

## **2<sup>nd</sup> AKHIL BHARTIYA SHIKSHA SAMAGAM**

### **Thematic Session 1: Access to Quality Education and Governance – Higher Education**

#### **Introduction:**

Education is not just a basic right of each individual; it is the key to a sound foundation of both, individual and society. Education, more specifically quality education is the precursor to ensuring the holistic development of individuals and an access to better opportunities in all aspects of life. The aspirations of a nation to ensure sound economic welfare for its citizens are intertwined with its ability to provide quality education to all.

Quality education furthers not just the economic advancement of a nation but also its social and cultural advancement. Quality education is defined by the quality of learners and teachers, the quality of the learning content and, learning environment, quality of governance and leadership, and the quality of assessment practices. The goal of ensuring access to quality education for all however cannot be achieved in isolation. It requires dedicated efforts to create an effective governance mechanism that facilitates an enabling environment for ensuring access to quality education.

India's Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) at the start of the 21<sup>st</sup> century was at 12.4%. Sustained focus of governments and regulatory bodies along with innovative schemes & increased funding helped in the expansion of the higher education sector with greater regional and social equity, increasing the GER to a 27.1% at present.

India's GER though having more than doubled in the last two decades, is still far behind several developed nations, calling for a more focused effort to improve access to quality higher education.

NEP 2020 emphasizes on an education that increases creativity and innovation, critical thinking and higher-order thinking capacities, problem-solving abilities, teamwork, communication skills, greater in-depth learning and mastery of curricula across fields, social and moral awareness, and other 21<sup>st</sup> century skills, besides general engagement and enjoyment of learning.

The major recommendations in connection with access and governance are holistic & multidisciplinary education, flexible education, revamping of curriculum, higher order assessment, active research environment, faculty development, and revision of governance structure and a target of 50% GER by 2030.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> Akhil Bharatiya Shiksha Samagam (ABSS), an annual event to celebrate the launch of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 was celebrated on 29<sup>th</sup> – 30<sup>th</sup> July 2023 at ITPO Complex, New Delhi. The event was organized by the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship and marks the 3<sup>rd</sup> anniversary of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. The two-day event consists of 16 sessions on 16 different themes. The thematic sessions were held to promote dialogue and understanding on the various themes of the NEP 2020.

The first of the sixteen sessions was on ‘**Access to Quality Education and Governance**’. A panel of distinguished experts from academia, administration and industry participated and shared their views on the issues, challenges and solutions in the implementation of the NEP. The composition of panelists for the session was as below:

Prof. Abhay Karandikar, Director, IIT Kanpur	Chairman
Shri Vikash Rastogi, Principal Secretary HE, Govt of Maharashtra	Panelist
Shri Ashank Desai, Mastek Ltd	Panelist
Shri Vineet Nayar, Sampark Foundation	Panelist

More than 200 participants attended the session from varied backgrounds like the University Systems, Institutes of National Importance (INIs), and Colleges.

#### **Expected Outcomes of the Session:**

The Session was expected to provide a forum where in the Institutions and stakeholders can collaborate to foster and formulate action plans for improving the quality of education being imparted and to streamline their governance strategies:

- a. Strategy to be adopted to enhance quality of the higher education and access to the same
- b. Guidance for institutes to transform themselves into multidisciplinary educational institutes through collaborations
- c. Leveraging SWAYAM courses to make education more accessible and increase the variety of courses available to learners
- d. Moving towards institutional autonomy and creating a strong leadership team in the institutes.
- e. Improved understanding of the NAAC and NBA accreditation process and the eligibility criteria for institutes
- f. Improved understanding and roadmap for improvement of the ranking of institutes

## **Discussion:**

The Session was coordinated by Anil Kumar- Director (Finance), D/o Higher Education, M/o Education. After welcoming the Panelists and the Participants, he gave a brief of the topic of the Thematic Session. After a brief introduction of the Panelists, the session was handed over to the Chair for discussion.

### **Chair: Prof. Abhay Karandikar, Director-IIT Kanpur**

The session began with a brief introduction by Prof. Abhay Karandikar, Chairman of the panel on the theme to enable greater understanding and shed light on the various initiatives taken for facilitating greater access to quality education and governance. In order to set the context, he emphasized on certain principles of NEP wrt Access to Quality Education and Governance like- Equitable and Inclusive Education, Quality Education and Learning Outcomes, Teacher Empowerment and Professional Development, Education Governance & Regulation and Technology Integration. There are some challenges in access to quality education- disparities in access, significant variation in quality of teacher, assessment procedures, outdated pedagogy and infrastructure. He stated that Integration of Technology also has huge role in scaling the quality of education. Effective use of technology and digitization has a significant role in access to quality education. In order to engage a dialogue and discussion on the theme with participants, he invited the panelists for their views on the theme.

### **Panelist-1: Shri Ashank Desai, Chairman-Mastek Ltd**

He focused on the **Role of Technology, Professional Education, and Governance** in enabling Quality Education. He laid great emphasis on change being a necessary pre-requisite to ensure the intended transformation in the education system and highlighted the role of NEP 2020 in bringing about the change. He added that unless the NEP is geared to make changes, the outcomes may not bring the intended transformation. Highlighting the role of technology, he suggested **to include the Technology Adoption as one of the verticals for Higher Education Institutions**. For scaling quality education and towards ensuring equity he called for a technology mission that looks at all aspects of NEP, particularly the impact. The changes in technology are going to affect the education also and we have to geared up for those changes. We must plan for the technology evolution and must think of adopting it. He further stressed on the quality of professional education and its impact on society. He called for greater integration between industry and institution and a mission that constantly looks at society,

industry, and institution connect. He gave examples of **advisory boards of higher education institutions** run by the industry people, and the people from the society. This inclusion of these people brings to the table what are the needs of the industry and the society. If we don't do it, it may result into silos of institutions, industry, and society. **So there has to be a strong connection between Industry, Society, and Institutions by way of representation in the Boards of the Institutions.** Society interaction with the institutions seems to be missing in the NEP. Discussing autonomy in HEIs, he underlined it as the key difference in determining the quality of education between INIs and other HEIs. He opined that the IITs and the IIMs commands a respectable position because of good governance, which is basically because of the autonomy these institutions enjoy. Such **autonomy** is not there in case of many other HEIs. Even IITs and IIMs have a long way to go in terms of international recognitions or rankings for which they need **much more freedom beyond academic autonomy**. Batting for autonomy for HEIs as an important step to bring quality education, pointed to **autonomy being an inseparable element for quality. The quality of the board of an institution determines the quality of the institute also.** Lastly, he drew attention to the shortage of quality leadership. Pointing that the NEP recommended for a new governance system for HEIs with Board of Directors would lead to a steep rise in demand for candidates at the leadership level. He added that with 1000 plus universities and 45000 plus colleges in the country, the need for candidates at the leadership level would see a steep rise. He questioned our readiness and the availability of an ecosystem that builds leaders to govern these institutions. Without the right persons at the top, providing quality education and implementation of NEP in general would be a challenge. **Through capacity building of the leaders who govern the institutions, governance can be improved and quality higher education can be achieved.** He concluded with an emphasis on the need for institutions that help build leaders to lead institutions, and it is the IIMs, which can play a crucial role in this. He said, we need institutions like- IIMs to train the leaders who can lead the educational institutions and improve governance.

#### **Panelist-2: Shri Vikash Rastogi, Principal Secretary HE, Govt of Maharashtra**

Coming with vast experience associated with higher education in the State of Maharashtra, **Shri Vikash Rastogi** gave an overview of the higher education system, covering polytechnics to post-doctoral programmes, in the State of Maharashtra. He shared the experience of the Maharashtra, how the governance can lead to the quality education. He shared the efforts and initiatives undertaken towards ensuring quality education, particularly with reference to **accreditation, autonomy, and capacity building of faculty**. He informed that

the state is focusing on increasing the **Accreditation**. And there is a mechanism to mentor the unaccredited institutions, to help them in taking accreditation. He stated how quality education is at the forefront for Maharashtra which has a GER of 34% (better than the national average) and the most NAAC-accredited institutions in the country. He shared that as per the University Act, quality has to be at the forefront of the higher education. He told that the State Government has been focusing on improvement in quality by accreditation through policy level interventions, proper support and incentives. He informed that State also has a Scheme called 'Paris-Sparsh' to guide the colleges for NAAC, NBA assessment. There are 150 colleges in higher education and 75 institutions in technical education which can act as Mentor. One college is expected to mentor 5 to 7 colleges for NAAC or NBA assessment. Another important aspect, which the state is focusing after accreditation, is the autonomy. Drawing the attention of participants towards the various NEP initiatives like 4-year UG programme, multiple entry and exit in academic programmes, industry connect, society connect which were well underway in the state institutions, he said the speedy transformation was possible because of the autonomy HEIs in the state are enjoying for a long period. He shared the best practices of the state government to promote autonomy through means of "**Empowered Autonomous Colleges**" whereby the autonomous colleges besides setting syllabi, conducting examinations and declaring results can also get their college logos inscribed in the degree along with the logo of the affiliating university, a step closer to degree awarding status, since the UGC Act doesn't permit colleges to award degrees. The concept of Cluster University was started in 2018 in Maharashtra and currently it has three cluster universities and another 20 Cluster Universities are proposed to be set up in line with NEP. Emphasizing the focus of NEP in transformation to be led by the faculty and academic leadership. He shared insights on the **Faculty Development Academy**, an initiative focused on training teachers and creating a regular supply of academic leaders. Faculty Development Academy is a Section-8 Company, having representation of the state government, industry and the universities. This has tied up with some of the best institutions like IISERs, IITs and other institutions leveraging their expertise in various areas. This is helping in creating the academic leaders who will be in position of vice chancellors, and in boards of the various academic institutions. He said that the state is using multi-dimensional approach for improving the quality of higher education and implementation of NEP. He further informed about the constitution of a steering committee for the implementation of NEP and a healthy budgetary allocation for higher education as essential factors promoting quality education and nurturing academic leaders in the state. He concluded by emphasizing the role of governance as an enabler for quality initiatives led by the state.

**Panelist-3: Shri Vineet Nayar, former CEO HCL Technologies, and Founder Chairman & CEO Sampark Foundation**

He appreciated that through the ABSS Platform, Hon'ble PM projected the vision of India being a dominant country by the year 2047, and acknowledged that education will be a major contributor for that. He emphasized that the quality of the students coming out of higher education institutions is not up to the mark. From the experience of working in the field of school education through his foundation, he knows what quality of input is coming to the higher education institutions. We need to understand, where is the industry going. The industrialization in the world, which started in Europe, then US and unfortunately Asia was the last to get industrialization. Through this industrialization, we came to know of Management Philosophy of lining up people into rows and column to get high productivity than they can individually produce. That resulted into an education system, and management practices what we call vertical specific knowledge. Those industrial age policy got dramatically challenged in the digital age. So the countries which did extremely well in industrial age- like Germany, UK started falling behind in a big way specially in comparison to US when digital started. And digital started rising innovation. If we see the concept of Innovation, it is about attempting to do, and do the stuff which others considers impossible. And that is the reason that despite massive IT Export from the country, we do not have a single global product. And all global products are coming from small countries, like Israel, France, and Finland and even Turkey. But in India we are not able to produce. It is because of how we attempt the innovation. Are we teaching people, how to attempt impossible, and try and achieve what others considered impossible? It is within the boundary of logic and reason for you, it is outside the boundary of logic and reason for others. That is the fundamental challenge in our country which we face today. If our aspiration is to dominate the global world in 2047, we need to learn how to aspire people to think outside the boundary of logic and reason. He raised a doubt that in school education or in higher education, neither we are focusing to expand the boundary of logic and reason, nor we have a framework how we will expand the boundaries of logic and reason. There is a second reason, we must be little careful of is that in the history of industrial age, knowledge accumulation was very-very critical for everybody. The reason Indian Engineers, and Doctors were very successful abroad, was that they were able to absorb the information or data and our ability to absorb the knowledge was very large, and we could apply that knowledge into practice. Now with the introduction of tools like- ChatGPT, Machine Learning and AI, that whole absorption of knowledge has become redundant. Now the world is moving towards application of knowledge, you use the knowledge you have, irrespective of how you acquired

it. And he stated that he fully support this multilingual support of knowledge, because English is not the only medium in which we can acquire the knowledge. Irrespective of how we acquire the knowledge, are we teaching how to apply the knowledge? Our education institutions are completely away from practical industries and therefore, there is no connect between them. We are in silos, and we continue walking down the path of giving them higher and higher knowledge may be more relevant knowledge but we are not teaching how to apply that knowledge. Because of that, in IT industry new engineering recruits cannot be directly placed on the job. They require substantial amount of training before contributing anything in the industry. Yet they are not able to produce the products of global caliber. So we need to think from curriculum point of view, whether the application of knowledge is happening or not. And even the digital initiatives or hybrid digital initiatives are not enough, until hybrid includes industry.

He finally suggested three things- **first** is that NEP framework needs to move away from competence only criteria to application of competency. If India want to be globally dominant by 2047, we must aspire to be the creative headquarter of the world, not the service head quarter of the world. This has to be reflected accordingly in the curriculum framework. **Second** is - can we expand our CSR funding to all for-profit organizations who take interns, if you take interns from colleges, it will be considered as CSR funding. The moment that happens, because everybody wants backward integration, everybody wants ready to hire people, corporate sector will move to the education sector at a very fast pace, and start absorbing interns and that will make it more relevant. And the **third** and the most important point which we are missing is what we are doing with our teachers. There is very little or no innovation happening in college education in terms of pedagogy in comparison to the school education. There has to be innovation in how to teach. Unless we come with a dramatic way of teaching, we will suffer the consequences of having the same teacher, delivering the same knowledge, same way and the outcome will be the same. Therefore, innovation is required in pedagogy to find out new way of teaching so that outcomes are different compared to the outcomes we see today.

He concluded with a remark that the vision 2047 is a compelling one and education is the only way and we as Indians should ensure that it becomes a reality.

**Way Forward:** Acknowledging the steps being taken by the Government for improvement of the Quality and Governance in the Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) like- accreditations, introduction of NIRF rankings, National Higher Education Qualifications Framework (NHEQF), regulation for redressal of Grievances of Students, and Guidelines for transforming HEIs into Multidisciplinary Institutions etc, the panelist delineated the following issues and challenges and came out with the solutions to achieve access to quality education and governance as envisioned in the NEP 2020 during the course of their discussion.

**Issues:**

- Disparity in Access
- Quality of Teachers and their Capacity Building
- Assessment Methods and Procedure
- Availability of Infrastructure
- Technology, Professional Education,
- Improvement of Governance in Higher Education Institutions
- Gap between aspiration of the nation from higher education and the reality
- Industry-Academia and Society-Academia connect.
- Disparity in the quality of education among institutions

**Challenges:**

- Challenges we face in achieving quality education for all
- Integration of technology to scale quality education and ensure equity
- Disconnect between the industry, society and education
- Addressing the Leadership lacuna
- Empowering colleges to award degrees in the absence of any legislative framework
- Gap in knowledge accumulation and knowledge application
- Lack of innovation in pedagogy in Higher Education
- Availability of requisite funds to upgrade the infrastructure
- Accrediting all the Higher Education Institutions by the National Accreditation and Assessment Council (NAAC) to ensure that the minimum quality standards.
- Accrediting the programs offered by the technical institutions by the National Board of Accreditation (NBA) to ensure that the technical programs in India are in line with the industrial standards and the requirements of the technical industries.



## **Conclusions:**

- To include the Technology Adoption as one of the vertical for Higher Education Institutions.
- Greater integration between industry and institution and a mission that constantly looks at society, industry, and institution connect.
- There has to be a strong connection between Industry, Society, and Institutions by way of representation in the Boards of the Institutions.
- Autonomy for HEIs will be an important step to bring quality education, as the autonomy is an inseparable element for quality. Institutions need much more freedom beyond academic autonomy, in order to compete internationally.
- The quality of the board of an institution determines the quality of the institute also. So there has to be a focus on improving the quality of leadership for institutions.
- There has to be an ecosystem that builds leaders to govern the higher education institutions. Without the right persons at the top, providing quality education and implementation of NEP in general would be a challenge. Through capacity building of the leaders who govern the institutions, governance can be improved and quality higher education can be achieved. The IIMs can play a crucial role in training the leaders who can lead the educational institutions and improve governance.
- Focus on increasing the Accreditation, NACC as well as NBA.
- To promote autonomy through means of “Empowered Autonomous Colleges” allowing them setting the syllabi, conducting examinations and declaring results can also get their college logos inscribed in the degree along with the logo of the affiliating university, a step closer to degree awarding status.
- Establishment of Cluster Universities.
- The concept of Faculty Development need to be institutionalized for capacity building of the faculties. The programs and trainings for the faculty should be organised on a regular basis to enable professors, teaching assistants, scholars, and administrators to stay updated with the latest pedagogical trends, changes in syllabus, and constantly evolving educational technology.
- Constitution of a steering committee for the implementation of NEP and a healthy budgetary allocation for higher education are the essential factors promoting quality education.

- Change in the education system from how to accumulate knowledge to more emphasis on the application of that knowledge. A curriculum that focuses on the application of knowledge is the need of the hour.
- The digital initiatives or hybrid digital initiatives for imparting education are not enough, until hybrid includes industry also. We need to understand, where is the industry going.
- We need to learn, and must have a framework on how to inspire people to think outside the boundary of logic and reason.
- NEP framework needs to move away from competence only criteria to application of competency. If India want to be globally dominant by 2047, we must aspire to be the creative headquarter of the world, not the service head quarter of the world. This has to be reflected accordingly in the curriculum framework.
- We should expand our CSR funding to all for-profit organizations who take interns, if they take interns from colleges, it will be considered as CSR funding. The moment that happens, because everybody wants backward integration, everybody wants ready to hire people, corporate sector will move to the education sector at a very fast pace, and start absorbing interns and that will make it more relevant.
- There has to be innovation in how to teach. Unless we come with a dramatic way of teaching, we will suffer the consequences of having the same teacher, delivering the same knowledge, same way and the outcome will be the same. Therefore, innovation is required in pedagogy to find out new way of teaching so that outcomes are different compared to the outcomes we see today.

The panel discussion was followed by an engaging discussion and dialogue between the panelist and participants on the theme and its pertinent aspects. The session ended with the chair, Prof. Abhay Karandikar highlighting the key takeaways from the session and presentation of mementos to the four panelists as a token of gratitude and a vote of thanks to all present.

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