

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION
DEPARTMENT OF HIGHER EDUCATION**

**RAJYA SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 339
ANSWERED ON 22.07.2026**

Skill integration in higher education

339 # Shri Tejveer Singh:

Will the Minister of *Education* be pleased to state:

- (a) whether the process of integrating skill development and vocational education into higher education under the National Education Policy, 2020 has been effectively implemented;
- (b) the major steps taken by Government to promote research, accreditation and multidisciplinary education in higher education institutions; and
- (c) the initiatives taken by Government to increase the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) and ensure equitable access to higher education for disadvantaged sections?

ANSWER

MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

(DR. SUKANTA MAJUMDAR)

(a): The Government has undertaken several measures to strengthen Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in line with the National Education Policy (NEP), 2020, with inter-alia emphasis on skill development, vocational education, equitable access for disadvantaged sections, quality assurance, research and innovation, and multidisciplinary education.

The National Education Policy (NEP), 2020 envisages integration of skill development and vocational education with mainstream higher education to enhance employability, entrepreneurship and lifelong learning. UGC has notified the National Higher Education Qualifications Framework (NHEQF), aligned with the National Credit Framework (NCrF), to enable integration of general, vocational and experiential learning. The National Credit Framework facilitates credit accumulation and transfer across academic, vocational and skill education, while the Academic Bank of Credits (ABC) supports seamless academic mobility. UGC has also issued Guidelines for Internship/Apprenticeship Embedded Degree Programmes (IEDP), enabling undergraduate students to acquire industry-relevant skills through structured internships and apprenticeships integrated with their degree programmes.

AICTE is actively strengthening skill development by embedding it into technical education. It partners with industries and institutions to offer online skill courses aligned with the regular curriculum, along with skill-focused programmes, compulsory internships, and vocational degrees. These initiatives are designed to build students' practical abilities and improve employability. Additionally, AICTE has signed MoUs with leading industries and organisations to support internships, skill-building, and faculty upskilling, including hands-on exposure to Industry 4.0 technologies.

Employability Skill module has been included as a part of Job Roles/SWAYAM courses in the curriculum which includes Communication Skills, Self-Management Skills, Information and Communication Technology Skills, Entrepreneurship Skills, and Green Skills.

To support skill development, the SWAYAM Plus portal has also been launched, focusing on upskilling and reskilling the workforce. More than 500 courses have been developed curated from 89 industry partners across 17 sectors and offered on emerging areas such as AI, Data Analyst etc. So far, more than 6,00,000 students registered on the platform.

The National Apprenticeship Training Scheme (NATS) bridges the gap between academic learning and industry requirements by providing structured on-the-job training to graduates and diploma holders. The Scheme promotes industry-integrated education through Apprenticeship Embedded Degree Programmes (AEDP), supports apprenticeships in emerging areas such as Artificial Intelligence (AI), and facilitates academic credit integration through the NATS Assessment and Creditisation Framework.

(b): To boost research and innovation, the Government has established the Anusandhan National Research Foundation (ANRF), which seeks to harness the research potential of universities and colleges, support academic research, and facilitate translational research in emerging technologies and national priority areas. The ANRF aims to mobilize ₹50,000 crore during 2023–28, including ₹14,000 crore from the Central Government, with the remaining sourced from public sector enterprises, the private sector, philanthropies, and international bodies, through various funds such as the ANRF Fund, Innovation Fund, and Science and Engineering Research Fund.

The Government has launched the Research Development and Innovation (RDI) Scheme on 3rd November 2025, a Rs. 1-lakh-crore initiative representing a significant move to strengthen India's research and development landscape. The scheme is aimed at catalysing private sector investment in research, development and innovation through long-term, low or nil-interest financing, thereby complementing the efforts of ANRF and other Ministry of Education schemes in building a robust national research ecosystem.

Other initiatives such as the Prime Minister's Research Fellowship (PMRF), Prime Minister Research Chair (PMRC) Scheme, Scheme for Promotion of Academic and Research Collaboration (SPARC), IMPRINT, Uchhatar Avishkar Yojana (UAY) and Institutions of Eminence (IoE) continue to enhance research capacity, innovation and collaboration between academia, industry and international institutions.

Focus of NEP on research and innovation has propelled India's ranking in the Global Innovation Index (GII) from 48 in 2020 and currently being ranked at 38th place in 2025.

To strengthen the quality of higher education, institutions are encouraged to obtain accreditation from the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC), and reforms are being undertaken to expand accreditation coverage and strengthen the accreditation ecosystem. NAAC evaluates institutions on various parameters including teaching-learning, research, infrastructure, governance and institutional best practices, and awards accreditation grades based on their performance. The accreditation process promotes quality assurance, accountability, research and innovation, and serves as an important benchmark for institutional excellence and continuous improvement in higher education.

The Government has taken several measures to promote multidisciplinary and flexible higher education in line with the National Education Policy (NEP), 2020. The University Grants Commission (UGC) has notified the Guidelines for Multiple Entry and Exit in Academic Programmes offered in Higher Education Institutions, facilitating flexible learning pathways and academic mobility through the Academic Bank of Credits (ABC). The Government is also implementing the Multidisciplinary Education and Research Improvement in Technical Education (MERITE) Scheme to strengthen

research infrastructure and promote innovation and interdisciplinary research in Higher Educational Institutions.

In alignment with National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, the Government has launched the third phase of Rashtriya Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA) in June 2023 in the form of Pradhan Mantri Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyan (PM-USHA) for the period 2023-24 to 2025-26 with an outlay of Rs. 12,926.10 crore, including the committed liabilities of the earlier phases of RUSA, to cater to the needs of educationally unserved/underserved areas. Under the Multi-Disciplinary Education and Research Universities (MERU) component of PM-USHA, 35 Universities have been approved for a total amount of Rs. 100 crore each.

(c): The Government has taken various measures to increase the GER in Higher Education, which inter-alia includes, Setting up of more Higher Education Institutions; Allowing well performing HEIs (based on NAAC and NIRF ranking) by University Grants Commission (UGC) to offer full Open Distance Learning/Online Programmes based on quality parameters; Providing much-needed flexibility and appropriate Exit as well as entry options in the Higher Education system, to facilitate students to choose their learning trajectory; Allow pursuing two Academic Programmes simultaneously; Permitting HEIs for two admission cycles in an academic year; Providing anytime, anywhere learning opportunities for all learners through Study Webs for Active Learning for Young Aspiring Minds (SWAYAM) platform, which provides high quality structured online courses in multiple disciplines; Permitting up to 40% credits in regular courses using SWAYAM platform; and Conducting JEE, NEET (UG) and Common University Entrance Test (CUET) Exams in 13 languages, and making available Text Books in Indian Languages to facilitate students, particularly from vernacular/rural background.

In order to provide equity in access for disadvantaged groups, the Central Government implements various scholarship and financial assistance schemes to support students belonging to marginalised sections.

As a result of these initiatives, India's Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in higher education increased from 23.7 in 2014–15 to 30 in 2023–24. Female GER rose from 22.9 to 31.2 during the same period. SC GER increased from 18.9 to 27.8, while ST GER increased from 13.5 to 22.8 between 2014–15 and 2023–24. The rise in GER has been accompanied by significant growth in student enrolment, with total higher education enrolment increasing from 3.42 crore in 2014–15 to 4.50 crore in 2023–24, adding more than 1.08 crore students to the higher education system.
