

# RASTRIYA UCHCHATARA SHIKSHA ABHIYAN (RUSA): A Theoretical Analysis

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## Abstract:

Access and equity is more important in higher education, it is the quality of education that should be considered as prime. The Government of India took many steps to promote higher education after independence and to provide the best education to its all citizens. But even today, the higher education system as a whole is faced with many challenges such as financing, management, access, equity, relevance, ethics and quality of higher education together with the assessment of institutions and their accreditation. But education could not be considered in separation or planned in a gap. It has to be used as a powerful instrument of social, economic and political change. In the forthcoming decade, to harvest the benefits of demographic factors i.e. a huge working age population, there is a need for achieving an educated and productive workforce through intensive effort to improve equality, relevance and excellence in higher education. In this context, the Government of India is implementing the Centrally Sponsored Scheme (CSS) of Rashtriya Uchchata Siksha Abhiyan (RUSA), aims at providing strategic funding to eligible state higher educational institutions and for providing financial support to proposals contained in State Higher Education Plan (SHEP) approved by the State Higher Education Councils (SHECs) in order to achieve the objectives of equity, access and quality in higher education. The central funding (in the ratio of 60:40 for general category states, 90:10 for special category states and 100% for union territories) is based on norms and is outcome dependent. This paper critically analysed the various aspects of Rashtriya Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA).

**Key words:** *Rashtriya Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA), Project Approval Board (PAB), Access, Equity, Excellence, Higher Education.*

## I. INTRODUCTION

Education is considered as the important tool for the intellectual, social, moral and spiritual development of the people. For that Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) launched in 2001 for elementary education and Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA) launched in 2009 for secondary education produced a great results in the educational developments. For higher education, University Grants Commission (UGC) has a provision for routine innovation and development funding. UGC funds are quite adequate for centrally funded universities and colleges, which are recognized under sections 12B and 2(f) of UGC Act. However, as of 12 April 2018 statistics, the higher education sector in India consisted of 850 Universities<sup>[1]</sup> and according to AISHE (All India Statistics on Higher Education) 2015-2016 statistics there are 35,539 Colleges<sup>[2]</sup>, out of which 214 Universities are not covered under 12B of UGC Act, and only 11,430 Colleges are registered under 12B and 2(f)<sup>[3]</sup>. 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. The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs approved it in October 2013. From that time to now the RUSA Resource Centre of MHRD, New Delhi has held the total of 10 Project Approval Board (PAB) meetings to approve the State Higher Education Plan (SHEC) of States and give the new instructions to follow the guidelines of RUSA. The success of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) and Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA) has laid a strong foundation for primary and secondary education in India. However, the sphere of higher education has still has not seen any concerted effort for improvement in access, quality and excellence. In the upcoming decades, India is set to reap the benefits of demographic dividend with its huge working age population. The International Labour Organization (ILO) has predicted that by 2020, India will have 116 million workers in the age between 20 to 24 years, as compared to China's 94 million. India has a very favourable dependency ratio and it is estimated that the average age in India by the year 2020 will be 29 years as against 40 years in USA, 46 years in Japan and 47 years in Europe. The XII Plan continues to maintain focus on higher education in India, to make it more relevant to the global needs and to remove the inequities in access to higher education amongst various social groups. Such objectives are sought to be realized by providing adequate inputs and implementing much needed governance and regulatory reforms also need to be implemented. In fact, we have more than 60% of our population in the age group between 15 to 59 years. This trend is very effective on the grounds that what matters is not the size of the population, but it's the age structure. It would be a lost opportunity if we don't take it as an advantage of this dividend. Herein lies the great significance of higher education. We must strive to prepare an educated and productive workforce through a concerted effort to improve the access, quality and relevance of higher education.

## II. HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The Central Advisory Board of Education (CABE) had approved the draft of RUSA in its 60<sup>th</sup> Meeting held on 8<sup>th</sup> November, 2012. The President of India announced the Scheme in his address to the joint sitting of Parliament on 21<sup>st</sup> February 2013 and

Prime Minister also announced the Scheme in the Governors' conference on 12<sup>th</sup> February, 2013 and Approved by the Cabinet on 20<sup>th</sup> June 2013 as the only Centrally Sponsored Scheme (CSS) from the Department of Education. The Expenditure Finance Committee (EFC) of planning commission has cleared the Scheme on 11<sup>th</sup> September 2013 and subsequently the Hon'ble Finance Minister cleared the Scheme on 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2013. The Cabinet Committee for Economic Affairs (CCEA) approved RUSA on 3<sup>rd</sup> October, 2013.

#### IV. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- ❖ To study the objectives of RUSA.
- ❖ To discuss the various components of RUSA.
- ❖ To study the compositions of RUSA.
- ❖ To discuss the funding process of RUSA.
- ❖ To discuss the guiding principles of RUSA.
- ❖ To study the disbursement process of fund of RUSA.

#### IV. METHODOLOGY

This study is done with theoretical analysis based on the secondary sources of Data like Books, Magazines, Research Journals, Published Articles, MHRD Documents, and RUSA Documents etc.

#### IV. OBJECTIVES OF RUSA

The Central objective of RUSA was to achieve the target of Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) of 32% by the year of 2020. Otherwise the key objectives of RUSA are to improve access, equity, quality and excellence in higher education through planned development of higher education at the state level. Objectives include creating new academic institutions, expanding and upgrading the existing institutions, developing institutions that are independent in terms of quality education, professionally managed, and characterized by greater inclination towards research and provide students with education that is relevant to them as well the nation as a whole. The main 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.
- ❖ To usher transformative reforms in the state higher education system by creating a facilitative institutional structure for planning and monitoring at the state level, promoting autonomy in State Universities and improving governance in institutions.
- ❖ To ensure reforms in the affiliation, academic and examination systems.
- ❖ To ensure adequate availability of quality faculty in all higher educational institutions and promote capacity building at all levels of employment.
- ❖ To create an enabling atmosphere in the higher educational institutions to promote research and innovation.
- ❖ To expand institutional base by creating additional capacity in existing institutions and establish new institutions, to achieve higher enrolment.
- ❖ To correct the regional imbalances in terms of access to higher education by setting up institutions in un-served and underserved areas of the country.
- ❖ To 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.

#### VI. VARIOUS COMPONENTS OF RUSA

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 University
- ❖ Conversion of colleges to Cluster Universities
- ❖ Infrastructure grants to Universities
- ❖ New Model Colleges (General)

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

### VII. COMPOSITIONS OF RUSA

The Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) has constituted a National Mission Authority with the following composition:

- ❖ Union Human Resource Development Minister - Chairperson
- ❖ Member, Planning Commission (in charge of higher education)
- ❖ Secretary, Department of Higher Education, Ministry of Human Resource Development - Vice-Chairperson
- ❖ Chairperson UGC, Co Vice Chairperson
- ❖ Chairperson, AICTE
- ❖ Chairpersons of the SHECs of all states
- ❖ Three Experts in the field of Higher Education
- ❖ Financial Advisor to MHRD
- ❖ Representative of Ministry of Finance
- ❖ Secretary, Agriculture
- ❖ Secretary, Health
- ❖ Secretary, S&T
- ❖ Secretary, Sports
- ❖ Secretary, Culture
- ❖ Joint Secretary (Higher Education) – Member Secretary
- ❖ Chairperson, MCI
- ❖ Chairperson

### VIII. FUNDING PROCESS OF RUSA

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 65% of the total grants, and 35% will be contributed by the state/UT as matching share. For north-eastern states, Sikkim, Jammu and Kashmir, and Uttarakhand the matching share is waived to 10%. During the 12th Five-Year Plan 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. Then the scheme will extend into the 13th FYP. As far as planning in India is concerned, this is the most favourite quote. In the next five year plan i.e. 12th FYP, MHRD is going to launch its one of the ambitious project, called as, Rashtriya Uchhtar Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA) – National Higher Education Mission. Like Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan and Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA), RUSA is being developed to boost Higher Education Sector in India. Every once and while when the news related to International Ranking of Higher Education Institutes are popping, the policy-makers in Higher Education is found busy in searching for the best suitable excuses. This time, hopefully, rather engaging their energy in finding the ways and means for escaping, an approach towards the damage control and then development of Higher Education Sector is coming up. This study is exploring the anatomy of RUSA as well as tries to reveal the possible benefits

## IX. GUIDING PRINCIPLES OF RUSA

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

### ➤ **Focus on Quality and Research:**

The RUSA focuses on better quality of state higher education institutions. The aim is to achieve mass access to higher education with high quality standards. States must ensure that all their institutions adopt NAAC accreditation as the mandatory quality assurance framework, and simultaneously seek to upgrade the overall academic quality by implementing reforms. They will be encouraged to promote research and innovation in their institutions. Since research focus can be judged both from input efforts and outcome indicators, the SHEPS are expected to have a balanced appreciation of both aspects. States and institutions are expected to honestly declare their present status in this area and outline specific strategies for improvement, including the use of information and communications technologies (ICT). There is a need to improve resource allocation for universities to enable good quality research and 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, etc., should be considered for faculty promotions.

### ➤ **Performance based outlays and outcome based reimbursements:**

The cornerstone around which RUSA is designed is that the states and state institutions will be funded on the basis of their performance against mutually agreed targets to between the states and the centre. The funds given to a state will be linked with the outcomes it can achieve in the higher education sector. These results and parameters of performance will be defined through norms that will focus on key areas of equity, access and excellence.

### ➤ **Incentivizing and Dis-incentivizing:**

RUSA will also be using the principles of incentivizing desirable actions of states and institutions and dis-incentivizing undesirable actions. Not only will compliance to rules, regulations and fulfilment of norms be supported by incentives, non-performance or non-fulfilment of prerequisites and norms will invite sanctions/penalties/reduced allocations for states and institutions. This is intended to make these scheme not only demand driven, but also competitive. The states and institutions will be encouraged to compete with each other in order to reap benefits of competition based formulaic grants.

### ➤ **Apolitical decision-making :**

Another basic tenet of RUSA is that the decision-making regarding the centre's allocations to various states will be done in an unbiased, apolitical and professional manner, on the basis of the SHEPs and the performance of states on the predefined parameters. The process of decision-making and its result will be transparent and the methods of decision-making will be impartial. It is expected that states will also be as unbiased, apolitical and professional while planning and ushering governance reforms at the state level. In order to effectively implement these reforms the selection of leadership positions in state universities should take into account the imperatives of merit and performance.

### ➤ **Disclosure based governance:**

Disclosure based governance must be followed not just by the RUSA authority but also by the State Higher Education Councils and the institutions that come under it in terms of its decision and outcome achievements. RUSA envisages a higher education system that has a greater participation of all stakeholders, where the institutions are responsible for their quality not just to the regulatory authorities but also to the students, parents and the society. A policy of full disclosure and clean governance are the first steps towards establishing such a system of higher education.

### ➤ **Autonomy:**

Autonomy is an indispensable condition for quality and accountability. RUSA envisages greater autonomy for institutions in terms of decision making. The institutions will have full liberty to plan specific interventions depending on their special needs and requirements. Some key concerns in enforcement of university autonomy are as follows:

## ✓ Revisiting the acts:

There is a need to revisit the acts of various state universities to see if there are some clauses detrimental to their autonomy.

## ✓ Streamlining the recruitment process:

Universities must have the autonomy to recruit the most competent faculty as per laid-down procedures and purely on the basis of merit.

## ✓ Membership of governing bodies:

A university is administered by its senior functionaries under the guidance of its statutory bodies such as the executive committee, syndicate, senate, etc. The persons to be nominated to these bodies must have specialized knowledge in the relevant disciplines and should not have conflict of interests in so far as decision making in the university is concerned. These bodies should predominantly consist of members from academic background.

## ✓ Institutional leadership:

It is the duty of the Vice Chancellor to safeguard the autonomy of the university. The increasing trend of appointing civil servants as heads of educational institutions needs to be reviewed. Special RUSA orientation programmes or conferences on the management of universities should be organized to enable the Vice Chancellors, Directors, Pro-Vice Chancellors, Deans and Heads of Departments to hone their management skills.

➤ **Equity based development:**

Equity based development initiatives must form an essential part of any development or expansion plans, both at the state and institution levels. Any growth in the higher education sector must create equal opportunities for women, disadvantaged classes and the differently abled. Also, development must have a greater focus on serving the rural and tribal areas. The plan appraisal process would take this aspect into account while deciding the allocations. Well-calibrated equity strategies must be built into the entire state planning process.

➤ **Financial Outlay for RUSA:**

In 11<sup>th</sup> Plan, Higher Education Sector (UGC) had been disbursed Rs. 19800 cr. Out of sanctioned Rs.46600 cr. for Expansion and Development while in 10<sup>th</sup> plan Rs. 9600cr. had been disbursed. RUSA is considered to be of Rs. 99000 cr. in total. While Rs.22,855 cr. is planned to be spent in 12<sup>th</sup>Plan.RUSA has basically two types of Centre-State Fund Sharing. For the states ranging in Special Category, like North-East States, Sikkim, J&K, HP and Uttarakhand, will receive in 90:10 manners while rest of the states and UTs will receive in 65:35 manners. It is being expected that States should mobilize 50% of its fund from the PPP. Rs. 16227 cr. is being spent by Centre while states will contribute only. 6628 cr. in RUSA in 12<sup>th</sup>Plan.

**Disbursement process of Fund of RUSA:**

Allocation of Grants will be based on certain prerequisites as mentioned in the RUSA document. Here the proposed disbursement of the fund is explained in the brief in broader categories for easiness of understanding.

## A. Grants to Create New Universities:

- ❖ 45 Autonomous Colleges will be converted into a University with grant support of Rs. 55cr. each requires Rs. 2475 cr. outlay.
- ❖ 35 Universities will be created by Conversion of colleges in to a Cluster University by grant support of Rs. 55 cr. each requires Rs. 1925 cr. outlay.

## B. Grants to Create New Colleges:

- ❖ 60 new Model Colleges with the grant of Rs. 12 cr. each will be created with outlay of Rs.720 cr.
- ❖ 54 existing colleges will be converted into Model Colleges with grant support of Rs. 4 cr. Each, which requires Rs.216 cr. outlay.
- ❖ 40 new colleges for Professional and Technical Education will be created with grant support of Rs. 26 cr. each, which requires Rs. 1040 cr. Outlay.

## C. Infrastructure Grants to University / College:

- ❖ 150 Universities will be provided Infrastructural Grants of Rs. 20 cr. each, which will requires. 3000 cr.
- ❖ 3500 colleges will be supported by Rs. 2 cr. Each for Infrastructure Grants which requires. 7000 cr. outlay.

## D. Grants for Faculty Recruitment and Improvement:

- ❖ 5000 new faculty positions will be created with grant support of Rs. 58lacks each which will require Rs. 2900 cr. outlay.
- ❖ 20 States will be provided grant support of Rs. 10 cr. each for Faculty Improvement Programmes which will require Rs. 200 cr. Outlay. This amount will be provided to create Infrastructural Facilities at UGC Academic Staff Colleges
- ❖ 20 states will be provided grant support of Rs. 5 cr. each for Leadership Development for
- ❖ Educational Administrators Programme which will require Rs. 100 cr. outlay.

E. Research, Equity, Quality, MIS, Vocationalization of Higher Education and Institutional Restructure the states and UTs will receive in 65:35 manners. It is being expected that States should mobilize 50% of its fund from the PPP. Rs.16227 cr. is being spent by Centre while states will contribute Rs. 6628 cr. in RUSA in 12<sup>th</sup>Plan.

- ❖ 20 states will be provided grant support of Rs. 60 cr. each for Research, Innovation and Quality Improvement. This will require Rs. 1200 cr. Outlay.
- ❖ 20 states will be provided grant support of Rs. 5 cr. each for Equity Initiatives, which will require Rs. 100 cr. outlay.
- ❖ 20 states will be provided Institutional Restructuring and Reform grants of Rs. 20 cr., each that will require Rs. 400 cr. outlay.
- ❖ 20 states will be provided Rs. 10 cr. each grant support for Development of MIS for Higher Education as well as data collection and data base management. This will require Rs. 200 cr. Outlay.
- ❖ 20 states will be provided grant support of Rs. 10 cr. each for Capability Enhancement Programmes which will require Rs. 200 cr. outlay.
- ❖ 20 states will be provided grant support of Rs. 15 cr. each for Vocationalization of Higher Education in the state. This will require Rs.300 cr. outlay. In order to implement RUSA, it is being proposed to utilize 4% of total plan cost, i.e. 879 cr. for Management, Monitoring and Evaluation and Research purpose.

## X. FINDINGS

After the critical analysis based on the various secondary sources, objectives of the study and research questions some significant findings are found. The findings are discussed below:

- ❖ There are some significant objectives to implementation of RUSA, which aims to achieve including the target of Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) of 32% by the year 2020, improvement of state higher education quality, adequate availability of quality faculty members, improve access, equity, quality, excellence and the promotion of research in higher education through planned development of higher education at the state level.
- ❖ We found 15 components of RUSA that helps to take the key action and funding areas for the fulfilment of RUSA's objectives.
- ❖ The Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) has constituted a National Mission Authority contains 17 composition which works hard to fulfilment of RUSA successful.
- ❖ We found that several ratio of fund is shared by central and state governments (in the ratio of 60:40 for general category states, 90:10 for special category states and 100% for union territories).
- ❖ RUSA is structured on certain impassable guiding principles. It is necessary to list these principles clearly at the beginning so as to ensure that this scheme does not degenerate into some kind of infrastructure support scheme. These guiding principles helps RUSA to work smoothly.
- ❖ We studied there are three tier institutional structure at the national, state and institution levels, would facilitate the monitoring of RUSA at the respective levels.

## XI. CONCLUSION

RUSA is an excellent opportunity to the State Universities to upgrade educational and research quality of infrastructure, knowledge resources and skill development expertise to produce international quality of higher education. It aims to create various new universities through up-gradation of existing autonomous colleges and by conversion of colleges to a cluster one. It will create a number of new model degree colleges, new professional colleges and provide infrastructural support to the universities and the colleges. Faculty recruitment support, faculty improvements programmes and leadership development of educational administrators is also an important part of this scheme. In order to improve skill development the existing central scheme of Polytechnics has been included within RUSA. It is considered as one of the positive step which aims to change the Indian Higher Education Landscape radically. Besides routine monitoring of schemes, there is persuasive need to evaluate and integrate recommendations from various Reports Commissioned by variety of Committees of the UGC, the MHRD and by

independent researchers to ensure a more comprehensive evaluation of various dimensions of higher education in India, including equity in access, in the quality of higher education. It should also be underscored that the upgraded colleges and universities would be mentored for high-quality research outputs with fund-associated expertise through RUSA.

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