went to the USA, UK, and Australia for their studies, but a very few students came to India for their studies. And foreign universities could not set up a campus in India. Some collaborative programmes were operating in India.

Foreign University Campus in India: Under the provisions of NEP-2020, the UGC framed the regulations for setting up of foreign university campus in India. Ministry of Finance under the provision Fintech SEZ under the GoI -International Finance Services Act 2019. also made provision for setting up a foreign university campus in Gift City, in Gujarat. Under the UGC regulations for setting up campuses and operation of Foreign Higher Education Institutions in India,2023.foreign universities have applied for setting up a campus in India. Two universities have already set up campuses in Gift City, and a proposal for setting up four universities in Mumbai Education City seems to have been approved. Two universities have set up campuses in Gurgaon and Noida. Details of objectives and the foreign university campus in India have been published in the College Post -April-June, 2025. Here, a brief observation may be made that the UGC regulations, as well as SEZ provisions, may possibly run into legal issues. Many of the universities applied to UGC do not conform to the norms laid down in regulations. Besides the regulations, also diluted policy intended norms for eminent universities to set up campuses in India, by allowing universities holding ranks above the cohort of 200 in Times Higher Education or QS ranking to apply for setting up a campus in India.

## REGULATIONS ON INTERNATIONAL COLLABORATION:

UGC has also come out with Regulations on (Academic Collaboration between Indian and Foreign Higher Education Institutions to offer Twinning, Joint Degree and Dual Degree Programmes) in 2021. This facilitated Indian Universities to tie up with foreign universities for several academic programmes/ exchanges. There are reports that this scheme has worked well. There are 400 such collaborations with Indian Universities. A paper published in College Post -April-June, 2025, revealed that on average, one could observe from the advertisements issued by the Private Universities tie up with five to six countries and 8-10 foreign universities. A random analysis of universities located in Gurugram showed that such collaboration with foreign universities ranges from 5-22 countries and 8-41 programmes. More than foreign universities' campuses in India as part of the internationalization of higher education. This collaboration, if carried out effectively, may cause changes in the higher education landscape in India.

## FINANCING OF HIGHER EDUCATION:

NEP-2020 promised to increase the allocation of funds on education to 6 percent of GDP by 2030, increasing the allocation on education by 20 percent every year. Accordingly corresponding increase in higher education to implement the policy. As discussed, allocation of funds is done Government of India to UGC, and UGC, in turn, allocates funds to Institutions of higher education for carrying out reforms as envisaged in policy and also on meeting the capital and recurring expenses of Central Universities, Colleges Affiliated to Central Universities, Deemed to be universities supported by the UGC, and inter-university centres. The UGC also provides grants to state universities and colleges affiliated to state universities for their development and implementation of reforms. State Universities and Colleges affiliated to state universities (including autonomous colleges) constitute a large part of the higher education system, both in terms of the number of institutions and students enrolled among them. Since 2000, several universities have been set up through private university (self-financed) Acts of respective states. Several private (self-financed) colleges have also come up during the last two decades. The UGC provides grants to state-funded universities and colleges, as well as colleges set up by philanthropists as not-for-profit institutions and registered under section 2f and 12B of the University Grants Commission. Their figures in 9000

colleges and about 500 state universities.

Analysis of the finances of the UGC for the years 2020-21 to 2023-24 shows there is very little increase in funds given to the UGC. After the announcement of the policy, it was expected that a certain scheme of implementation, along with funding for the implementation of the scheme, would also be worked out. However, as revealed from the analysis of data, it has not happened so far except for one scheme of funds for world-class university-university eminence. That also for the year 2022-23.

Distribution of Grants: The analysis of data revealed that a sum of Rs. 13135.14 was given as a grant to UGC in the year 2020-21. Out of this, the UGC released a sum of Rs. 12716.7.Of this amount, more than 85.08 percent was for Central Universities, Central University Colleges, Deemed to be universities, and inter-university centres. Funds given to State Universities and Colleges accounted for less than 3 percent. Funds given to Colleges account for less than 0.05 percent during 2020-21. The trend of very high allocation to Central Sector and very low allocation to State sector institutions continued in the subsequent years. The figures for 2021-22, 2022-23, and 2023-24. The figures are 86.51%, 82.57%, and 82.81% respectively. The trend of funds given to State Universities and Colleges affiliated to state universities and listed at 2F and 12 B of the UGC Act was also the same over this period. It was 2020-21, 2.61 % and that for 2021-22, 2022-23, and 2023-24 were 3.3, 2.44, and 2.67. Of these funds given to colleges constitutes a very miniscule-less than 0.50%. Hence major amount of grants received has gone for mostly maintenance of universities and colleges of central universities and institutions of the central sector.

Increase in Grant: Over this period, grants released by UGC increased by only Rs. 932.02 croreie, 7.32 %in 2021-22 over 2020-21. The increase for the 2022-23 was 3449.01, i.e, 25.32 % this is mainly due to allocation for World Class Eminent Universities - part of the policy pronouncement. That for 2023-24 was Rs. 3077.32, i.e., 18.03 %. The increase in total grants given to UGC was 5.16 % in 2021-22 over 2020-21 and 23.35 % in 2022-23 over 2021-22 and 12.11% in 2023-24 over 2022-23. On average, for these years, it works out as only 16.89 % for the grant released by UGC and 16.48% for the grants

**Table No.1 : Grants and Release of grants by UGC to Institutions of Higher Education by years 2020-21 to 2023-24**

| Type of Institutions | % of total Released 2020-2021 | % of total Released 2021-2022 | % of total Released 2022-2023 | % of total Released 2023-2024 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| State Universities | 2.56 | 2.84 | 2.37 | 2.41 |
| College of State Universities | 0.05 | 0.46 | 0.08 | 0.27 |
| Central Universities | 63.79 | 62.13 | 61.09 | 60.77 |
| Colleges of Central Universities | 16.6 | 19.53 | 17.82 | 17.38 |
| Inter-University Centres | 1.26 | 1.36 | 1.33 | 1.24 |
| Institutions Deemed to be Universities | 3.43 | 3.49 | 2.33 | 3.44 |
| Miscellaneous/Non-Univ. &Instts. | 0.002 | 0.02 | 0.007 | 3.47 |
| Online Payments through Banks for Scholarships/ Felowships | 11.28 | 9.09 | 8.5 | 10.23 |
| Regional Centres | 0.08 | 0.22 | 0.00029 | |
| Administrative Charges (HO) | 0.88 | 0.79 | 0.67 | 0.7 |
| Administrative Charges (RO) | 0.06 | 0.05 | 0.034 | |
| Anti-Ragging Measures | 0.00008 | 0.02 | | 0.0035 |
| Institute of Eminence (IoE) | 0.003 | 0.002 | | |
| National Academic Depository (NAD) | 0.005 | 0.0025 | | |
| Distance Education Bureau (DEB) | | | 0.052 | |
| World Class Institutions or Institute of Eminence (IOE) | | | 5.72 | |
| Media Campaign Against Ragging | | | | 0 |
| Service Charges to Bank for DBT | | | | 0.09 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| Total Spent /Released in Rs. Crore | 12716.7 | 13618.09 | 17067.1 | 20144.42** |
| Percentage Change % Amt.Released | | 7.32% | 25.32% | 18.03% |
| Total Grants Received in Rs. Crore | 13135.13 | 13850.43 | 18069.86 | 20560.82 |
| Percentage Change %* Total Grants | | 5.16% | 23.35% | 12.11% |
| Average % Change for 3 years ** | 16.89% | | | |
| Average % Change for 3 years Based on Total Grants | 16.48% | | | |

*Source : Compiled from the UGC Annual Reports*

received by UGC. The grants received and grants released to institutions of higher education are far below the promised 20% increase every year. The details can be seen in Table No. 1.

## ALLOCATION OF FUNDS TO CENTRAL UNIVERSITIES, COLLEGES, AND INSTITUTIONS:

As observed above that more nearly 85 % funds have been allocated /released to Universities, Colleges, and institutions in the central sector, and a very small amount has been allocated to a vast number of universities and colleges in the state sector. Within Central sector institutions, more than half of the funds have gone for salaries of staff, and another more than one third, i.e, 33 percent, has gone for working expenses. The development funding / capital assets account for a very small proportion. It ranged from 4 to 8 percent over the four years. There does not appear to be any corresponding change in the allocation of funds for the implementation of NEP-2020. The system of higher education seems to have just sustained on old lines, even central sector. Details may be seen in Table 2 below:

**Table No.2 : Budget allocated to Central Universities** (in Rs.lakhs)

| Universities | Recurring (31) | Capital Assets (35) | Salary (36) | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Total 2020-21 | 424013.48 | 47821.75 | 799834.35 | 1271669.58 |
| percentage% | 33.34 | 3.76 | 62.89 | |
| Total 2021-22 | 462956.54 | 76251.24 | 822601.43 | 1361809.2 |
| Percentage % | 33.99 | 5.59 | 60.4 | |
| Total 2022-23 | 631820.84 | 148918.97 | 925971.63 | 1706711.44 |
| percentage % | 37.01 | 8.72 | 54.25 | |
| Total 2023-24 | 414821 | 83500 | 716942 | 1215263 |
| percentage% | 34.13 | 6.87 | 58.99 | |
| Total4 years | 1933611.86 | 356491.96 | 3265349.41 | 5555453.22 |
| Average Percentage% | 34.8 | 6.41 | 58.77 | |

*Source : Compiled from the UGC Annual Reports*

The fund allocation for the implementation of NEP-2020 is not commensurate with high-sounding policy pronouncements and Guidelines and Regulations issued by the UGC to implement the policy. The thrust seems to be on non-monetary aspects of implementation of policy, with a sort of Guidelines and Regulations, and through a push by circulars and notifications. The recent circular for implementation of the Year Degree programme, i.e., addition of one year in universities and colleges without a proper scheme for implementation and estimation of likely requirement of faculty, infrastructure, and changes in courses and their contents, system of delivery, and evaluation, is a stark example of making universities and colleges to implement it without resources inputs i.e. funds. It may be mentioned that when the scheme of Autonomous Colleges was launched under the previous policy, specific funding to colleges and universities was worked out; similarly, Academic Staff Development, renamed as the HRDC scheme, clear funds were allocated. So is true for all other reforms.

It appears that for the implementation of NEP-2020, the Government of India has not provided funds to the UGC and has not worked out estimates and a time frame for the implementation of the policy through various schemes and programmes. There appears a lack of piecemeal approach to implementing the policy. Therefore, there is a need to carry out a detailed analysis of the implementation of various aspects of policy through UGC Guidelines and Regulations at the ground level, particularly state universities and colleges affiliated to them. Also, to know how a large portion of the system that has emerged after 2000 under private (self-financing system) universities and colleges has responded to these reforms in higher education.

## TO SUM UP:

The NEP-2020 is an excellent document of intentions of change and reforms. Guidelines and Regulations issued by the UGC are also noteworthy, yet there is a clear lack of planning, timeframe, and funding for the implementation of the policy. There also seems to lack urgency at the government level to carry out fundamental structural changes at the apex level. There is also an issue of taking all the states on board for the implementation of the policy. A detailed review after five years of announcement of the policy may help resolve issues, if any, and give a new thrust for the implementation of this excellent document of intention.

*This column brings out briefs of: Ph.D, M.Phil Researches in Education, Economics of Education, Social, Political, Psychology aspects of education/ economics conducted in University /College departments. It also brings out briefs on researches done by Research Institutions, Industry and NGOs. This column was introduced from April-June, 2016 issue of College Post. Method of reporting the researches completed and in progress was given in that issue. Interested researchers, professors and Heads of institute are requested to send their brief accordingly. Purpose of this column is to high light the researches in education conducted in university and college departments and in any other institution / industry and NGO for the benefit of policy makers, research scholars, thinkers. Readers are welcome to encourage relevant person and institute to send briefs on research done and being done in education/ economics.*

This issue brings to you brief on following Researches in Education/Economics.

## PH. D THESIS:

Title of the Thesis : Financing of secondary education by public sector in India, Name of Researcher: Khanna, Pallavi Name of the Guide: Rizvi, Halima Sadia, Year of Completion: 2024, Name of the Department: Department of Economics, Name of the University: Jamia Millia Islamia University

## The Domain of the Study:

The public provisioning of secondary education in India is the main domain area of the present study. The assessment period of the study covers eleven years from FY 2009-10 till FY 2019-20

## Objective of Study:

1. To examine the growth of Secondary Education.
2. To analyze the trends and patterns of public expenditure on Secondary Education.
3. To study the role of Centrally Sponsored Scheme (CSS)-RMSA in Secondary Education financing

## Key Findings:

**GER:**

- ¢ The GER, NER, Age-specific ER, and Adjusted-NER, analyzed at the all-India level, suggest that even in quantitative terms, India is still far from attaining the status of universal secondary education.
- ¢ That as the level of education increases, a decreasing trend has been found in the proportion of enrolment in government-run schools during the last decade.
- ¢ That despite the high proportion of private schools, the role of government schools still remains important as the proportion of government schools (including Government Aided schools) is much higher than private schools.

**Education Development Index:**

- " The 'Principal Component Analysis'. Our estimates reveal that although progress has been made by states over the years in the secondary education sector, the level of progress is slow and uneven.
- " That Bihar state has a very low value of EDI at both the lower secondary and higher secondary levels, and thus has the minimum value of composite EDI. Other states having low composite EDI are Nagaland, Jharkhand, Assam, and Chhattisgarh.
- " That Goa state is at the top with the highest value of composite EDI, followed by Kerala, Punjab, Tamil Nadu, and Himachal Pradesh. So it can be concluded that these states have better outcomes at both the lower secondary and higher secondary levels in government schools compared to other states.
- " That states like Kerala, Punjab, Himachal Pradesh, and Tamil Nadu, which otherwise have developed as big city headquarters, have a high index value, and the less developed states like Meghalaya, Nagaland, and Tripura have high values. This is due to a significant degree of improvement in educational outcomes as well as infrastructure, which in turn can be attributed to the implementation of education reforms.

**Finances:**

- " The share allocated to secondary education in India's GDP has been less than 1% from 2009-10 to 2019-20. Most interestingly, the share of secondary education in the country's total budget stagnated at around 3% over the years. Additionally, the distribution of the educational budget into plan and non-plan components reveals that an overwhelming proportion of the secondary education budget was absorbed by non-plan expenditure. During the study period, non-plan accounted for 82.12 percent of the overall revenue budget of secondary education.
- " From the angle of inter- sectoral comparison, it is revealed that a large portion of government resources in India goes towards elementary education (over 49%), followed by secondary education (31%). The expenditure for secondary education has remained stagnant at around 31% of the total education budget. In fact, the share declined from 31.16% in 2009-10 to 29.50% in 2012-13, and further from 33.06 percent in 2017-18 to 32 percent in 2019-20, which is a matter of concern.
- " That Central government's and Sate governments' spending on secondary education separately shows that the Centre's share stagnated at 0.1% of the GDP

between 2009-10 and 2018-20 and declined to 0.4% in 2019-20, while the states' shares have increased from 0.87% of the GDP in 2009-10 to 0.94% in 2019-20.

- The government expenditure on secondary education as a percentage of NSDP ranged between 2.64 percent in Tripura and 0.43 percent in Gujarat during FY 2019-20.
- The states, namely Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Chhattisgarh, Goa, Himachal Pradesh, Jharkhand, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Meghalaya, Odisha, Punjab, and Rajasthan, reported a slightly higher increment in the share of expenditure on secondary education to NSDP in 2009-10, compared to 2019-20..
- That public expenditure on secondary education as a percentage of NSDP is less than 1.5 percent between FY 2009-10 and FY 2019-20 in the majority of states in India. This provides another reason to conclude that the government is constantly attempting to promote private education under the pretext of budget constraints.

**Allocation Efficiency:**

- Based on data from Indiastat, scheme-specific information systems, Finance Accounts, Budget Briefs of Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan/ Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan, and RTI responses. The analysis revealed that, at the national level, the actual funds released were much lower than the approved outlay.
- An analysis of what the union and state governments have committed to allocate as their share for Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan in the Annual Work Plan & Budget Approved reveal a glaring discrepencies. Thus, not only have the Centre and state governments failed to provide sufficient amounts for the RMSA according to the matching grant criterion, but the decision of the central government to cut allocations for some of the centrally sponsored schemes has adversely affected the funding for Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan.
- The scheme-SamagraShikshaAbhiyan for school education- which has replaced Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan, and Teacher Education has addressed the issue of duplication of efforts and personnel towards implementing similar interventions and achieving similar objectives.
- The exposure to Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan continues to report the same issues about the release and utilization of funds. Delayed release of the state share leads to low utilization, which in turn, leads to the decrease in the Central Share release for the following year. There has also been a decline in the allocation of the central share to states over the years.
- That as a result of these developments, fund availability for interventions in the education sector witnessed a significant decline. The situation has not changed much under the Samagra regime. These findings highlight the failure of recent interventions by the Indian government in universalizing secondary education in the country and a move away from the stated objective of ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education as stated under the Sustainable Development .

## 2nd October- the Birth Anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi – A message

### Talisman:

"I will give you a talisman.
Whenever you are in doubt, or when the self becomes too much with you,
apply the following test:
Recall the face of the poorest and the weakest man whom you may have seen,
and ask yourself if the step you contemplate is going to be of any use to him.
Will he gain anything by it?
Will it restore him to a control over his own life and destiny?
In other words, will it lead to swaraj (freedom) for the hungry and spiritually starving millions?
Then you will find your doubts and yourself melt away."

- Mahatma Gandhi

We are reproducing an article of AI literacy published in World University News as it is a global issue:

## AI LITERACY AS THE NEW ACADEMIC LITERACY FOR STUDENTS

**Afrooz Purarjomandlangrudi and Amir Ghapanchi * 09 September 2025**

Universities face an urgent literacy crisis that has nothing to do with reading and writing.

Today's students arrive on campus as digital natives, yet they demonstrate profound AI illiteracy when it comes to the artificial intelligence tools increasingly central to academic work. They can format citations perfectly but cannot identify when an AI system has fabricated those very sources, highlighting a dangerous gap between technological sophistication and critical understanding.

Higher education must develop AI literacy as a fundamental academic skill, comparable to information literacy or research methodology.

Herein, we have identified 12 essential AI literacy skills, organised into four categories: Core Technical Competencies, AI Systems Knowledge and Tool Literacy, Academic Integrity and Ethics, and Learning and Workflow Integration. Each category and its underlying skills are presented below with practical examples demonstrating their academic applications.

### CATEGORY 1: CORE TECHNICAL COMPETENCIES

This foundational category encompasses the essential skills students need for effective AI interaction in academic contexts.

#### Skill 1: Prompt engineering

Students must learn to craft effective prompts that elicit useful responses from AI systems. This involves providing context, specifying desired formats, and iterating for better results.

Like learning to ask good research questions, prompt engineering requires specificity and strategic thinking. For example, instead of asking, "Write about climate change", students might prompt: "Explain the relationship between ocean acidification and climate change, focusing on peer-reviewed research from the last five years, with clear topic sentences for each major point."

#### Skill 2: AI fact-checking and source verification

Students need systematic approaches for verifying AI-generated information against reliable sources. This includes understanding AI's tendency to hallucinate citations and mix factual information with plausible-sounding fiction.

Students must treat AI outputs like Wikipedia entries - useful starting points requiring independent verification. For instance, when researching renewable energy policies, students should cross-reference AI-provided statistics with original government reports and academic papers rather than accepting AI claims at face value.

#### Skill 3: AI output evaluation and quality assessment

Students must develop judgement skills for assessing the quality, completeness and relevance of AI responses. This involves recognising when AI provides superficial analysis, misses nuanced arguments, or fails to address the full scope of a question.

Students need frameworks for evaluating whether AI output meets academic standards for depth and critical thinking. For example, when asking AI to analyse a literary work, students should recognise that initial responses often lack interpretive depth and require significant human enhancement and original thinking.

#### Skill 4: Iterative collaboration techniques

Students must learn productive multi-turn conversations with AI systems, building complexity through successive interactions rather than expecting comprehensive responses from single prompts.

This involves providing feedback, asking follow-up questions, and guiding AI toward sophisticated analysis. For instance, when developing a research proposal, students might begin with broad topic requests, then progressively provide specific research interests and methodological preferences to develop a more targeted proposal.

### CATEGORY 2: AI SYSTEMS KNOWLEDGE AND TOOL LITERACY

This category focuses on understanding how AI systems work and navigating the expanding landscape of AI tools.

#### Skill 5: Algorithm awareness and bias recognition

Students need foundational knowledge of how AI systems are trained and the implications of training data limitations. This includes recognising potential biases in AI responses and understanding when AI might perpetuate harmful stereotypes or outdated information.

Students should evaluate AI outputs through their disciplinary lens and maintain critical distance from AI-generated content. For example, when using AI to research historical events, students should recognise that training data may reflect dominant cultural narratives while overlooking marginalised voices crucial for comprehensive historical analysis.

#### Skill 6: AI Tool selection and comparison

Students must develop skills for evaluating and selecting appropriate tools for different academic tasks. This involves understanding the strengths and limitations of various AI models, knowing when to use general-purpose versus specialised academic AI applications, and making informed decisions about AI services.

Students should understand how different tools handle data privacy and institutional requirements. For instance,

students might choose Claude for writing feedback, ChatGPT for research assistance, and specialised tools like Elicit for literature reviews, understanding how each aligns with specific academic needs.

### Skill 7: Multimodal AI literacy

Students increasingly encounter AI-generated content beyond text, including images, videos and data visualisations. They must develop skills for critically evaluating AI-generated multimedia content and recognising deepfakes or synthetic media.

This skill becomes important as AI-generated visuals become more sophisticated and potentially misleading. For example, students researching contemporary political movements should identify AI-generated protest images or synthetic audio clips that might misrepresent events or fabricate evidence.

## CATEGORY 3: ACADEMIC INTEGRITY AND ETHICS

This category addresses responsible and ethical AI use within academic contexts.

### Skill 8: Ethical AI use and attribution

Students must develop frameworks for when and how to acknowledge AI assistance in academic work. This involves understanding institutional policies, distinguishing between AI-assisted and AI-generated work, and developing personal ethical standards for appropriate AI use.

Students need guidance on transparency and proper attribution methods while maintaining assignment learning objectives. For example, students might use AI to brainstorm essay topics and receive draft feedback while ensuring final arguments and analysis represent their own critical thinking.

### Skill 9: Data privacy and security awareness

Students must understand the implications of sharing academic work and research data with AI platforms. This includes knowing how different AI services handle user data, understanding when sensitive information should not be shared with AI systems, and making informed decisions about institutional versus personal AI accounts.

Students should understand risks related to intellectual property and research confidentiality. For instance, graduate students should avoid inputting unpublished findings or participant information into public AI systems, instead using institutional tools with appropriate privacy protections.

### Skill 10: AI accessibility and inclusion awareness

Students should understand how AI tools can support diverse learning needs while recognising potential barriers and biases that might disadvantage certain populations. This includes knowing how AI can assist students with disabilities, understanding socioeconomic factors affecting AI access, and recognising cultural biases in AI systems.

Students should consider equity implications when AI becomes standard in academic settings. For example, students should recognise that AI writing assistants might benefit non-native English speakers while creating advantages for those with premium AI access, requiring thoughtful consideration of fairness.

## CATEGORY 4: LEARNING AND WORKFLOW INTEGRATION

This category focuses on optimising AI integration for academic and personal development.

### Skill 11: AI-human workflow integration

Students must learn to design academic workflows that strategically combine AI capabilities with human expertise, understanding where each contributes most effectively. This involves recognising tasks where AI excels (brainstorming, initial drafts) versus areas requiring human judgment (critical analysis, original argumentation).

Students should develop systematic approaches for incorporating AI while maintaining learning objectives. For example, students might use AI for initial literature searches and draft organisation but rely on human analysis for synthesising sources and developing original arguments.

### Skill 12: Meta-learning with AI

Students should learn to use AI as a tool for understanding and improving their own learning processes. This includes leveraging AI for personalised study strategies, self-assessment, and identifying knowledge gaps.

Students can use AI to create practice questions and explain difficult concepts while balancing AI assistance with developing independent learning skills. For instance, students struggling with statistical concepts might use AI to generate practice problems with solutions and receive feedback on problem-solving approaches while ensuring they develop genuine understanding rather than AI-dependent performance.

## CONCLUSIONS: IMPLICATIONS FOR THE HE SECTOR

These 12 AI literacy skills cannot be relegated to optional workshops - they must be embedded throughout the academic experience.

Institutions that successfully integrate AI literacy will produce graduates better equipped for an evolving professional landscape where AI fluency is essential. This transformation requires faculty development, evolved academic integrity policies, and institutional commitment to embrace AI's pedagogical opportunities rather than ban these tools.

By treating AI literacy as fundamental academic infrastructure, universities can ensure that students

*...contd. on page 42*

The University Grants Commission (UGC) has issued a draft Learning Outcome Based Curriculum Framework (LOCF) in nine subjects-Anthropology, Chemistry, Commerce, Economics, Geography, Home Science, Mathematics, Physical Education, and Political Science-for consideration by universities and colleges in India. The guidelines were circulated on August 20, 2025, with feedback sought by September 20, 2025.

This initiative is part of the implementation of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, with the stated aim of promoting "flexibility and innovation in programme design and syllabi development." The framework also attempts to integrate the Indian Knowledge System (IKS) across disciplines. However, it has drawn critical responses from subject experts. Many argued that it encroaches upon the autonomy of universities, where framing of curricula, teaching methods, and evaluation systems are the responsibility of academic councils and other statutory bodies defined in state laws and university ordinances. Critics fear that mandatory guidelines could undermine academic innovation.

To examine these concerns, the Kerala State Council of Higher Education (KSHEC) set up a high-powered committee chaired by Professor Prabhat Patnaik, with members Dr. N.J. Rao (retired professor, IISc Bengaluru) and Dr. Vani Kesari (Cochin University of Science and Technology). Eminent historian Professor Romila Thapar was also invited to comment on the draft LOCF.

Based on the committee's report, the Government of Kerala sent a letter on September 20 to Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan, Higher Education Secretary, and UGC Chairman Vineet Joshi. Kerala's Higher Education Minister, R. Bindu, criticised the draft framework for going "far beyond the UGC's statutory mandate" by prescribing detailed syllabi, course structures, and reading lists. The letter argued that the model syllabi blur distinctions between imaginative literature and scientifically verified facts, describing the framework as "outdated and academically unsuitable." It further said the framework lacks a coherent vision rooted in India's intellectual and social context, instead reproducing "Western models with selective ideological insertions." The emphasis on an undefined Indian Knowledge System was described as "both exclusionary and sectarian."

Kerala "firmly rejected" the draft LOCF, calling it incompatible with the pursuit of critical, creative, and pluralistic higher education. The state urged the Centre to withdraw the framework and initiate a genuinely consultative process involving state governments, universities, and the academic community. KSHEC's expert committee report was enclosed with the letter.

The report noted that while a standardised credit framework could be useful, it should not be imposed on universities. It stated that the LOCF "violates the autonomy of universities; ignores the role of state bodies that supervise and finance state universities; and contravenes the UGC Act." The committee said the framework effectively hands over to UGC and a small group of hand-picked experts the authority to dictate syllabi across disciplines, an "encroachment on academic autonomy unprecedented even in India and unknown in other major countries." It warned against reducing the academic community to "automatons whose sole role is to follow UGC diktats."

On the subject of Economics, the report questioned why contributions only from the ancient period were highlighted and made compulsory, despite their limited relevance to mastering the discipline today. Professor Thapar further stressed that curriculum design is the prerogative of universities, not governments, and requires advanced subject expertise that administrators and politicians lack.

The draft framework for Mathematics also attracted criticism. In The Indian Express, R. Ramanujam argued that it undermines core mathematical strengths while failing to meaningfully incorporate India's mathematical heritage.

However, former UGC Chairperson M. Jagadesh Kumar defended the framework in a September 26 Indian Express article. He argued that the LOCF is meant as a model to aid universities and faculty, leaving room for innovation and local adaptation. He also justified the integration of IKS across subjects, calling the framework a "curriculum for our times."

Overall, the debate reveals deep divisions. While UGC presents the LOCF as a flexible guide, critics see it as a centralising imposition, particularly because the integration of IKS is framed as compulsory. Reports suggest that centrally funded higher education institutions have already been urged to begin implementing the framework-raising concerns that the model could restrict institutional autonomy in the name of standardisation and cultural integration.

*Source: News Minute.com and Indian Express*

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*Across the Globe...contd. from page 41*

become critical, ethical and effective collaborators with these powerful technologies.

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*Courtsey: World University New, September,2025https://www.universityworldnews.com/*

## AI'S ROLE IN A HYBRID CLASSROOM AND CONTENT CREATION *

The education landscape is rapidly transforming, with hybrid classrooms-blending in-person and online learning-becoming a mainstream model. Alongside this shift, Artificial Intelligence (AI) has emerged as a powerful tool that enhances both teaching and content creation, making learning more engaging, personalized, and efficient.

### Personalization in Hybrid Learning

In a hybrid setting, students often learn at different paces, and teachers struggle to meet individual needs. AI-driven platforms like DreamBox and Smart Sparrow adapt to individual student needs by analyzing performance data and adjusting content in real-time. For instance, DreamBox personalizes math instruction by modifying lesson paths based on student interactions, ensuring that each learner progresses at their own pace.

### Intelligent Classroom Management

AI also supports classroom management in hybrid environments offering efficiency that allows educators to focus more on mentoring, guiding discussions, and supporting students emotionally-tasks that cannot be replaced by machines. For example, Google's Gemini for Education suite offers features such as automated attendance tracking, personalized quiz generation, and performance analytics. Teachers can use these tools to monitor student engagement and tailor instruction accordingly. Additionally, Brisk Teaching provides free AI tools that fit seamlessly into teaching routines, offering lesson plan generators and interactive content creation features.

### Enhancing Accessibility

Yoodli, an AI-powered speech coaching platform, helps students enhance their public speaking skills by providing real-time feedback on pacing, filler words, and body language. Moreover, AI-powered chatbots can answer student questions around the clock, offering real-time academic and administrative support, ensuring continuous learning in hybrid environments.

### Comprehending Complex Information

Students now do not need to rely only on books or teacher. Notebook LM is an advanced AI-powered tool that acts as a personalized AI research assistant grounded in their own notes and documents. It can help quickly summarize lengthy academic papers, extract key concepts, create glossaries, generate lesson ideas, and answer questions based on course materials.

### AI in Content Creation

Beyond classroom management, AI is revolutionizing content creation. With AI-driven tools, educators can generate high-quality instructional materials in minutes. Canva AI enables teachers to design interactive digital resources, such as infographics and presentations, that cater to various learning styles.

Additionally, Synthesia allows for the creation of AI-generated videos, complete with avatars and voiceovers, to deliver content in a more engaging manner. These tools empower educators to produce high-quality instructional materials efficiently.

### Supporting Creativity and Collaboration

In hybrid settings, AI-powered collaboration platforms allow students to co-create content, share feedback, and engage in peer learning across digital and physical spaces. Platforms like Learnt.AI assist in generating learning objectives, assessment questions, and icebreakers, allowing educators to focus on fostering higher-order thinking skills.

### Conclusion

AI is revolutionizing hybrid classrooms and content creation by personalizing learning experiences, enhancing accessibility, and streamlining administrative tasks. By integrating AI tools, educators can create dynamic and inclusive learning environments that cater to the diverse needs of students.

**Er Rahul Agarwal*

**THE THIRD EYE OF GOVERNANCE: RISE OF POPULISM, DECLINE IN SOCIAL RESEARCH,** By B.N. Rao (2021). Speaking Tigers Book Publication. Foreword by R.A. Mashelkar; Preface by Arvind Singhal

The book under review seeks to trace the history, achievements, and failures of social research in India since Independence, exploring the evolution of the spirit of research and its role in governance and policymaking. Drawing on the author's personal experiences spanning over five decades in India's premier research organizations, government ministries, and policy institutions, it provides a unique insider's perspective on the changing research ecosystem. The book comprises a foreword by R.A. Mashelkar, a preface by Arvind Singhal, an introductory note, and nine chapters.

At the outset, the author underscores the Indian Constitution as the guiding force shaping the nation's social, political, and economic development. Chapter I highlights how, in the first two decades after Independence, political leadership, civil society, the media, and research institutions worked in harmony to achieve national goals. Institutions for research, surveys, and statistics enjoyed autonomy and independence, upholding the dictum: Research for whom? With what purpose? With what reliability? With what humanity? However, this spirit gradually eroded, leading to a disconnect in India's growth trajectory and resulting in unsustainable development patterns.

Chapter II focuses on the significance of research in policymaking, emphasizing that the true purpose of research is to enrich policy and serve the marginalized. Rao divides the post-Independence research experience into two phases-1947-1972 and 1995-2020-observing a marked decline in the role of research in the latter period, especially in the last decade (2010-2020). He argues that the early post-Independence years witnessed unparalleled enthusiasm for scientific inquiry and nation-building, but this research-driven spirit has since given way to populist politics and short-term priorities.

In Chapter III, the author revisits the visionary contributions of individuals like Mahatma Gandhi, B.R. Ambedkar, Durgabai Deshmukh, Sarojini Naidu, and SushilaNayar, whose ideas shaped India's early public policies. He stresses that while public opinion should ideally guide policymaking, the contemporary decline in the use of research in policy formulation, implementation, and evaluation is a matter of concern.

Chapter IV traces the historical evolution of social science research in India, noting that the country has been home to scholars from diverse intellectual traditions-social, philosophical, spiritual, economic, and statistical-whose ideas influenced global thought. Their inclusive approach, rooted in concern for the "last man," guided post-Independence policies but was soon abandoned. Rao cites a conversation with Prof. Everett Rogers, who found that until 1971, only about 20% of research findings influenced decision-making-a figure that improved to just 30% by 1983. By 2020, Rao concludes, research had largely become a tool for manipulative interests and political expediency, losing touch with grassroots realities and the poor.

Chapter V examines research funding, revealing that India's expenditure on research in 2018 stood at merely 0.69% of GDP-the lowest among nine nations studied (South Korea being the highest at 4.29%). Alarmingly, there are no transparent data on how much of this spending is directed toward public policy research or the government-private sector contribution ratio. Reviews of 27 ICSSR-funded institutes during 2016-18 revealed a lack of policy relevance, declining initiatives, and funds increasingly consumed by administrative costs. Rao laments the absence of social or behavioral impact assessments in ministries dealing with agriculture, health, or social development and the lack of collaboration with external research bodies.

Chapter VI explores India's seriousness about research for public policy. Rao argues that research must incorporate behavioral and longitudinal dimensions to remain relevant. However, political and media-driven interests have distorted research priorities-shifting focus from long-term inquiry to short-term electoral concerns.

In Chapter VII, Rao discusses the deteriorating state of data in India, quoting Nobel Laureate Abhijit Banerjee's 2019 warning that political mobilization is undermining the credibility of Indian data. Rao cites delays in data release, poor quality, lack of independence, and absence of transparency as systemic flaws. He draws upon insights from eminent economists like Dr. C. Rangarajan, Prof. Pronab Sen, and YaminiAiyar to reinforce his critique.

Chapter VIII details the evolution of India's research ecosystem-a complex network of universities, research institutions, and civil society organizations. While initiatives such as the establishment of the Anusandhan National Research Foundation (ANRF) represent positive steps, the author asserts that deeper structural reforms and stronger collaboration are essential to unlock India's research potential.

Chapter IX addresses the central question: Can research be the third eye of governance? Rao recalls Prof. P.C. Mahalanobis's prescient observation that data and statistics must remain autonomous and free from bureaucratic control. He concludes that research, when conducted independently and transparently, can uncover hidden realities, strengthen policymaking, ensure accountability, and indeed serve as the "third eye" of governance.

Despite its scholarly richness and compelling arguments, the book suffers from some editorial weaknesses-chiefly repetition, uneven organization, and overemphasis on the author's personal experiences and frustrations. Nevertheless, its insights are invaluable. The work remains a must-read for scholars, policymakers, and anyone engaged in the research ecosystem of India.

**- Dr. S.C. Sharma**

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CHEST

# Online Course on Critical Thinking - Foundations, Skills & Applications for – Students & Professionals

*Course Code: 02, Credit Hours: 4 Credits, Course Duration: 1 Semester*

**Curse Overview:**

*This course aims to develop students' critical thinking skills by encouraging logical reasoning, effective argumentation, and problem-solving. Students will learn to identify fallacies, construct sound arguments, evaluate evidence, and make well-informed decisions in academic, professional, and personal contexts.*

**Learning Outcomes:**

*By the end of the course, students will be able to:*

- *Recognize the key components of critical thinking and logical reasoning.*
- *Analyse and evaluate arguments for validity, soundness, and clarity.*
- *Identify common logical fallacies and cognitive biases.*
- *Construct well-reasoned arguments and communicate them effectively.*
- *Apply critical thinking skills to solve problems and make decisions in real-world situations.*

## Course Modules

**Module 1: Introduction to Critical Thinking**

- Unit 1: Definition and importance of critical thinking
- Unit 2: Critical thinking vs. ordinary thinking
- Unit 3: Characteristics of a critical thinker.

**Module 2: Basics of Logic and Reasoning**

- Unit 1: Arguments: Premises, conclusions, and structure
- Unit 2: Deductive vs. inductive reasoning
- Unit 3: Evaluating validity and soundness of arguments

**Module 3: Identifying and Avoiding Fallacies**

- Unit 1: Common logical fallacies: Unit 1.1: Ad hominem
- Unit 1.2: Straw man argument
- Unit 1.3: False dichotomy
- Unit 1.4: Slippery slope Unit 1.5: Hasty generalization
- Unit 2: How to detect and address fallacies in arguments

**Module 4: Cognitive Biases and Critical Thinking**

- Unit 1: Understanding cognitive biases: Confirmation bias, anchoring, etc.
- Unit 2: The role of perception, memory, & heuristics in reasoning
- Unit 3: Techniques to mitigate biases in decision-making

**Module 5: Critical Reading and Media Analysis**

- Unit 1: Evaluating credibility and reliability of sources
- Unit 2: Analysing media, news, and online content for bias and manipulation
- Unit 3: Recognizing fake news and misinformation

**Module 6: Argument Construction and Effective Communication**

- Unit 1: Structuring arguments: Claims, evidence, and reasoning
- Unit 2: Writing and presenting arguments clearly and persuasively
- Unit 3: Debates and discussions: Techniques for effective argumentation

**Module 7: Problem-Solving and Decision-Making**

- Unit 1: Strategies for solving complex problems critically
- Unit 2: Decision-making frameworks
- Unit 3: Ethical reasoning and moral decision-making

**Module 8: Applications of Critical Thinking**

- Unit 1: Applying critical thinking in academics and research
- Unit 2: Critical thinking in professional and workplace settings
- Unit 3: Case studies: Real-world problems requiring critical thinking

*Teaching Methods Online: (i) Contents on LMS (ii) Interactive sessions (iii) Group activities, debates, and role-plays (iv) Case studies and analysis (v) Assignments and presentations*

*Online Assessment Methods: (i) Reading of Modules: 10% (ii) Quizzes/Tests: 20% (iii) Assignments and Essays: 25% (iv) Group Debate/Presentation: 15% (v) Final Exam: 30%*

*IMPORTANT NOTE -*
*Course will be offered in collaboration with the institutions. Also, students can directly enroll for the Courses. Certificate will be provided jointly by SEED-CHEST and Collaborating Institute(s).*

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# Online Course on Communication Skills

***A 4 Credit Course***
***8 MODULES COURSE WITH SUB-MODULE UNITS***
***DURATION: 60 HRS. 6-8 WEEKS***

Average Per week self-study 8 Hrs.

and contact /test on Virtual mode 2 Hrs.

Course on Canvas Platform

Virtual Meet on Google Meet platform

Course Over View

*This course helps participants develop effective communication strategies for various contexts, improving verbal, non-verbal, written communication, and skills for conflict Resolution, Negotiation techniques, collaboration and effective Teamwork.*

## Course Objectives

- Develop clear and concise verbal communication.
- Enhance active listening skills.
- Master non-verbal communication techniques (e.g., body language, tone).
- Improve writing skills for reports, emails, and formal documents.
- Overcome barriers to effective communication.
- Build confidence for public speaking and presentations.
- Build skills for Conflict Resolution and Negotiation
- Cultivate interpersonal skills for teamwork and leadership.

## Course Modules

**Module1: Introduction to Communication**

- Understanding the basics of communication.
- Components: Sender, message, receiver, and feedback.
- Barriers to communication and how to overcome them.

**Module2: Verbal Communication**

- Speaking with clarity and confidence.
- Vocabulary building.
- Formal vs. informal communication.
- Handling difficult conversations.

**Module3: Non-Verbal Communication**

- Role of body language and facial expressions.
- Reading non-verbal cues.
- Using gestures effectively.

**Module4: Listening Skills**

- Active listening techniques.
- Empathetic listening.
- Improving concentration and retention.

**Module5: Written Communication**

- Email and business letter etiquette.
- Writing reports, proposals, and resumes.
- Editing and proofreading skills.

**Module6: Public Speaking& Presentations**

- Overcoming stage fright.
- Structuring effective presentations.
- Engaging your audience.

**Module7: Conflict Resolution & Negotiation**

- Dealing with conflicts constructively.
- Persuasion and negotiation techniques.

**Module8: Communication in Teams**

- Building rapport with colleagues.
- Collaboration and effective teamwork.

**IMPORTANT NOTE -**
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