



PRADHAN MANTRI UCHCHATAR SHIKSHA ABHIYAN (PM-USHA): NEEDS, OBJECTIVES AND INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK OF HIGHER EDUCATION

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Abstract

Pradhan Mantri Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyan (PM-USHA) is the successor program of Rashtriya Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA). PM-USHA is a scheme of the Ministry of Education, Government of India to improve the quality of higher education in state universities in line with the National Education Policy 2020, While the Indian higher education ecosystem has made significant progress, it also faces challenges such as ensuring quality education, reducing disparities, addressing the employability gap, and adapting to changing global trends. Continued efforts in funding, policy development, research, and innovation are essential to ensure the growth and relevance of higher education in India. which speaks about providing quality education for all. Under this, emphasis has been laid on strengthening higher education institutions as per future needs and international standards for structural reforms. It focuses on promoting equity, equality, access, and inclusion in higher education. Under this, emphasis is on improving the quality of education and recognition of colleges and universities. Under this scheme, 60% of the funds will be provided by the Central Government and the remaining 40% contribution will be borne by the states. To enhance teacher capacity in ICT tools, the scheme will also focus on faculty development programme and with the implementation of ICT digital infrastructure under PM-USHA, institutes will be encouraged to provide Wi-Fi facilities, smart classrooms and virtual laboratories in the institute campuses.

Key Words – PM-USHA Yojna- Component, Needs, Objectives, Instructional framework for Higher Education.

INTRODUCTION -

Rashtriya Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA) was a Centrally Sponsored Scheme to fund States/UTs institutions, with the vision to attain higher levels of access, equity, and excellence in the State higher education system with greater efficiency, transparency,

accountability, and responsiveness. The first phase of the scheme was launched in 2013 and the second phase was launched in 2018. Now, in the light of National Education Policy 2020, RUSA scheme has been launched as Pradhan Mantri Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyan (Vishal,2023).

As per AISHE report 2020-21, there are 1,113 Universities, 43,796 Colleges, and 11,296 Stand Alone Institutions. There are 422 State Public Universities that have 41,836 affiliated colleges. 446 Universities are privately managed and 475 Universities are located in rural areas, 17 are women-centric universities. 78.6% Colleges are privately managed (65% Private-unaided and 13.6% Private-aided). There are 35.8% of Colleges, which run only single programmes, out of which 82.2% are privately managed. Total enrolment in higher education has been estimated to be 4.13 crores with 2.12 crores boys and 2.01 crores females. Females constitute 48.7% of the total enrolment. Out of the total enrolment of 4.13 crores students, a vast majority of 3.26 crores students are enrolled in Under-Graduate is an approx. 78.09% of the total enrolment. On the other hand, 11.5% of students are enrolled in Post Graduation which is approximately 47.16 lakh students. There are 2,255 students enrolled in Integrated Ph.D. in addition to 2.11 lakh students enrolled in Ph.D. Level. To take advantage of the demographic dividend, there was a need for a concerted effort that would improve the quality and relevance of higher education and result in more employability (Pradhan Mantri Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyan- Guidelines, June,2023).

COMPONENT OF PM-USHA SCHEME -

Sr. No.	Component	No. of Units	Unit Cost (Rs. Cr.)	Total Amt. (Rs. Cr.)
1.	Multi-Disciplinary Education and Research Universities (MERU)	35 Universities	100	3500
2.	Grants to Strengthen Universities (Accredited & Unaccredited Universities)	73 Universities	20	1460
3.	Grants to Strengthen Colleges (Accredited & Unaccredited Colleges)	401 colleges	5	2005
4.	New Model Degree Colleges	40 New Model Degree Colleges	15	600
5.	Gender Inclusion and Equity Initiatives	50 Districts	10	500
6.	MMER (Management Monitoring Evaluation and Research Grants)		% for States and 1% for Central MMER	161.3

(Pradhan Mantri Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyan- Guidelines, June,2023).

Uttar Pradesh has secured ₹740 crore under the Pradhan Mantri Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyan (PM-USHA) programme, the highest amount in the country, with six universities

receiving ₹100 crore each for the development of these institutions as multi-disciplinary education and research universities (MERUs), while a sum of ₹140 crore has been distributed among eight other universities in the state for renovating dilapidated buildings (Hindustan times, feb.19,2024).

NEEDS OF PM-USHA SCHEME –

NEP 2020 faced Some of the major problems currently higher education system in India include: (a) a severely fragmented higher educational ecosystem; (b) less emphasis on the development of cognitive skills and learning outcomes; (c) a rigid separation of disciplines, with early specialisation and streaming of students into narrow areas of study; (d) limited access particularly in socio-economically disadvantaged areas, with few HEIs that teach in local languages (e) limited teacher and institutional autonomy; (f) inadequate mechanisms for merit-based career management and progression of faculty and institutional leaders; (g) lesser emphasis on research at most universities and colleges, and lack of competitive peer reviewed research funding across disciplines; (h) suboptimal governance and leadership of HEIs; (i) an ineffective regulatory system; and (j) large affiliating universities resulting in low standards of undergraduate education (NEP ,2020).

RUSA 1.0 & 2.0 has addressed around 2500 institutions, enhancing access, equity, and quality through 16 components. Notable progress in higher education indicators like Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER), Quality Reforms through Accreditation, and Student-Teacher ratio has been achieved. However, gaps persist in access, inclusion, Enrolment, quality improvement, skill development, employability, and technology integration.

Hence, fresh interventions are necessary for bridging these gaps, yielding improved results. PM-USHA aims to rectify key gaps identified in the NITI Aayog's Evaluation Report of Centrally Sponsored Schemes. The report recommends:

- ❖ Redesigning the scheme for rationalization and higher impact.
- ❖ Focusing on graduate employability by funding market-linked courses, industry connections, and student internships.
- ❖ Thoroughly tracking HEI employability outcomes.
- ❖ Introducing skill-based education, addressing critical gaps, and offering vocational courses.
- ❖ Promoting technology and Open Distance Learning for enhanced access and quality.
- ❖ Supporting institutes to boost NAAC accreditation grades, emphasizing quality initiatives, e-learning adoption, and outcome tracking.

- ❖ Encouraging community participation, gender sensitization, and more.

OBJECTIVES OF PM-USHA SCHEME –

- ❖ To improve the overall quality of existing state higher educational institutions by ensuring their conformity to prescribed norms and standards and adoption of accreditation as a 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.
- ❖ Implementation of recommendations of the NEP 2020 through funding support provided to State HEIs.
- ❖ Ensure governance, academic, and examination (and evaluation) reforms in the State higher educational institutions and establish backward and forward linkages with school education on one hand and employment market, on the other hand, to facilitate self-reliance and thus creating an Atma-Nirbhar Bharat.
- ❖ Create an enabling atmosphere in the higher educational institutions to devote themselves to research and innovations.
- ❖ Correct regional imbalances in access to higher education by facilitating access to high-quality institutions in urban & semi-urban areas, creating opportunities for students from rural areas to get access to better quality institutions, and setting up institutions in unserved & underserved areas.
- ❖ Developing infrastructure for ODL/Online/Digital mode of education in such States/UTs.
- ❖ Improve equity in higher education by providing adequate opportunities for higher education to socially deprived communities; promote inclusion of women, minorities, SC/ST/OBCs, and special-abled persons.
- ❖ To identify and fill up the existing gaps in higher education, by augmenting and supporting the State Governments' efforts.
- ❖ Enhancing employability through skilling and Vocationalization.
- ❖ Improving accreditation status of accredited institutions and getting accreditation of non-accredited institutions.
- ❖ Providing better hostel facilities in remote areas.
- ❖ Establishing New Model Degree Colleges in the districts where there are no Government and Government-aided institutions.

- ❖ Focusing on low GER, Left Wing Extremism (LWE), border area districts, aspirational districts and districts with higher SC/ ST population.
- ❖ Focus on multidisciplinary education, including STEM, commerce and humanities fields of education.

INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK OF HIGHER EDUCATION –

PM-USHA shall be implemented and monitored through an institutional structure of bodies with clearly defined roles and powers at the Central, State, and institutional levels. All the bodies shall monitor the progress of the scheme at their respective levels, starting right from the institutional level up to the national level.

A. CENTRAL LEVEL STRUCTURE - The central level structure comprises four bodies namely:

- ❖ National Mission Authority (NMA) which would be chaired by Hon'ble Education Minister, Government of India
- ❖ Project Approval Board (PAB) which would be chaired by Secretary (Higher Education), Government of India
- ❖ National Project Directorate (NPD)
- ❖ Technical Support Group (TSG)

B. STATE LEVEL STRUCTURE- State level structure is comprised of three bodies namely:

- ❖ State Higher Education Council (SHEC)
- ❖ State Project Directorate (SPD)
- ❖ State Technical Support Group (State-TSG)

C. INSTITUTIONAL LEVEL STRUCTURE - This project at the institutional level is managed by two bodies:

- ❖ Board of Governors (BOGs)
- ❖ Project Monitoring Unit (PMU)

CONCLUSION –

PM-USHA scheme focuses on equity initiatives and gender inclusion by providing adequate opportunities to underprivileged groups, and it promotes the inclusion of women, minorities, SCs/STs/OBCs, and specially-abled people in higher education, which will help to increase the Gross Enrolment Ratio (**Satish, September 08, 2023**). language barrier for learners must be removed, and multilingualism, such as mother tongue/local and regional languages as a medium of instruction, should be promoted, increasing accessibility among

different courses and allowing learners to develop an artistic, creative, cultural, and academic path. And PM-USHA would provide the facilities to the institution for upgrading the physical and digital infrastructure and also for the conversion of single-stream higher education institutions (HEIs) into multiple streams institutions.

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