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Impact of Rusa (Rashtriya Uchcharat Shiksha Abhiyaan) to Encourage Higher Education

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ABSTRACT: Rashtriya Uchchattar Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA) (Hindi for "National Higher Education Mission") is a holistic scheme of development for higher education in India initiated in 2013 by the Ministry of Education, Government of India. The centrally sponsored scheme aims at providing strategic funding to higher educational institutions throughout the country. Funding is provided by the central ministry through the state governments and union territories (UT), which in coordination with the central Project Appraisal Board will monitor the academic, administrative and financial advancements taken under the scheme.^[1] A total of 316 state public universities and 13,024 colleges will be covered under it.^[2]

KEYWORDS: Rashtriya Uchchattar Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA), education, scheme, ministry, funding

I.INTRODUCTION

Innovative educational policies in India have been a huge success. Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) launched in 2001 for elementary education and Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA) launched in 2009 for secondary education produced great results in the educational developments. For higher education University Grants Commission (UGC) has a provision for routine innovation and development fundings. UGC funds are quite adequate for centrally funded universities and colleges, which are recognised under sections 12B and 2(f) of UGC Act. However, as of 31 March 2012 statistics, the higher education sector in India consisted of 574 universities and 35,539 colleges, out of which 214 universities are not covered under 12B of UGC Act, and only 6,787 colleges are registered under 12B and 2(f). Thus a larger number of higher institutes run by state governments, which are limited in their own management, are not provided with sufficient financial support to enhance their facilities for educational reforms. Therefore, a separate scheme for state/UT-managed universities and colleges was proposed by the National Development Council (NDC) as part of the 12th Five-Year Plan in 2012.^[3] The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs approved it in October 2013.^[4]

Objectives

RUSA aims to provide equal development to all higher institutions and rectify weaknesses in the higher education system. Its target achievement is to raise the gross enrolment ratio to 32% by the end of XII Plan in 2017. The major objectives are to:^[5]

1. improve the overall quality of existing state institutions by ensuring that all institutions conform to prescribed norms and standards and adopt accreditation as a mandatory quality assurance framework.
2. usher transformative reforms in the state higher education system by creating a facilitating institutional structure for planning and monitoring at the state level, promoting autonomy in state universities and improving governance in institutions.
3. ensure academic and examination reforms in the higher educational institutions.
4. enable conversion of some of the universities into research universities at par with the best in the world.
5. create opportunities for states to undertake reforms in the affiliation system in order to ensure that the reforms and resource requirements of affiliated colleges are adequately met.
6. ensure adequate availability of quality faculty in all higher educational institutions and ensure capacity building at all levels of employment.
7. create an enabling atmosphere in the higher educational institutions to devote themselves to research and innovations.
8. expand the institutional base by creating additional capacity in existing institutions and establishing new institutions, in order to achieve enrolment targets.
9. correct regional imbalances in access to higher education by facilitating access to high quality institutions in urban and semi-urban areas, creating opportunities for students from rural areas to get access to better quality institutions and setting up institutions in un-served and underserved areas.

10. improve equity in higher education by providing adequate opportunities of higher education to SC/STs and socially and educationally backward classes; promote inclusion of women, minorities, and differently abled persons.[1,2]

Funding process

RUSA is provided by the central Ministry of Human Resource Development directly to the state and UT governments. From the state/UT budget the funds are disbursed to individual institutions. The funding to states would be made on the basis of critical appraisal of state plans for higher education plans. The amount of funding from central government will be 60% of the total grants, and 40% will be contributed by the state/UT as matching share. For northeastern states, Sikkim, Jammu and Kashmir, and Uttarakhand the matching share is waived to 10%.^[5] During the 12th Five-Year Plan period between 2012 and 2017, RUSA is allotted a financial outlay of INR 228.55 billion, of which INR 162.27 billion will be contributed by the central government. During the first phase, 80 new universities would be created by converting autonomous colleges/colleges in a cluster to state universities. 100 new colleges would be set up and 54 existing colleges would be converted into model degree colleges. Infrastructure grants would be given to 150 universities and 3,500 colleges to upgrade and fill critical gaps in infrastructure especially libraries, laboratories, etc. Further additional 5,000 faculty positions would be supported.^[6] Then the scheme will extend into the 13th Five-Year Plan.^[4]

II.DISCUSSION

Rashtriya Uchchar Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA) is a Centrally Sponsored Scheme (CSS), launched in 2013 and operates in mission mode for funding the state government universities and colleges to achieve the aims of equity, access and excellence.

The Government has approved the scheme of Rashtriya Uchchar Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA) for continuation till 31.03.2026 or till further review, whichever is earlier.

Objectives

The salient objectives of RUSA are to;

- Improve the overall quality of state institutions by ensuring conformity to prescribed norms and standards and adopt accreditation as a mandatory quality assurance framework.
- Usher transformative reforms in the state higher education system by creating a facilitating institutional structure for planning and monitoring at the state level, promoting autonomy in State Universities and improving governance in institutions.
- Ensure reforms in the affiliation, academic and examination systems.
- Ensure adequate availability of quality faculty in all higher educational institutions and ensure capacity building at all levels of employment.
- Create an enabling atmosphere in the higher educational institutions to devote themselves to research and innovations.
- Expand the institutional base by creating additional capacity in existing institutions and establishing new institutions, in order to achieve enrolment targets.
- Correct regional imbalances in access to higher education by setting up institutions in unserved & underserved areas.
- Improve equity in higher education by providing adequate opportunities of higher education to SC/STs and socially and educationally backward classes; promote inclusion of women, minorities, and differently abled persons.[2,3]

Major impact and Targets

RUSA 3.0

New phase of RUSA targets to reach out the unserved, underserved areas; remote/ rural areas; difficult geographies; LWE areas; NER; aspirational districts, tier-2 cities, areas with low GER etc., and to benefit the most disadvantaged areas and SEDGs.

RUSA 2.0 targets

- Increase the spending of States on higher education as a % of GSDP to 2% or above.
- Ensure all the State Institutions are NAAC Accredited by the end of March 2020 as a part of mandatory quality assurance framework.
- Reduce the student-teacher ratio to 15:1 in Institutions by the end of March 2020. Increasing the National GER to 32% by March 2022

- Ensure growth of GER with more inclusion of disadvantaged groups (SC/ST/Women); Ensure that all the States participate in AISHE and data pertaining to all State institutions is furnished.
- Ensure that the number of colleges affiliated to State Universities reduce to 200.

RUSA 1.0

- To achieve the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) target of of 25.2% by the end of 12th Plan and 32% by the end of 13th Plan

Components

RUSA would create new universities through upgradation of existing autonomous colleges and conversion of colleges in a cluster. It would create new model degree colleges, new professional colleges and provide infrastructural support to universities and colleges. Faculty recruitment support, faculty improvements programmes and leadership development of educational administrators are also an important part of the scheme. In order to enhance skill development the existing central scheme of Polytechnics has been subsumed within RUSA. A separate component to synergise vocational education with higher education has also been included in RUSA. Besides these, RUSA also supports reforming, restructuring and building capacity of institutions in participating state.

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

- Creation of Universities by conversion of colleges in a cluster
- Creation of Universities by way of upgradation of existing autonomous colleges
- Enhancing Quality and Excellence in Autonomous colleges
- Equity initiatives
- Faculty improvements
- Faculty Recruitment Support
- Infrastructure grants to Colleges
- Infrastructure grants to Universities
- Institutional Restructuring, Capacity Building and Reforms
- New Colleges (Professional)
- New Model Colleges (General)
- Enhancing Quality and Excellence in select State Universities
- Research, innovation and quality improvement
- Upgradation of existing degree colleges to model colleges
- Vocationalisation of Higher Education (State as a Unit)

Financial outlay

RUSA 3.0

The Government has approved the scheme of Rashtriya Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA) for continuation till 31.03.2026 or till further review, whichever is earlier. The proposal entails an expenditure of Rs. 12929.16 crore out of which Central Share is Rs. 8120.97 crores and the State Share is of Rs. 4808.19 crores. It has been envisaged to support around 1600 projects under the new phase of the scheme.[3,4]

RUSA 2.0

A financial outlay of Rs 7100 crores has been earmarked for 3 years beginning 2017-18 to 2019-20. The project cost in the public funded institutions for all sub-components is shared between the Central Government and State Governments in the ratio of 90:10 for North-Eastern States, J&K, Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand, 60:40 for other States and UTs with Legislature and 100:0 for UTs without Legislature.

The funding would flow from the central ministry through the state governments/union territories to the State Higher Education Councils before reaching the identified institutions. The funding to states would be made on the basis of critical appraisal of State Higher Education Plans, which would describe each state's strategy to address issues of equity, access and excellence in higher education.

III.RESULTS

RUSA would create new universities through upgradation of existing autonomous colleges and conversion of colleges in a cluster. It would create new model degree colleges, new professional colleges and provide infrastructural support to universities and colleges. Faculty recruitment support, faculty improvements

programmes and leadership development of educational administrators are also an important part of the scheme. In order to enhance skill development the existing central scheme of Polytechnics has been subsumed within RUSA. A separate component to synergise vocational education with higher education has also been included in RUSA. Besides these, RUSA also supports reforming, restructuring and building capacity of institutions in participating state.[4,5]

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

- Up gradation of existing autonomous colleges to Universities
- Conversion of colleges to Cluster Universities
- Infrastructure grants to Universities
- New Model Colleges (General)
- Upgradation of existing degree colleges to model colleges
- New Colleges (Professional)
- Infrastructure grants to colleges
- Research, innovation and quality improvement
- Equity initiatives
- Faculty Recruitment Support
- Faculty improvements
- Vocationalisation of Higher Education
- Leadership Development of Educational Administrators
- Institutional restructuring & reforms
- Capacity building & preparation, data collection & planning

IV.CONCLUSION

RUSA provides state higher education institutes with strategic funding. This funding is norm-based and outcome-based. The fund is divided in the ratio of 90:10 for special category states, 60:40 for the general category states, and 100% for the Union Territories. Before reaching the eligible institutions, the funds need to be passed from the central ministry through state governments and union territories to the state higher education council. State Higher Education Plans describing each state's strategy for addressing the excellence in higher education and issues of equity, would be used to determine how much money each state would receive.[5,6]

Here are the eligibility criteria to get RUSA funding –

- The colleges of any discipline under the Section 2(f) of the UGC Act are eligible for the funds.
- At least 10 years of active administration is required.
- The colleges must have grade A of NAAC accreditation or a good NBA score.
- The status of accreditation must be relevant at the time of registration.
- The universities should comply with this eligibility condition for 5 years of the notification of these regulations.
- Independent accreditation from a NAAC/NBA/UGC-approved accrediting body is required to be regarded as eligible.

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Components of RUSA

RUSA proposes to establish new universities by upgrading current autonomous colleges and converting institutions into clusters. It would establish new concept degree colleges and specialized colleges, as well as support infrastructure for colleges and universities.

The system also includes faculty recruiting assistance, faculty enhancement initiatives, and leadership training for school administrators. The old core plan of Polytechnics has been merged under RUSA to improve skill development. RUSA also has a distinct element to hybridize vocational courses with higher education.

Aside from these, RUSA promotes reforming, reorganizing, and strengthening institutions in member governments. The following are the primary components of RUSA –

- Upgrading existing colleges into universities
- Merging colleges into cluster universities
- Infrastructure grants to universities
- New Model Colleges (General and Professional)
- Upgrading existing degree colleges to model colleges
- Infrastructure grants to colleges
- Research, innovation, and quality improvement
- Equity initiatives
- Faculty Recruitment Support
- Faculty improvements
- Vocationalisation of Higher Education
- Leadership Development of Educational Administrators
- Institutional restructuring & reforms
- Capacity building & preparation, data collection & planning

Principles of RUSA

1. Focus on Quality and Research

RUSA works to improve the quality of the state's higher education institutions. The goal is to provide everyone with equal access to high-quality higher education. States must guarantee that all of their universities embrace NAAC accreditation as the necessary quality assurance system, while also working to improve general educational excellence through improvements.

2. Norm-Based and Outcome-Dependent Funding

The financing under RUSA is norm-based, and future grants are outcome-dependent. The central financing is strategic and based on SHEPs, which serve as a baseline by which a state's and institutions' progress is assessed. Future financing is determined by prior accomplishments and the use of resources reported to the MHRD.

3. Incentivizing and Disincentivizing

RUSA both incentivizes and demotivates state acts. Non-performance or non-fulfillment of conditions and norms encourages lower funding for states and institutions. This is done to ensure that the program is not just demand-driven but also viable. States and institutions are urged to compete for the advantages of formulaic funding based on competition.

4. Apolitical Decision Making

Another core RUSA principle is that decisions are made in an unbiased, apolitical, and professional way, based on SHEPs and state performance on set metrics. The decision-making process and its outcome are honest and transparent, and the approaches are unbiased. States are required to develop and implement governance improvements with the same impartial, apolitical, and professional approach. To properly execute these changes, public university leadership roles should be selected on the following basis -

- Autonomy
- Revisiting the acts
- Streamlining the recruitment process
- Membership of governing bodies
- Institutional leadership

5. Disclosure-Based Governance

Institutions must implement disclosure-based administration when it comes to their operations and results. RUSA envisions a more active role for all stakeholders, with institutions accountable not just to regulators but also to students, parents, and society. The first step in developing such a higher education system is to adopt a policy of full transparency and transparent administration.

6. Equity-Based Development

At both the governmental and institutional levels, equity-based development projects must be an integral element of any growth or growth prospects. Any expansion of higher education must provide equitable opportunity for women, underprivileged groups, and those with disabilities.

In addition, redevelopment must place a larger emphasis on rural and tribal communities. When determining quotas, the plan assessment process would consider this.

Functions of RUSA

- Monitor flow of funds and information
- Appraise State Higher Education Plans and engage with SHECs
- Engage with MIS provider to plan, coordinate and manage MIS
- Generate MIS reports as required
- Provide all operational, technical, logistical, and managerial support to NMA, PAB, and National Project Directorate
- Conduct evaluation studies
- Appoint consultants for project monitoring, designing, technical inputs, and any other purpose and a period and on such conditions of engagements as deemed necessary
- Appraisal of DPRs of the States and recommending to Central Government for release of funds on that basis
- Monitoring and Evaluation of Fund Utilization by the States on achievement of physical and financial targets against timelines.[6]

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