

## HIGHER EDUCATION IN JAMMU AND KASHMIR IN CONTEXT TO RASHTRIYA UCHCHTAR SIKSHA ABHIYAN ( RUSA)

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### Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to find out the extent to which the higher education system of Jammu and Kashmir has improved after a new Centrally Sponsored Scheme created in 2013 for funding state higher educational institutions called Rashtriya Uchchar Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA) was introduced in the state. The findings are based on increase in the Gross Enrolment Ratio, expansion of infrastructure and better human resources, curriculum reform, quality research, skill training, accreditation of higher educational institutes and above all focus on performance through audio visual documentation like MIS (Management Information System) and AISHE (All India Survey on Higher Education). Further the study takes the stock of the Government's initiatives that have been taken in this regard and makes inquiries into scope of their implementation. Also, the impact of the scheme RUSA in Jammu and Kashmir has been studied by finding achievements in pedagogy, curriculum reform, skilled human capital, youth employability, audio-visual learning, accreditations, access, GER, and equity.

**Key Words:** GER, State Higher Education Council, State Project Directorate, Higher Education, RUSA.

### INTRODUCTION

Public institutions of higher education are a challenging responsibility. It requires creativity, medium-term vision, communication excellence, financial management skills and knowledge of how to increase economic efficiency. For teachers to impart knowledge to students they must have a broad knowledge of their subject matter, the curriculum and educational standards as well as enthusiasm and a desire for learning throughout the course of their career. Most importantly, the coming generations will need jobs and to be educated, skilled and prepared for productive lives and careers. Thus, reforming higher education is important and urgent.

There is a trend that scarce percent of higher education institutions are considered to have faculty of high standing. Mostly, teachers work on a non-permanent, ad-hoc basis and are designated variously as temporary, contractual, ad hoc and guest faculty. This is a serious problem as people with a good academic record do not want to take such positions as these are less attractive than a permanent one. The appointment of vice-chancellors, the heads of universities and the most visible symbols of the university system, who are supposed to provide academic leadership as well as administrative skills are these days appointed not because they are distinguished

academicians, but because they have the right political connections. Present challenges are for the efficient management of resources, including cash assets, any wastage should be eliminated and assets with financial returns should be invested in. The research in higher education institutions is to be planned and topics identified based on the experimental studies and applications. Research findings need encouragement for being debated before being disseminated. At the institutional level, there is a need to link teaching with research as it is easier to carry forward the legacy of basic research at the level of classical science. Science is a system for exploring, and for innovation. It can fuel our nation's economic growth. It can form a path for our young people in a competitive global marketplace, while also adding a spark to their imagination.

There was a need for concerted efforts which would improve the quality and relevance of higher education and result in an educated and productive workforce. In lieu of above, a new overarching Centrally Sponsored Scheme for funding state level institutions was created in 2013 called Rashtriya Uchatar Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA). The scheme is implemented through a set of bodies with clearly defined roles and functions at the National, State and Institutional level. The objectives of RUSA are to encourage research, enhance teacher quality, enable student learning, periodic curriculum revision, project work, field work, awards for achievers, student counselling by experts, academic, administrative, governance, affiliation reforms, high confidentiality in examination and evaluation, autonomy of institutions, accreditation of institutes for quality and excellence. Since its inception, RUSA has been committed in building the capacities of the state higher education systems and nurturing the institutions.

Transformational reforms in higher education sector have acquired great momentum since Rashtriya Uchatar Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA) was flagged off by the Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India in 2013 with a vision to transform the state higher education institutions in India into repositories of excellence and to strengthen higher education policies & its implementation in India through research, for better attainment of the goals of excellence, access, and equity.

Greater access requires an enhancement of the education institutional capacity of the higher education sector to provide opportunities to all those who deserve and desire higher education. Equity involves fair access by the poor and socially disadvantaged groups to higher education. Quality and excellence involve provision of education in accordance with accepted standards so that students receive available knowledge of the highest standard that helps them to enhance their human resource capabilities.

Relevance involves promotion of education so as to develop human resources keeping pace with the changing economic, social and cultural development of the country; and Value Based Education involves inculcating basic moral values among the youth.

## **REVIEW**

Governance reforms in shape of institutional autonomy in form of cluster universities, autonomous colleges with composition of governing bodies having members from industry, civil society, alumni, academicians etc. which played the role in governance and management, academic programmes, staff appointments, student admission, administration, cluster universities act for better academic programmes and evaluations, skills for job opportunities and better decision making. Implementation of regular revisions to curricula, choice-based credit system, the introduction of continuous and comprehensive student evaluations, semester system. A framework to make all institutes accountable is must.

The impact of some best practices like introducing new courses benefitted in flexibility in diversity of programs, in its structure, in its curricula, in its delivery system. For academic reforms, courses for post-graduation, research programmes, 5-year integrated courses, honors courses, integrated B.Ed-M.Ed, multi-disciplinary courses, academia-industry and academia-society interactions, autonomous colleges have been started which helped the students to choose the discipline of one's interest for becoming professionals in their chosen subject and also getting job opportunities.

International collaborations, pooling of resources, reduction in work load of universities due to affiliations, had also great impact on beneficiaries. Autonomous institutions are administered by its senior functionaries under the guidance of its statutory bodies such as the University/Governing council, executive committee, syndicates, etc. (members from academic background). Reforms in examination and evaluation system have been introduced by continuous assessment, class evaluation and problem solving and for skill based courses field work reports and presentations are introduced.

## **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

- To find out the effect of RUSA on the Gross Enrolment Ratio, expansion of infrastructure and better human resources, curriculum reform, quality research, skill training, accreditation of higher educational institutes and performance through audio visual documentation like MIS (Management Information System).

## **ANALYSIS & FINDINGS**

It is time that the impact created by RUSA is assessed to keep it hitting greater milestones in the years to come so that higher education mechanism makes the country economically self-sufficient and self-reliant by imparting education and training to citizens of the country who can take part in nation building by providing solutions to different socio-economic problems keeping in view the cost – benefit balance and are competitive globally. The reforms initiated under RUSA aim to build a self-sustaining momentum for greater accountability and autonomy of state institutions and impress upon these the need to improve the quality of education. NITI (National Institution for Transforming India) Aayog's vision is to transform India into prosperous, highly educated, healthy, secure, corruption free, energy abundant, environmentally clean, and globally influential nation. Both NITI Aayog and RUSA together have made a visible impact among stakeholders and have reflected that the committed professionals can play a critical role in helping speed-up the work of missions like implementation and monitoring of reforms through measuring and tracking progress. The online centralized database has been started as MIS (Management Information System) which captures all information and development plans for RUSA and Non – RUSA funded Institutes as well as states. On the basis of data captured by NHERC- MIS, evidence based analytic reports can be created to monitor the performance of the higher education system and all institutions are linked through MIS. Best practices of RUSA have been started like audio-visual documentation; data through MIS will serve as the basis for rigorous analysis on higher education policies and its implementations. Institute Development plans (IDPs) are being uploaded by every higher education institute as per RUSA guidelines.

RUSA's mission is to create new universities and clusters through up-gradation of existing colleges, new model degree colleges, new professional colleges, and provide infrastructural support to universities and colleges, faculty recruitment support, faculty improvement programmes, leadership development of educational administrators, skill trainings and vocational education to students approved by the State Higher Education Council (SHEC) as per RUSA guidelines for the overall development of the higher education system of the country.

It is obvious that the next few years are mission critical for RUSA as it has to allow only quality higher education institutions to be established in the country, having NAAC accreditation with a minimum score of 2.5, minimum 90% faculty has to be on permanent basis, promotion of research in collaboration with international universities through National research foundation(NRF), improving India's global ranking in higher education to first top 100 world rankings, industry interactions with faculty and

students internships, upgrading library and laboratory facilities like incubation centers, innovation hubs, summer camps for promoting critical thinking, produce papers on best practices in higher education, procure high quality e-resources, and providing facilities that support research hubs/parks .

The administrative reforms for accountable governance, affiliation reforms to create autonomous individual institutes with board of governors, examination reforms includes curriculum reform, semester systems, CBCS, accreditation reforms for the quality of the institutes are to be implemented rigorously. Steps are being taken for the policy changes required that will facilitate the skill training to meet the industry requirements, to achieve technology based learning, training of teachers, soft skill training to students, exam reforms in terms of concept and application based, merit based transparent appointments to key university leadership positions i.e. the appointment of vice-chancellors, the heads of universities and the most visible symbols of the university system, who are supposed to provide academic leadership as well as administrative skills. There is a need to improve resource allocation for universities to enable good quality research & innovation. Criteria such as the number of research publications, impact factors of journals in which papers are published, citations, the amount of research funding attracted, research projects etc. We have to ensure that the spending on Higher Education as a percentage of GSDP is at least 2% of GSDP and increased to 4% in later stage.

Filling up faculty vacancies and ensuring that faculty positions in institutions are not less than 85% of sanctioned faculty strength is the key. The State is required to fill all the vacant sanctioned posts and claim funds under RUSA for additional posts to enable them to achieve the student-teacher ratio of 20:1 so that teachers can improve their pedagogy. It is essential to hire highly motivated and academically skilled faculty in higher educational institutions and student feedback to promote quality teaching. Student feedback in higher educational institutions is to be taken as faculty performance appraisals. Present challenges are for the efficient management of resources, including cash assets, any wastage should be eliminated and assets with financial returns should be invested in.

With these features RUSA scheme looks promising in the draft form. However, its effectiveness will depend on its successful implementation. RUSA scheme gives a concrete shape to our vision of development of higher education in India. This realization will definitely follow after its successful implementation. For now, it is indeed commendable that Rashtriya Uchcharitar Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA) has already started taking initiatives for the improvement of higher education in the country by

designing its objectives on quality education and creating an enabling atmosphere so that the institutions can devote themselves to further innovations and research, and thus accelerate the growth story of India.

Over the years, since the allocation to State Higher Education System was not enough, these meager funds were thinly spread amongst many institutions, impacting the overall quality of infrastructure and teaching. Hence, there was a need to establish a new institutional mechanism, which would make every stakeholder a partner in the process of higher education transformation. The strategic intervention came through this centrally sponsored scheme called RUSA, which has a completely new approach towards funding state higher education Institutions. The allocation of funds under RUSA is based on well-defined norms & parameters and linked to academic, administrative and governance reforms, while future grants are performance-based in accreditations and outcome dependent. The reforms initiated under RUSA aim to build a self-sustaining momentum for greater accountability and autonomy of state institutions and impress upon them the need to improve the quality of education. The new paradigm is important in reforming the curriculum and pedagogy if globalization, localization, individualization are all taken into consideration for better teaching, learning and growth. It also includes expansion of infrastructure, better human resources, curriculum reform, quality research and above all focus on performance.

The two autonomous colleges and three cluster universities of J&K state have been constituted autonomous status by UGC and State Government act respectively to enhance what is best in their heritage and relive them creatively in the present context of higher education in India and the world and create greater job opportunities. However, there are certain challenges like improving the examination system, innovations in pedagogy, the committee system to be constantly monitored and evaluated to provide the best results, greater participation of the faculty in the administration of the colleges and evaluation process and the credibility in strictly following the criteria of merit and transparency in appointments, admissions and examinations. Framing of transfer policy, creation of posts, adequate funding for the facility of transport, hostels, residential, medical, sports etc are also the requirements of the autonomous institutions. State/ RUSA still have a significant role to play as funding source and also in monitoring and evaluating the academic standards and new initiatives of autonomous institutions and increase the number of autonomous institutions/clusters.

The impact of some best practices like introducing new courses benefitted in flexibility in diversity of programs, in its structure, in its curricula, in its delivery



system. For academic reforms, courses for post-graduation, research programmes, 5-year integrated courses, honors courses, integrated B.Ed-M.Ed, multi-disciplinary courses, academia-industry and academia-society interactions, autonomous colleges have been started which helped the students to choose the discipline of one's interest for becoming professionals in their chosen subject and also getting job opportunities. International collaborations, pooling of resources, reduction in work load of universities due to affiliations, had also great impact on beneficiaries. Autonomous institutions are administered by its senior functionaries under the guidance of its statutory bodies such as the University/Governing council, executive committee, syndicates, etc. (members from academic background). Reforms in examination and evaluation system have been introduced by continuous assessment, class evaluation and problem solving and for skill based courses field work reports and presentations are introduced. Projects amounting to Rs 218.00 crore have been approved during 12th, 13th & 15th Project Approval Board (PAB) MHRD, GoI.

The training on vocational skills and add on courses, career development, job attainment, job survival, basic competencies, leadership and self-development, personal skills, life survival skills, and workplace competencies have been started. To achieve the target of GER of 32% rationally in urban and rural areas, infrastructures are being upgraded in order to achieve high enrolment targets, new institutions are being established in rural and un-served areas with low GER. This objective will reduce brain drain from semi-urban and rural areas. In order to improve the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in the Higher Education sector in the state, to keep pace with the national average, there has been a tremendous leap forward in the recent years by way of establishing of degree colleges in almost every nook and corner. Focus of the state should be on equip and train the teachers and administrators the new skills of teaching and performance. To improve the selection, transfers, performance evaluation of teachers, student feedback.

## **CONCLUSION**

To achieve the target of GER of 32% rationally in urban and rural areas, infrastructures are being upgraded in order to achieve high enrolment targets, new institutions are being established in rural and un-served areas with low GER. This objective will reduce brain drain from semi-urban and rural areas. In order to improve the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in the Higher Education sector in the state, to keep pace with the national average, there has been a tremendous leap forward in the recent years by way of establishing of degree colleges in almost every nook and corner of the state. The expansion process is still on and establishing more colleges is on the anvil. Besides the degree Colleges, the state has taken steps to increase the reach of

students to higher and technical education by facilitating the establishment of a number of universities and national institutes including the central universities at Jammu as well as Kashmir, IIT Jammu, IIM Jammu, IIMC Jammu, state engineering colleges apart from facilitating the opening of some universities and a mathematical institute

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