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Engage Excellence

**Centre Giving Autonomy To  
Institutions Like IIMs: PM  
Modi**



Prime Minister Narendra Modi addressed a conference attended by Vice Chancellors and Directors of over 350 higher education institutions. The 'Conference on Academic Leadership on Education for Resurgence' is in continuation of the efforts being made by the Ministry for evolving an action plan for transformation of the higher education sector. "The theme of the conference is to deliberate on the challenges facing the Indian education system and to work out a plan for a paradigm shift both in terms of achieving academic outcomes and also in regulation of education.

Here are the highlights of PM Modi's speech:

- Knowledge and education are not restricted to books
- The purpose of education is to enable balanced growth of every dimension of a human being, which is not possible without innovation.
- In our ancient/old universities like Takshshila, Nalanda and Vikramashila, innovation was given emphasis along with Knowledge.
- In our ancient universities like Nalanda, Vikramshila and Takshashila both knowledge and innovation were equal given importance.
- I insist that students should give knowledge in the class room of the College, University but they also add them to the aspirations of the country.
- Centre strives to make educational institutions in the country's needs at every level..
- With this vision, we have started the Atal Tinkering Lab. Focusing on increasing trend of innovation in schoolchildren.
- Our government is also focusing on investing in education.
- To improve the infrastructure of education, the Revitalization of Infrastructure and Systems in Education or RISE programme has been started. It aims to spend one lakh crores by 2022.
- The government has set up HEFA- that is, High Education Funding Agency, which will provide financial assistance in the formation of higher educational institutions.
- Government has decided to increase the budget of National Higher Education Campaign.
- We have started this by giving autonomy to institutions like IIMs.
- Now IIM has got the strength to decide on its course curriculum, teacher appointment, board member appointment, expansion.
- The government will no longer have any role in them. This is an unprecedented decision related to higher education in India.

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**India needs a world-class higher educational system**

India has the third-largest higher educational system in the world. In 2016, there were 799 universities and 39,071 colleges spread across the country. These numbers are staggering. The growth of higher education in India over a little more than half a century has been even more staggering.

Between 1950 and 2014, the number of universities in India increased by 34 times. And, between 1950 and 2013, colleges increased by 74 times.

This quantitative explosion in higher education institutions has not been matched by the quality of the education they provide. In fact, the gap between quantity and quality is so large that it stands as one of the major obstacles in the way of India being a world leader. To become such a leader, India needs to develop a world class higher education system.

Two years ago, the Narendra Modi administration attempted to put some focus on quality in higher education with its introduction of draft regulations for a new initiative called the "UGC (Declaration of Government Educational Institutions as World Class Institutions) Guidelines, 2016." By 2018, when the first six institutions were named under this initiative, they were designated as "Institutions of Eminence" as opposed to "world class institutions".

Although the label has been changed, the intent remains the same. That is to give considerable discretion to and elevate the status of these institutions. This is not necessarily a bad thing. But, it will do little to address the underlying problems of higher education in India.

This is true because the focus is completely wrong. These universities are the tip of the higher educational iceberg. Enhancing the capacity of a few institutions, thus possibly enabling them to be rated a little higher in the world rankings of higher education institutions, does nothing for the many.

That's not to say that India does not need world class institutions of higher education. It is to say that more, importantly India, needs a world class higher education system.

A world class higher education system is one that is student- or customer-centered rather than institution-centered. It comprises certified and caring institutions that have the resources required and the core mission of ensuring that students/customers acquire the knowledge/skills/abilities and dispositions that they need to achieve their individual goals and to maximize their contribution to society.

India's current system has been almost exactly the opposite of that. The emphasis has been primarily on a select group of institutions and individuals rather than embracing and addressing the needs of the whole.

There are many steps that must be taken to change this and to make the Indian higher education system world class. They include:

- Increase public financing. The federal and state governments currently provide limited funding for higher education. As a result, over 70 percent of the higher education institutions are operated by the private sector. These institutions are not well regulated and are of highly variable quality. Public sector financing could be used to support existing public institutions and to establish new ones in regions in which there are limited higher educational opportunities.

- Enhance the infrastructure. Colleges and universities throughout India have inadequate physical settings, lack equipment, and suffer from a shortage of competent teachers. Ensuring that each higher educational institution is infra-structurally sound, establishes the proper environment for learning and growth.

- Expand access to and participation in higher education. The enrollment in higher education is approximately 15 per cent of the eligible population. This percentage needs to be much higher for India to be considered and to become a developed or developing country. It also needs to be representative of the entire population, including females, those from the weaker sectors, and rural areas.

- Enforce standards and requirements appropriately. The announced replacement of the University Grants Commission (UGC) with the Higher Education Commission of India (HECI) created considerable debate within and outside of the educational community. The essential question regardless of whether there is an UGC, HECI or some other agency with an acronym, must be: Is the proper data being collected and used to monitor performance and ensure accountability for each institution in the higher education system?

- Place an emphasis on vocational education. The higher education system must meet the needs of potential employers and prospective employees. Currently, there is a mismatch. The higher educational system must equip itself to be the provider of first resort and give the country the skilled workforce it requires.

There are many other steps that must be taken, such as addressing politicians controlling many educational institutions, to make India's higher education system world class. But there must be only one mindset. That mindset must be that the country's higher education system must be restructured, redesigned, and renewed in a way that benefits all of India and all Indians.

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## New education policy draft finally ready, will be submitted to government by end of month

The new education policy draft, expected to focus on rationalisation of school curriculum to reduce academic load and create more time for sports and snip off overlapping regulations, is likely to be delivered to the Centre by October 31.

The much awaited draft, which has seen four extensions, has been finalised and it is expected to pay particular attention to Indian languages, sports and mathematics, overlapping and multiple regulatory mechanisms in higher education and strengthening of public institutions.

After it's submission, the ministry of human resource development will examine it to add or delete before presenting it to Parliament. The revision is a significant exercise as the education policy in place was framed in 1986 and was revised in 1992.

The new national education policy (NEP) was an election promise by the Modi government and repeated delays, including setting up of a new committee under former Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) chief K Kasturirangan in June 2017, has raised a question mark whether it will be adopted before the term of the government ends in May, 2019.

However, according to reliable sources in the government, the policy has been framed with a 20-year-vision (2020-2040) and "therefore, the government has ample time for it to be presented for approval by both the Houses." As reported by TOI earlier the draft policy could be presented in Parliament in the winter session.

The deadline for the committee tasked with drafting the NEP was moved to October 31, 2018 after the third deadline of August 31 was extended in July 2018. Initially the former cabinet secretary T S R Subramanian-headed panel was entrusted with the task of drafting the new NEP when Smriti Irani was the HRD minister. The committee submitted its report in 2016. However, the government set up the Kasturirangan committee with eight members in 2017 after HRD minister Prakash Javadekar took charge and asked it to frame the draft after taking inputs from the Subramanian committee report.

According to sources, the new policy will be in sync with many of the reforms already initiated by the government. "This has also been a reason for the delay as they keep on updating the draft. Big restructuring in the regulatory frame work is one of the focus. There will be increased stress on traditional knowledge, Indian languages and mathematics at school level."

Sports as an integral part of school curriculum and rationalisation of the curriculum are some of the other areas. In fact, many of these areas have been mentioned on numerous occasions by the HRD minister Prakash Javadekar at various platforms.

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