

Standing Committee Report Summary

Issues and challenges before higher educational sector in India

- The Standing Committee on Human Resource Development (Chair: Dr. Satyanarayan Jatiya) submitted its report on 'Issues and challenges before higher educational sector in India' on February 8, 2017. The report examined the challenges of higher education in India after studying the higher education institutions in Hyderabad, Chandigarh, Patiala, Thiruvananthapuram, Udaipur, Chennai, Vishakhapatnam, Bhopal and Indore. The Committee also interacted with public sector banks regarding the education loan facilities being provided to students for higher education.
- The key observations and recommendations of the Committee are as follows:
 - **Shortage of resources:** Bulk of the enrolment in higher education is handled by state universities and their affiliated colleges. However, these state universities receive very small amounts of grants in comparison. Nearly 65% of the University Grants Commission (UGC) budget is utilised by the central universities and their colleges while state universities and their affiliated colleges get only the remaining 35%. The Committee recommends that the mobilisation of funds in state universities should be explored through other means such as endowments, contributions from industry, alumni, etc.
 - **Teacher vacancies:** According to UGC, the total number of sanctioned teaching posts in various Central Universities are 16,699 for professors, 4,731 for associate professors, and 9,585 for assistant professors. Out of the total sanctioned teaching posts, 5,925 (35%) professor posts, 2,183 (46%) associate professor posts and 2,459 (26%) assistant professor posts are vacant.
 - The Committee reasoned that this could be due to two reasons: (i) young students don't find the teaching profession attractive; or (ii) the recruitment process is long and involves too many procedural formalities. The recruitment process should start well before a post is vacated. In addition, to make the profession of teaching more lucrative, faculty should be encouraged to undertake consultancy projects and be provided financial support for start-ups.
 - **Accountability and performance of teachers:** At present, there is no mechanism for ensuring the accountability and performance of professors in universities and colleges. This is unlike foreign universities where the performance of college faculty is evaluated by their peers and students. In this context, a system of performance audit of professors based on the feedback given by their students and colleagues should be set up. Other inputs like research papers, publications by teachers should be added in the performance audit in due course of time.
 - **Lack of employable skills:** Lack of employable skills in students of technical education has been observed. Identification of skill gaps in different sectors and offering courses for enhancing employability in them has been recommended. Some strategies in this regard can include: (i) Industry Institute Student Training Support, (ii) Industrial Challenge Open Forum, (iii) Long Term Student Industry Placement Scheme, and (iv) Industrial Finishing Schools.
 - **Accreditation of institutions:** The Committee notes that accreditation of higher educational institutions needs to be at core of the regulatory arrangement in higher education. Further, quality assurance agencies should guarantee basic minimum standards of technical education to meet the industry demand for quality manpower. The National Board of Accreditation should act as a catalyst towards quality enhancement and quality assurance of higher technical education.
 - Credit rating agencies, reputed industry associations, media houses and professional bodies should be encouraged to carry forward the process of rating of Indian universities and institutions. A robust rating system will give rise to healthy competition amongst universities and help improve their performance.

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