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seed...

Online Courses on Ethics, Values & Life Skills

Course -1

Introduction to Ethics – 2 Credits

Module -1: DEFINITION AND MAJOR THEORIES

Unit 1: The definition

Unit 2: Major Theories of Ethics and Brief description of theories

Unit 3: Ethical Framework and Approaches

Unit 4: Key Distinction between Ethics, Morals, and Values

Module - 2: SCOPE OF ETHICS AND ETHICS IN DIFFERENT DISCIPLINES AND PROFESSIONAL ETHICS

Unit 1: Scope **Unit 2:** Scope of Ethics in Different Disciplines

Unit 3: Professional Ethics **Unit 4:** Challenges of Application

Module – 3: ETHICS IN MODERN TIMES

Unit 1: Ethics in Modern Times **Unit 2:** Future Challenges

Course - 2

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Unit 1: The Definition **Unit 2:** Norms and Values **Unit 3:** Perennial Values

Module - 2: VALUES IN MODERN SOCIETY

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Unit 3: The Revivalist or the Orthodox Model **Unit 4:** The Radical or the Revolutionary Model

Module - 3: TYPES OF CONTEMPORARY SOCIETIES

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Unit 4: Post-Modern Societies **Unit 5:** Indian Unity and Diversity Value

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Course- 3

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EDITORIAL

NEET: THE ISSUE OF PAPER LEAK - A DECADE-OLD STORY



The issue of student suicides linked to the National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test (NEET) has tragically touched nearly a century and a quarter mark over the past decade*. The College Post - a higher education journal - in its Vol.16, No.2 (April-June 2016) edition, highlighted the intervention of the Supreme Court in several academic matters. This included the Central Government's Ordinance on the conduct of NEET in 2016. The Ordinance was challenged by many state governments.

The College Post documented how the Apex Court's interventions reshaped academic governance in higher education. Specifically, regarding NEET, the journal argued for staying the Ordinance and allowing universities and colleges to continue conducting their own admission tests, as had been the practice earlier.

The article underscored the dangers of centralising admission tests:

- " Rise of the coaching industry, which burdens students financially and psychologically.
- " Erosion of the federal structure, since education is a concurrent responsibility of both Centre and States.
- " Loss of university autonomy, undermining their Acts and governance.
- " Increase in student suicides, reflecting the immense stress caused by uniform, high-stakes testing.

Today, the issue remains painfully relevant. With the recent NEET paper leak and subsequent cancellation of the exam, student unrest has resurfaced. Reports indicate that more than a dozen students have taken their own lives, reigniting debates about the fairness, feasibility, and human cost of centralised admission systems.

This reproduction of The College Post's reflections on NEET is intended to provoke thought on a burning issue that continues to affect thousands of young aspirants and their families.

Some excerpts:

Let us consider the case of the National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test (NEET)

.....The intense competition for admission to these institutions has given rise to a vast coaching industry. Although coaching centres existed in the early 1980s, their scale has grown enormously over the past three decades. The city of Kota has emerged as a major hub for coaching students aspiring to gain admission to engineering and medical institutions. This industry absorbs substantial financial resources from families and places immense psychological pressure on students. Many students emerge from this system disappointed and demoralised, and in some tragic cases, the stress has contributed to student suicides.

Such outcomes are not entirely unexpected in a system that centralizes admissions through common entrance examinations. These examinations tend to favour students who can afford expensive coaching, come from educationally advantaged backgrounds, and possess strong proficiency in English. During a study conducted in the early 1980s on coaching institutions for the Department of Science and Technology, Government of India, it was found that students who scored above 90 percent in their secondary and higher secondary examinations had a realistic chance of securing admission to highly competitive institutions. However, a much larger number of students with average academic records also enrolled in coaching centres, investing substantial family resources despite having limited prospects of success. The higher-performing students often used coaching merely as an additional aid, while their academic foundations already positioned them advantageously.

The centralised admission process, coupled with aspirations to enter prestigious institutions, has also encouraged many students to focus disproportionately on entrance examination preparation at the expense of broader learning. The question therefore arises: Are students trained primarily to succeed in standardised tests necessarily the

*[Bidhisha- Indiatoday.in/India/story/Neet-suicides/](https://www.bidhisha.in/india/story/Neet-suicides/)

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ICF RECOGNITION AND AWARDS FOR EXCELLENCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION

At the 26th National Annual Conference of the Indian Colleges Forum (ICF), it was resolved that ICF member colleges demonstrating outstanding performance in the following three areas may be recognised and honoured by the Indian Colleges Forum:

1. Academic Excellence through the introduction of innovative practices in teaching, learning and evaluation;
2. Effective implementation of Educational Technology (EdTech) and Artificial Intelligence (AI) in higher education; and
3. Innovative initiatives addressing the challenges of climate change and environmental sustainability.

Accordingly, the Indian Colleges Forum invites its member colleges to submit applications for recognition and awards under these three categories. Applications may be submitted online in the prescribed format. The application should include the following information:

1. Brief Profile of the College

The application should provide a brief background of the college, including:

- a. Year of establishment;
- b. Courses and programmes offered;
- c. Student strength;
- d. Faculty strength; and
- e. Nature of management: Government, Trust/Society, or any other category.

2. Academic Excellence

The application should describe:

- a. Innovative practices introduced in teaching, learning and evaluation; and
- b. The impact of these innovations on educational outcomes, student learning and overall academic performance.

3. Implementation of EdTech and Artificial Intelligence

The application should provide details of the introduction and implementation of EdTech and AI in:

- a. Institutional management and administration;
- b. Teaching and learning;
- c. Assessment and evaluation;
- d. Student and faculty support services;
- e. Use of public EdTech resources, including SWAYAM, SWAYAM Plus, SWAYAM Prabha, and other relevant national digital education platforms;
- f. Use of digital library and research resources provided through INFLIBNET;
- g. Use of private EdTech resources, wherever applicable, in teaching, learning, assessment and student and faculty support;
- h. Digital infrastructure created and the resources

invested; and

- i. Outcomes and impact of the implementation of these technologies and resources.
4. Innovative Initiatives to Address Climate Change
The application should describe innovative initiatives undertaken by the college to mitigate the impact of climate change and promote environmental sustainability, including, but not limited to:
 - a. Development of a green campus;
 - b. Use of renewable sources of energy;
 - c. Scientific waste management;
 - d. Water conservation and management;
 - e. Cleanliness and sanitation campaigns;
 - f. Environmental awareness and education programmes for students, faculty and the neighbouring community; and
 - g. Any other innovative initiatives related to climate action and environmental sustainability.
 5. Future Plans
The application should conclude with a brief statement of the college's future plans for further development and expansion of its initiatives in the above areas.

SUBMISSION OF APPLICATIONS AND RECOGNITION

The Secretary General, ICF, will issue an invitation to all member colleges to submit applications for recognition and awards. The invitation is expected to be issued by the end of August 2026.

The last date for submission of applications will be 30 September 2026. Applications will be submitted online in the prescribed format, which will be circulated along with the invitation.

The awards will be announced at the 27th National Annual Conference of the Indian Colleges Forum, scheduled to be held in December 2026.

A jury comprising experts in the three identified areas—Academic Excellence, EdTech and AI, and Climate Change and Environmental Sustainability—will be constituted to assess and evaluate the applications and recommend deserving colleges for recognition and awards.

MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEES OF ICF STATE CHAPTERS

The last meeting of the Executive Committees of the ICF State Chapters was held in March 2026. During the meeting, suggestions were made regarding the proposed Viksit Bharat Shiksha Adhithan Bill, 2025.

A detailed response to the proposed Bill was subsequently prepared by Shri M. S. Katoch. College Post also published its views on the Bill, including a comparative analysis of the UGC Act, 1956, and the Viksit Bharat Shiksha Adhithan Bill, 2025.

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INDIA'S HIGHER EDUCATION LANDSCAPE: GROWTH, INCLUSION AND EMERGING CHALLENGES IN THE LIGHT OF AISHE 2023-24

RAMESH CHANDER SHARMA *

Based on the latest All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) 2023-24 report, this paper examines the trends in the development of higher education across several key dimensions. It also identifies important gaps and offers suggestions for strengthening the future scope and coverage of the AISHE survey.

ABSTRACT

India's higher education system has expanded in size and social reach, but expansion should not be confused with equal access or improved quality. The All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) 2023-24 reports an estimated enrolment of about 4.50 crore students. It also records responses from 1,278 universities and university-level institutions, 46,468 colleges and 11,787 standalone institutions. The national Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) for the 18-23 age group reached 30.0. Female GER was 31.2, higher than male GER of 28.9, and women accounted for 49.7 per cent of total enrolment. Enrolment among Scheduled Caste, Scheduled Tribe and Other Backward Class students also increased over the decade.

These are important gains, but AISHE is mainly a descriptive, institution-reported survey. It cannot by itself establish learning quality, completion, employability, affordability or the causal effect of any policy. This article therefore separates what the survey directly reports from what can only be inferred. It examines institutional growth, enrolment, social participation, gender, regional variation, faculty capacity, private provision, online and distance education, doctoral education, internationalisation and student out-turn. It also uses peer-reviewed research and major policy reports to test rather than simply repeat the optimistic reading of the data.

The evidence shows that India has moved further towards mass higher education, but access remains uneven across states, social groups and institutional types. The system also faces problems of faculty distribution, affordability, weak outcome data, uneven quality and limited links between qualifications and suitable work. The target of 50 per cent GER by 2035 will

require more than additional seats. It will require reliable data, stronger public institutions, accountable private provision, timely student support, adequate faculty and a shift from counting admission to measuring completion and learning.

India has built one of the world's largest higher education systems. The system serves several purposes at the same time. It prepares people for professions, supports research, offers a route for social mobility and produces the teachers, administrators, doctors, engineers, managers and other professionals required by society. For families, a college degree is often treated as the main route to secure work and improved social status.

KEYWORDS

AISHE 2023-24; Indian higher education; Gross Enrolment Ratio; social inclusion; gender parity; private higher education; faculty capacity; student completion; employability; NEP 2020

1. INTRODUCTION

India has built one of the world's largest higher education systems. The system serves several purposes at the same time. It prepares people for professions, supports research, offers a route for social mobility and produces the teachers, administrators, doctors, engineers, managers and other professionals required by society. For families, a college degree is often treated as the main route to secure work and improved social status.

AISHE 2023-24 reports an estimated total enrolment of about 4.50 crore students. This is 31.5 per cent higher than in 2014-15. Female enrolment reached about 2.2 crore and accounted for 49.7 per cent of total enrolment. The survey frame included 1,289 universities and university-level institutions, 48,246 colleges and 15,221 standalone institutions. Of these, 59,553 institutions submitted data (Ministry of Education [MoE], 2026).

The overall response rate was about 92 per cent, but the category-wise picture is uneven. Almost all universities responded: 1,278 of 1,289, or about 99.1 per cent. Colleges recorded 46,468 responses out of 48,246, or about 96.3 per cent. Standalone institutions recorded 11,787 responses out of 15,221, or about 77.4 per cent. The lower standalone response matters because this category includes many polytechnics, nursing institutions and teacher-education institutions. The national totals are

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therefore strong but not equally secure across all institutional categories.

The national GER for the 18-23 age group increased from 23.7 in 2014-15 to 30.0 in 2023-24. This is substantial progress. It also means that India remains far from the 50 per cent target set by the National Education Policy 2020 (Ministry of Human Resource Development [MHRD], 2020). GER must also be interpreted correctly. It is total enrolment at a level expressed as a percentage of the official age-group population. It may include students outside the 18-23 age group. It is therefore a participation indicator, not a direct count of the proportion of 18-23-year-olds enrolled.

A second caution is more important. GER does not show whether students complete, what they learn, whether they can afford the full cost of study, or whether their qualifications lead to suitable work. A system can expand while remaining sharply unequal in institutional quality. Students from different social and economic backgrounds may enter colleges with very different levels of faculty, laboratories, libraries, academic support and public funding.

This article reads AISHE critically. It does not assume that every increase represents policy success, nor does it treat every weakness as proof of system failure. The central questions are simple. How much has the system expanded? Who is participating? Where are the main gaps? Does the system have the capacity to support further growth? What can AISHE answer, and what remains outside its scope?

2. METHOD AND LIMITS OF THE ANALYSIS

AISHE 2023-24 is the primary statistical source for this article. The analysis uses the report's key results, executive summary, analytical chapters, time-series section and selected tables. Figures are described as estimated national totals or actual-response figures where the report makes that distinction.

This distinction is necessary. AISHE estimates some national enrolment totals to account for institutions that did not respond. Other figures, including several management-wise, discipline-wise and mode-wise distributions, are based only on actual institutional responses. Comparing these two types of figures without qualification can produce false precision.

A second distinction concerns institutional registration. AISHE reports that 1,622 colleges were registered on its portal during 2023-24. This does not mean that all 1,622 were newly established in that year. Registration can reflect first-time reporting, changes in affiliation, upgrading, reclassification or activation of an institution. The report separately provides a table for colleges established in 2023. Based on actual responses, that table records 1,379 colleges established in 2023, with enrolment of 1,06,771. The article therefore uses

"registered on AISHE" and "established" as different terms.

A third issue is causality. AISHE is a descriptive survey. It can show that the number of institutions, enrolment or GER changed. It cannot prove that a specific reform caused the change. Statements in this article therefore use cautious terms such as "is consistent with," "suggests" and "may have contributed" where causal evidence is absent.

The article also draws on peer-reviewed research and major reports from the World Bank, UNESCO, OECD and the International Labour Organisation. These sources are used to examine claims about equity, private provision, digital education, completion and employment. They do not replace AISHE; they help interpret its limits.

AISHE itself notes that the responsibility for accuracy rests with institutional nodal officers. Portal validations and scrutiny checks improve consistency, but the Statistics Bureau does not independently audit every record. The survey is therefore the best available national source, but it should not be treated as error-free.

AISHE indicator	What it shows	What it does not show
GER	Participation relative to the official age-group population	Completion, learning or employment
Enrolment	Number of students reported or estimated	Attendance, retention or programme quality
PTR	Average students per reported teacher	Vacancies, class size or subject-level shortages
Out-turn	Number of pass-outs in the reported reference period	Cohort completion rate or employability
Registered institution	Institution present on the AISHE portal	Proof that it was newly established that year

3. AISHE AS A BASIS FOR PLANNING

AISHE was launched to provide regular national data where earlier information was fragmented and delayed. It covers universities and university-level institutions, colleges and recognised centres, and standalone institutions. It collects data on enrolment, programmes, social categories, gender, teachers, non-teaching staff, examination results, hostels, infrastructure and selected

NEP indicators.

Its value is practical. States can compare GER, college density, faculty numbers and social-group participation. Universities can study programme demand and staffing. Colleges can compare their enrolment and workforce with wider patterns. National agencies can identify where growth is concentrated and where participation remains low.

The survey is particularly important after NEP 2020 because the policy contains measurable goals. The target of 50 per cent GER by 2035, the move towards multidisciplinary institutions and the expansion of flexible learning all require reliable baseline and trend data.

Yet AISHE is still much stronger on inputs than outcomes. It reports how many students are enrolled and how many teachers institutions report. It provides far less information about first-year retention, withdrawal, time to completion, student learning, graduate destinations and employment quality. These omissions limit what can be concluded about performance.

The survey should therefore be used with other evidence. Accreditation data, audited faculty vacancies, student surveys, examination patterns, graduate tracking and labour-market statistics are needed to assess quality. AISHE tells us the size and composition of the system. It does not tell us whether every part of that system works well.

4. INSTITUTIONAL EXPANSION: WHAT THE NUMBERS DO AND DO NOT SHOW

4.1 Universities and Colleges

The number of universities and university-level institutions registered with AISHE increased by 529 between 2014-15 and 2023-24. Registered colleges rose from 38,498 to 48,246 over the same period, an increase of 9,748 (MoE, 2026).

These figures show an expanded institutional register and are consistent with additional capacity. They should not be presented as a precise count of institutions physically established during the period, because the AISHE portal also records status and affiliation changes. The more defensible conclusion is that the formal higher education network reported to AISHE has widened substantially.

Of the 1,289 registered universities and university-level institutions, 733 were government-managed, including 254 under the Central Government and 479 under state governments. There were 546 private unaided universities and 10 private deemed-to-be universities receiving aid. The system also included 19 open universities and 18 universities exclusively for women (MoE, 2026).

Among responding universities, 765 were general universities, 172 technical, 98 medical, 52 agriculture and allied, 30 law and 24 Indian-language universities. This diversity reflects the specialised structure that developed

over time. It also creates a practical problem for the NEP goal of multidisciplinary higher education. A specialised institution cannot become genuinely multidisciplinary by adding a few optional papers. It needs faculty, departments, libraries, laboratories and governance arrangements across fields.

4.2 Colleges Established in 2023

AISHE Table 5(b) records 1,379 colleges established in 2023 on the basis of actual responses. Of these, 1,082 were private unaided, 22 private aided and 275 government colleges. Their combined reported enrolment was 1,06,771 (MoE, 2026).

This breakdown is more useful than the portal-registration figure when discussing newly established colleges. It shows that most recent institutional expansion occurred in the private unaided sector. That pattern is consistent with the broader long-term shift towards private provision.

However, establishment alone does not prove effective capacity. A newly opened college may have low initial enrolment, narrow programmes or difficulty recruiting staff. The 1,379 colleges averaged fewer than 80 students each in the reported year, although start-up timing may partly explain the low average. The figure should therefore not be interpreted as a mature addition of fully utilised capacity.

4.3 Regional Concentration and College Density

Institutional capacity is unevenly distributed. Among major states, Karnataka had the highest college density in 2023-24 at 69 colleges per lakh population aged 18-23. Telangana followed at 56, while Andhra Pradesh and Himachal Pradesh recorded 51, Kerala 50, Rajasthan 47, Tamil Nadu 44, Uttarakhand 43 and Maharashtra 42 (MoE, 2026).

College density is useful, but it does not measure quality, programme range or physical accessibility. A state may have many small colleges with limited subjects. Another may have fewer but larger institutions. District-level distribution also matters. Colleges may be concentrated in cities even when the state average appears high.

The seven states with the largest enrolment-Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka, Bihar and Rajasthan-accounted for 59 per cent of total enrolment. This reflects their population size and institutional capacity. It also shows why national trends can be driven by a limited number of large states.

5. PUBLIC AND PRIVATE PROVISION

Among responding colleges, 70 per cent were private unaided, 12.9 per cent private aided and 17.1 per cent government colleges. The distribution of students was less concentrated than the distribution of institutions.

Private colleges together represented 82.9 per cent of responding colleges but enrolled 71.4 per cent of students in the actual-response college data. Government colleges represented 17.1 per cent of colleges and enrolled 28.6 per cent of students (MoE, 2026).

This difference is important. It indicates that government colleges, on average, enrol more students per institution than private colleges. The private sector has added a large number of institutions, but institutional share and enrolment share are not the same.

Private provision has clearly increased capacity. It should not, however, be assumed to expand equitable access automatically. Buckner and Khoramshahi (2021), using a cross-national dataset, found only a weak relationship between the private share of tertiary enrolment and overall tertiary GER. Their finding does not prove the same effect in every Indian state, but it does challenge the simple claim that more private institutions necessarily produce wider participation.

India's private sector is also not a single category. Private aided colleges, low-fee unaided colleges, specialised professional institutions and high-fee private universities differ sharply in cost, governance and student profile. A serious policy discussion must avoid treating them as identical.

Affordability remains central. Tuition is only one cost. Transport, accommodation, devices, books and unpaid time also matter. A private college may be geographically available but financially inaccessible. At the same time, poorly funded public colleges cannot be treated as an adequate solution merely because fees are lower.

The policy task is not to choose between public and private ownership. It is to ensure enough affordable places, transparent fees, verifiable faculty information, recognised programmes, fair refund rules and credible quality assurance across both sectors.

6. ENROLMENT GROWTH AND PROGRAMME PATTERNS

6.1 Overall Growth

Estimated enrolment reached 4.50 crore in 2023-24. The annual increase over 2022-23 was 3.7 lakh, or 0.8 per cent. Growth over the decade was much larger at 31.5 per cent (MoE, 2026).

The slow annual increase should not be exaggerated on the basis of one year. It may reflect demographic changes, reporting differences, limited capacity or changing demand. It does, however, show that reaching 50 per cent GER will require faster or more targeted expansion than the latest annual change suggests.

The North-Eastern states reported combined enrolment of 13.2 lakh, up from 9.4 lakh in 2014-15. Female enrolment in the region, at 7 lakh, exceeded male enrolment of 6.2 lakh (MoE, 2026). This is a positive participation trend, but it does not resolve questions of

programme availability, outward migration and institutional capacity.

6.2 Level of Study

Undergraduate education accounted for 76.8 per cent of total enrolment. Postgraduate programmes accounted for 12.9 per cent. Diploma, certificate, integrated and research levels formed much smaller shares (MoE, 2026).

The broad undergraduate base is expected in a mass system. The policy issue is whether undergraduate programmes provide depth, writing, quantitative skills, digital competence and opportunities for applied learning. Expansion without strong undergraduate teaching weakens the entire system because most students do not proceed to postgraduate study.

6.3 Disciplines

Based on actual responses, Arts accounted for 32.1 per cent of undergraduate enrolment, followed by Science at 13.5 per cent, Engineering and Technology at 12.9 per cent and Commerce at 12.0 per cent. At postgraduate level, Social Science had the largest share at 18.6 per cent, followed by Management at 18.2 per cent (MoE, 2026).

These figures show that general education remains the main route into higher education. Policy attention often focuses on professional and technical education, but Arts, Science and Commerce colleges educate the largest numbers. Their quality is therefore not a secondary issue.

Large enrolment does not establish programme value. Institutions must review curriculum, teaching, assessment and progression. General degrees need stronger work in writing, evidence, data analysis and problem-solving. Professional programmes need current knowledge and meaningful practical work.

7. STEM AND DOCTORAL EDUCATION

AISHE records 1.019 crore students in STEM courses, or 22.5 per cent of total enrolment based on actual responses. Of these, about 57.1 lakh were male and 44.8 lakh female. Women outnumbered men in the Science stream, but men remained the majority in the combined STEM total because Engineering and Technology enrolment was more male-dominated (MoE, 2026).

This distinction corrects a common overstatement. Women's numerical strength in Science does not mean gender parity across all STEM fields. Broad STEM totals can conceal discipline-level gaps in engineering, computing and advanced research.

Total Ph.D. enrolment was 3,43,559. Science accounted for 23.4 per cent and Engineering and Technology for 20.5 per cent, followed by Social Science at 11.1 per cent, Medical Science at 6.7 per cent and Management at 6.2 per cent (MoE, 2026).

The time-series section reports strong growth in Ph.D.

enrolment in universities and constituent units, including an increase in female enrolment. This supports the claim that the research pipeline is expanding. It does not show the quality of supervision, research methods, ethical review, publication or examination.

Doctoral policy should therefore avoid simple numerical targets. Research degrees require qualified supervision, access to literature and laboratories, clear ethics procedures, methods training and transparent viva processes. Publication requirements without quality controls can create incentives for weak or deceptive publishing. AISHE cannot measure these risks, so claims about doctoral quality must be based on separate evidence and institutional review.

8. ACCESS, EQUITY AND SOCIAL PARTICIPATION

8.1 Scheduled Castes

SC students accounted for 15.5 per cent of total enrolment. Their number reached 69.7 lakh, an increase of 51.4 per cent since 2014-15. SC female enrolment reached 35.1 lakh and increased by 66.9 per cent over the same period (MoE, 2026).

These figures show increased participation. They do not by themselves establish equitable access. That requires comparison with the relevant population, GER, institutional type, discipline, completion and student experience.

SC GER reached 27.8, below the national GER of 30.0. SC female GER was 29.3, higher than SC male GER of 26.4. The rise in participation is therefore real, but the group remains below the national participation level.

Cassan (2019) found that affirmative action increased educational attainment among Scheduled Castes, although effects varied by education level and gender. Varughese and Bairagya (2020) also showed that policy expansion has not removed group-based inequality. The implication is direct: reservation can improve entry, but institutions still need academic support and fair treatment after admission.

Sharma and Subramanyam (2020) documented the psychological effects of reservation-based discrimination among socially marginalised students at a leading university. Their qualitative study cannot be generalised to every institution, but it shows why access policy must include grievance systems, mentoring and a non-discriminatory academic environment.

8.2 Scheduled Tribes

ST students accounted for 6.4 per cent of total enrolment. Enrolment reached 28.8 lakh and increased by 75.7 per cent since 2014-15. ST female enrolment reached 15.1 lakh and more than doubled over the decade (MoE, 2026).

The GER picture is less positive. ST GER was 22.8,

well below the national figure, and lower than 23.5 in 2022-23. ST female GER was 23.7 and male GER 21.9. Gender parity within the group does not remove the overall participation gap.

Many tribal communities face geographical and financial barriers that admission reservation alone cannot solve. Local institutions, hostels, transport, timely scholarships, bridge support and digital access are therefore part of participation policy, not optional welfare measures.

8.3 Other Backward Classes

OBC students accounted for 40.1 per cent of total enrolment. Their number reached about 1.8 crore, a rise of 60.2 per cent since 2014-15. Female OBC enrolment reached 90.1 lakh and increased by 72 per cent (MoE, 2026).

OBC is a broad category covering communities with different levels of income, location and educational history. Aggregate totals should therefore not be treated as proof that all groups within the category have benefited equally.

8.4 Minority Participation and Economic Barriers

Minority enrolment increased from 21.8 lakh in 2014-15 to 33.3 lakh in 2023-24. Female minority enrolment increased by 62.9 per cent and reached 17.4 lakh (MoE, 2026).

The increase is important but cannot establish proportional representation without a population denominator. Minority status also interacts with income, region, language and gender. The article therefore avoids treating the aggregate figure as a complete measure of inclusion.

Economic disadvantage cuts across social categories. AISHE reports EWS enrolment in its detailed tables, but category reporting depends on institutional records and admission documentation. More useful policy analysis would combine EWS data with household cost, scholarship receipt, retention and completion. Because AISHE does not provide that full chain, the present article discusses economic barriers without making a claim that EWS participation is either adequate or inadequate.

8.5 Students with Disabilities

AISHE recorded 54,080 students with benchmark disabilities, including 34,080 males and 20,000 females. This is an extremely small reported share of a system enrolling 4.50 crore students (MoE, 2026).

The figure may reflect low participation, under-identification, non-disclosure or inconsistent institutional reporting. AISHE cannot separate these explanations. The safe conclusion is that reported participation is very low and data quality itself requires attention.

Admission is only one part of access. Buildings, transport, laboratories, websites, learning platforms and

assessment must be accessible. Institutions need audits, assistive technology and trained support. These are basic academic requirements.

9. GENDER PARITY: A REAL GAIN, NOT A COMPLETE VICTORY

Female enrolment reached about 2.2 crore and accounted for 49.7 per cent of total enrolment. Female GER was 31.2 compared with male GER of 28.9. The GPI was 1.08, and female GER remained above male GER for the seventh consecutive year (MoE, 2026).

This is a major change and should not be minimised. Women's participation is no longer marginal. At the same time, numerical parity is not the same as equal educational choice or career progression.

The national average hides discipline and location. Women may be strongly represented in Science and postgraduate study but less represented in some engineering and computing fields. A woman may be enrolled yet face restrictions on travel, internships, hostel residence or employment outside her home district.

The same caution applies to faculty. Women represented 44.9 per cent of teachers, lower than their share of students. AISHE does not by itself provide a complete account of women's representation in senior academic leadership. Institutions should therefore examine recruitment, promotion, research opportunity, care responsibilities, workplace safety and leadership selection.

Gender policy should move beyond admission. It should measure subject choice, completion, transition to work, research careers and leadership.

10. GER, STATE VARIATION AND THE 2035 TARGET

The national GER of 30.0 is an average. AISHE identifies several states and Union Territories with much higher participation: Delhi at 53.0, Tamil Nadu at 52.3, Uttarakhand at 48.5, Telangana at 46.6, Himachal Pradesh at 46.4, Sikkim at 42.5 and Karnataka at 41.9 (MoE, 2026).

These figures show that a GER near or above the NEP target already exists in some parts of India. They do not mean that access is equal within those states. Urban concentration, migration and the presence of large institutions can raise the state average while leaving some districts underserved.

The gap between 30 and 50 percentage points is large. It will require substantial additional capacity and higher transition from senior secondary school. Higher education policy cannot be separated from school completion. Students who do not complete Class XII or who leave school with weak preparation cannot be brought into higher education merely by adding seats.

Arnhold et al. (2023) argue that expansion must be linked with governance, financing, faculty management,

institutional performance and learning. This is a useful warning. The target should not encourage institutions to admit beyond their staff and facilities.

Alternative modes can contribute, but they should not become a low-support route for students who cannot afford campus education. Participation must be measured together with retention, completion and learning.

11. DISTANCE, PRIVATE AND ONLINE MODES

Within universities and their constituent units, AISHE reports 44.0 lakh students in distance mode, 6.5 lakh in private mode and 2.84 lakh in online mode. The online figure comprised about 1.74 lakh males and 1.10 lakh females. Distance enrolment was concentrated at undergraduate and postgraduate levels (MoE, 2026).

These figures place online education in perspective. It is visible but still small compared with total higher education enrolment. Distance education remains far more important.

Flexible modes can reduce geographical and scheduling barriers. They are useful for working adults, caregivers and learners far from campuses. However, access to content is not the same as access to education. Students need course design, teacher contact, feedback, assessment integrity, advising, devices and connectivity.

The UNESCO Global Education Monitoring Report Team (2023) cautions that robust evidence on the added value of educational technology is limited and that technology can both include and exclude. This is directly relevant to India. Digital delivery can widen access for some learners while shifting costs and support responsibilities to students.

Institutions should therefore report retention and completion separately by mode. Large admissions in distance or online programmes should not be treated as success unless students progress and complete. Subjects requiring laboratories, clinical work or intensive practice also need substantial in-person provision.

12. FACULTY STRENGTH, PTR AND INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY

AISHE reported 17.3 lakh teachers. About 55.1 per cent were male and 44.9 per cent female. Female teachers increased from 5.7 lakh in 2014-15 to 7.8 lakh in 2023-24 (MoE, 2026).

The executive summary reports an overall PTR of 22 for regular mode. The detailed analysis reports 23 for universities and colleges and 19 for university teaching departments and constituent units. These are not necessarily contradictory; they refer to different institutional groupings. The article uses the detailed figure when discussing universities and colleges and notes the executive-summary figure where relevant.

National PTR averages can conceal shortages. They

do not show class size, vacant sanctioned posts, subject-level gaps or the proportion of temporary and visiting faculty. AISHE's detailed teacher tables record temporary and visiting teachers, but a national average cannot show whether a department has enough full-time staff.

The distribution of faculty matters as much as the total. Established urban institutions may recruit more easily than rural and newly opened colleges. New programmes may be approved before a stable faculty base is created. These conditions affect feedback, mentoring, research supervision and curriculum development.

Faculty development is also necessary. Teachers are expected to design outcome-based curricula, use digital systems, supervise research, manage diverse classrooms and respond to academic misconduct. One-time workshops do not solve these tasks. Development must be linked to teaching practice, assessment and student support.

13. QUALITY: WHAT AISHE CANNOT PROVE

AISHE provides infrastructure and staffing indicators, but it is not a direct measure of teaching quality. The presence of a library, laboratory or digital platform does not show whether it is current, sufficient or used well. The number of teachers does not show the quality of feedback or assessment.

It is therefore wrong to use AISHE alone to claim either that quality has improved or that quality has collapsed. Both claims require other evidence.

Quality should be examined through curriculum, teaching, assessment, academic integrity, student support, completion and learning. Accreditation data, programme reviews, student surveys and graduate tracking are needed. Institutional quality assurance should support improvement rather than become an exercise in preparing documents for inspection.

The World Bank's review of Indian tertiary education identifies governance, faculty management, accountability and performance as central reform areas (Arnhold et al., 2023). The point is not that every institution is weak. The point is that rapid expansion creates risks when staffing, finance and governance do not grow at the same rate.

14. FOREIGN STUDENTS AND INTERNATIONALISATION

AISHE recorded 58,134 foreign students from 173 countries. Nepal accounted for 24.1 per cent, followed by the United Arab Emirates at 7.0 per cent, the United States and Bangladesh at 5.9 per cent each, Nigeria at 5.5 per cent and Zimbabwe at 4.0 per cent (MoE, 2026).

The number is small relative to total enrolment, but total domestic enrolment is not the only useful denominator. A more complete internationalisation analysis would compare inbound mobility rates, changes

over time, programme levels, fields and institutional concentration. AISHE provides some of this information, but the article does not claim that the national total alone measures global competitiveness.

The country mix suggests that proximity, cost, English-medium provision and links with Asia and Africa matter. India has potential as a regional education centre, but recruitment campaigns are not enough. International students require reliable admission, visas, housing, health support, advising and protection from discrimination.

Internationalisation also includes joint research, faculty mobility, exchange and credit recognition. Foreign-student numbers are one part of the picture.

15. OUT-TURN, COMPLETION AND EMPLOYMENT

AISHE 2023-24 reports about 1.1 crore pass-outs. The examination-result reference period, however, relates to the preceding academic year, 2022-23. This needs to be stated clearly because the enrolment and out-turn figures do not refer to the same cohort.

At undergraduate level, BA recorded 24.4 lakh pass-outs, followed by BSc at 11.51 lakh, BCom at 9.6 lakh and BE/BTech combined at 8.2 lakh. At postgraduate level, MA recorded 7.5 lakh, MSc 3.6 lakh, MBA 2.8 lakh and MCom 1.8 lakh. Diploma programmes produced 9.1 lakh pass-outs (MoE, 2026).

These figures show scale, not employability. AISHE does not collect employment rates, wages, job quality, field mismatch or time to work. It would be wrong to infer unemployment directly from pass-out totals.

The India Employment Report 2024 provides the relevant labour-market evidence. It notes that educated youth face higher unemployment and that the problem reflects a mismatch between aspirations, qualifications and available work (International Labour Organisation & Institute for Human Development, 2024). This evidence supports concern about graduate transitions, but it also shows that the problem is not simply "lack of skills." Job creation, sectoral demand, location, gender and social background also matter.

Attri and Kushwaha (2018) identified communication, academic performance, projects and co-curricular participation as factors linked with graduate placement. Nair (2020) reported positive results from experiential and competitive programming in one engineering institution. These studies are useful but limited. They should not be treated as national proof.

The correct conclusion is narrower. Higher education institutions cannot create all the jobs required by the economy, but they are responsible for sound curricula, credible assessment, career information and opportunities to apply learning. Employability must be developed across programmes rather than added as a final-semester workshop.

AISHE also lacks a national completion-rate

measure. Out-turn is not the same as completion rate because the denominator is unclear and cohorts are not tracked. OECD (2025) shows internationally why cohort-based completion data matter: entry does not guarantee graduation, and completion often rises only when students are followed beyond the expected programme duration. India needs comparable retention and completion measures.

16. MAIN POLICY PRIORITIES

16.1 Shift from Admission to Student Success

Institutions should track first-year retention, progression, time to completion and withdrawal. High failure should lead to programme review, not only blame of students. Support should begin in the first semester through diagnostics, writing and quantitative support, advising and mentoring.

16.2 Strengthen Public Capacity

Public universities and colleges remain central to affordable mass access. Their faculty recruitment, funding and infrastructure must be strengthened. Opening new institutions while existing public colleges lack staff is inefficient.

16.3 Regulate Private Provision through Transparency

Private institutions should disclose complete fees, refund rules, recognised programmes, faculty strength, accreditation, scholarships, completion and placement methods. Information must be comparable and verifiable.

16.4 Target Specific Barriers

Different groups face different barriers. Tribal and remote communities may need local provision, transport and hostels. Students with disabilities need accessible campuses and digital systems. Low-income students need timely scholarships and living support. Women's policy should address subject choice, mobility, research careers and leadership.

16.5 Recruit and Develop Faculty

Faculty planning should be tied to projected enrolment and programme needs. Recruitment must be timely. Institutions in underserved areas may require housing, research support and career incentives. Development should focus on course design, assessment, supervision, inclusion and advising.

16.6 Use AISHE as a Management Tool

AISHE data should be used at state, university and college level. States should identify low-participation districts, programme gaps and faculty shortages. Institutions should compare their own patterns with national and state trends.

16.7 Improve the Survey

Future AISHE reports should strengthen reporting on retention, completion, student mobility, withdrawal, graduate destinations and employment. Response among standalone institutions also needs improvement. Clearer separation of estimated and actual-response figures would make the report easier to interpret.

16.8 Implement NEP 2020 without Diluting Standards

The GER target should guide planned expansion, not admission beyond capacity. Credit transfer requires reliable records and academic equivalence. Multiple exit awards should not become the normal route for disadvantaged students. Multidisciplinary education requires real faculty and programme breadth.

16.9 Finance, Affordability and the Cost of Expansion

The GER target has a direct financial implication. Additional students require teachers, classrooms, laboratories, libraries, student services and digital systems. Expansion cannot be financed only through enrolment-linked fees without changing who can participate.

AISHE is not a complete higher education finance report. Its institutional and enrolment data, however, show where the pressure will fall. Government institutions enrol a larger average number of college students than private institutions and remain central to affordable access. If public capacity does not grow, a larger share of future expansion is likely to occur through fee-dependent institutions.

This does not mean that all private provision is unaffordable or that all public provision is adequately funded. It means that the financing model affects participation. High fees can alter programme choice, push students towards institutions close to home, increase borrowing or prevent entry. Low fees in a severely under-resourced institution do not guarantee quality.

Financial aid also needs better evaluation. Scholarship policy is usually reported through the number of beneficiaries or the amount allocated. These figures do not show whether funds arrived on time, covered the actual cost or reduced withdrawal. Institutions and governments should connect scholarship records with retention and completion data while protecting student privacy.

A credible expansion strategy should distinguish between the cost of adding seats in existing institutions and the cost of establishing new institutions. Strengthening an existing college may be more efficient where buildings and administrative systems already exist. A new institution may be necessary in an underserved district, but it should not be announced without a staffing and operating plan.

Public spending decisions should also consider programme cost. Laboratory, clinical and engineering

education requires more resources than classroom-based programmes. A uniform per-student funding approach can therefore produce hidden shortages in expensive fields.

The central financing question is not whether higher education should be free for every student. It is whether cost becomes a barrier unrelated to academic ability and whether public resources are directed towards institutions and students who need them most.

16.10 Affiliation, Institutional Scale and Governance

A large part of Indian higher education operates through affiliated colleges. AISHE counts these colleges and their enrolment, but the data do not fully show the governance burden placed on affiliating universities.

A university responsible for a very large number of colleges may struggle to update curricula, conduct examinations on time, monitor standards and process student records. The quality of a college is therefore affected not only by its own management but also by the capacity of the affiliating university.

NEP 2020 proposes a gradual move away from the affiliating-college system towards greater autonomy. The direction is reasonable, but autonomy requires capacity. A college cannot manage curriculum, assessment and academic governance well merely because a regulation grants it autonomy. It needs qualified faculty, academic leadership, examination systems and financial controls.

Institutional scale also matters. Very small colleges may find it difficult to offer a wide range of disciplines and student services. Very large colleges may face overcrowding and weak personal support. There is no single ideal size, but state planning should examine whether an institution can provide coherent programmes and maintain stable staffing.

Consolidation may be appropriate in some locations, particularly where several weak institutions operate close to one another. In other areas, consolidation could reduce access by increasing travel distance. Decisions should therefore be based on local evidence rather than a national rule.

Governance reform should focus on clear responsibility. Students should know which body is responsible for curriculum, examinations, grievances, records and refunds. Fragmented responsibility between college, university, regulator and government often delays solutions.

16.11 From Social Participation to Academic Belonging

The article has separated increased participation from full inclusion. This distinction should guide institutional practice.

Students entering higher education for the first time in their families may not know how to use a library, write an academic argument, communicate with faculty or

interpret assessment requirements. These are learned practices, not signs of intelligence. Institutions that assume every student already understands academic conventions convert social difference into academic disadvantage.

Bridge support should not be designed as a remedial label for particular castes or communities. It should be available on the basis of diagnosed need. Writing centres, quantitative support, language assistance and academic advising can serve a wide range of students without stigmatising them.

Belonging also affects persistence. A student who experiences discrimination, isolation or repeated administrative difficulty may leave even when tuition is covered. Institutions need effective grievance systems, counselling, peer mentoring and clear communication.

The same principle applies to students with disabilities. Inclusion does not end with a ramp or a reserved seat. Course materials, laboratory tasks, examinations, field visits and digital systems must be usable. Faculty need practical guidance on reasonable accommodation.

A stronger AISHE framework could eventually include selected indicators of student support and accessibility, but these should be designed carefully. Counting the existence of a counselling centre or accessibility committee is not enough. Use, staffing, response time and student experience matter.

16.12 Graduate Outcomes: A Better Measurement Agenda

India needs a national approach to graduate outcomes that goes beyond placement claims. Institutional placement data often cover only students who register with a placement office and may not follow common definitions.

A better system would track graduates at fixed points, such as six months and eighteen months after completion. It should record employment, self-employment, further study, competitive examinations, unpaid family work and job search. It should also record whether work is full-time, stable and related to the field of study.

Such tracking will not be easy. Graduates change phone numbers and locations, and response rates may be low. Data protection is essential. Even an imperfect, transparent system would be better than unverified promotional percentages.

Outcome data should not be used to punish institutions serving disadvantaged regions or students. Labour markets differ. A rural college may prepare students well but operate in an area with few formal jobs. Outcome measures should therefore be interpreted with regional economic data and student background.

Universities should also resist the idea that every

programme must lead directly to one occupation. Humanities and social science degrees develop broad capabilities that can be applied in many fields. The relevant questions are whether students learn, whether they can explain and use that learning, and whether institutions provide honest information about likely pathways.

16.13 Research, Teaching and Institutional Mission

The pressure to improve research rankings can lead every institution to claim the same mission. This is unrealistic. A national system needs research-intensive universities, strong teaching universities, regional colleges, professional institutions and flexible learning providers.

AISHE data can help define these missions by showing programme mix, faculty, research enrolment and student profile. It should not be used to rank all institutions on a single scale.

Teaching-focused institutions still need engagement with research. Faculty should be able to update course content, conduct local studies and involve students in inquiry. Research-intensive institutions, in turn, cannot neglect undergraduate teaching.

Policy should reward institutions for performing their stated mission well. A college serving first-generation students should be judged partly on progression, support and learning. A research university should be judged more strongly on research quality, doctoral training and knowledge contribution.

This differentiated approach is more honest than requiring every institution to display the same indicators. It also reduces incentives to produce superficial publications or partnerships only for compliance.

16.14 A Practical Data Dashboard for States and Institutions

AISHE contains enough information to support a simple planning dashboard. At state level, the dashboard should combine GER, college density, secondary-school completion, programme availability, faculty numbers, PTR and social-group participation.

At district level, it should include travel distance, urban-rural distribution, women's participation and hostel capacity where data are available. No single indicator should determine investment.

At institutional level, the minimum dashboard should include applications, admissions, first-year retention, progression, completion, faculty by employment status, student support use and graduate destinations. Data should be reviewed by academic departments, not kept only in an administrative office.

Comparisons should use appropriate peers. A specialised medical institution should not be compared with a general undergraduate college. A new institution should not be compared with a century-old university without context.

The purpose of a dashboard is to identify questions,

not to replace judgement. A low completion rate may indicate weak teaching, but it may also reflect financial distress, migration or an examination problem. Data should lead to investigation.

16.15 Risks in Pursuing the 50 per cent GER Target

The 50 per cent target can focus policy attention, but targets can create unintended behaviour.

First, institutions may be encouraged to admit students without adequate faculty or facilities. Second, flexible exit routes may become a way of recording partial participation rather than preventing withdrawal. Third, low-cost online provision may be used to expand numbers without equivalent support. Fourth, rapid private expansion may increase household cost. Fifth, pressure to show success may weaken data quality.

These risks do not mean that the target should be abandoned. They mean that GER should be reported with a balanced set of indicators: retention, completion, PTR, faculty stability, student aid and programme quality.

The target also needs state-specific planning. States starting near 50 per cent face a different task from states far below the national average. A uniform annual growth expectation would be neither fair nor useful.

Finally, the age-group denominator will change. Population projections and migration affect GER. Policy should therefore look at both ratios and absolute student numbers.

The strongest version of the target is not "half of young people enrolled at any cost." It is "half of the relevant population able to enter and complete credible higher education through an appropriate mode."

16.16 What Institutional Leaders Should Read Carefully in AISHE

Institutional leaders often use national reports selectively. A favourable number is quoted in a presentation, while the limitations in the footnotes are ignored. AISHE should be read in a more disciplined way.

First, the unit of analysis must be clear. A university-level figure may exclude affiliated colleges, while another figure combines universities and colleges. Second, the denominator must be checked. A percentage of institutions is not the same as a percentage of students. The private-college data illustrate this clearly: private institutions dominate the number of colleges, but their enrolment share is lower than their institutional share.

Third, leaders should distinguish a stock from a flow. Total enrolment is the stock of students present during the reference period. Out-turn is a flow of students completing in a different reference period. Newly registered institutions are not the same as newly established institutions.

Fourth, annual change should be compared with a longer trend. The 0.8 per cent rise in total enrolment in one year is worth noting, but it should not be described as a structural slowdown without further evidence.

Similarly, the one-year decline in ST GER is a warning sign, not proof of a long-term reversal.

Fifth, averages should be disaggregated before decisions are made. A satisfactory institutional PTR may conceal a department with severe shortages. A favourable gender ratio may conceal low participation in a particular programme. A high state GER may conceal districts with poor access.

Finally, institutions should report uncertainty honestly. Some AISHE figures are estimated, some are based on actual responses and some depend on institutional classification. Honest qualification does not weaken an argument. It makes the argument reliable.

The report is most useful when it changes questions asked inside an institution. Instead of asking only how many students were admitted, leaders should ask who progressed, who withdrew, where faculty shortages affected teaching, which programmes had weak demand, whether scholarships arrived on time and what graduates did next. AISHE provides the national frame. Institutions must supply the local evidence.

17. CONCLUSION

AISHE 2023-24 records substantial growth in Indian higher education. Enrolment has reached about 4.50 crore. Female GER exceeds male GER. Participation among SC, ST, OBC and minority students has increased. The institutional register has expanded, and private provision now dominates the number of colleges.

These are real developments. They should neither be dismissed nor overstated.

The data do not prove that access is equal, quality has improved or graduates have suitable employment. ST GER remains below the national average. Reported participation of students with disabilities is extremely low. Regional averages hide district differences. The lower response rate among standalone institutions reduces certainty in that sector. The college system is heavily private, which raises questions of affordability and accountability. Faculty totals and PTR averages do not reveal subject-level shortages or employment conditions.

The goal of 50 per cent GER by 2035 is possible only through a large increase in capacity and school-to-college transition. The increase must be supported by faculty, public finance, student aid, transparent private provision and better data. Flexible learning can contribute, but it must be judged through completion and learning.

The most important change is conceptual. India should stop treating admission as the end of access policy. Effective access means that a student can enter, afford, participate, learn and complete. AISHE provides the national baseline. The next step is to connect that baseline with outcomes.

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FOR THE BENEFIT OF READERS WE ARE REPRODUCING THE EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF AISHE -2023-24

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The All-India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) 2023-24, conducted by the Ministry of Education, is the 14th such survey on the Higher Education landscape in India. The survey serves as the primary and most reliable data base for policy formulation, planning, monitoring, and evaluation of higher education initiatives at both national and state levels.

The survey covers all institutions imparting Higher Education in the country, subject to their onboarding on the AISHE portal and participation in the data collection exercise. For AISHE 2023-24 survey, a total of 64,756 Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) including universities, colleges, and standalone institutions became part of the frame.

Of these, 59,553 institutions participated in the survey, resulting in a response rate of approximately 92%, reflecting the strong institutional engagement of AISHE.

This report presents a comprehensive assessment of the status of Higher Education in the country for the Academic Year 2023-24.

It provides detailed information on the number of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in the country, including category-wise and managementwise distribution of institutions. It also covers student enrolment data across various dimensions, such as mode of study (Regular, Distance, Private, Online) level of study, genderwise and category-wise enrolment, type of institution-wise enrolment, and foreign students enrolled in Indian institutions during the academic year.

Further, the report includes designation-wise and category-wise number of teaching staff, and non-teaching staff. It also presents data on infrastructure and facilities in HEIs, including hostels and other institutional amenities.

Based on the data collected from HEIs, key performance indicators such as the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER), Gender Parity Index (GPI), and Pupil-Teacher Ratio (PTR) have been calculated and presented in the report.

In addition, this report also provides a comparative analysis of key parameters over the last five years, highlighting trends and changes in institutional growth, enrolment patterns, faculty strength, and infrastructure development during the period leading up to AY 2023-24.

The AISHE 2023-24 reveals sustained growth in the higher education ecosystem, with a total of 59,553 participating HEIs comprising 1,278 universities, 46,468 colleges, and 11,787 standalone institutions. Student enrolment reached 4.50 crores, marking a 17% increase from 2019-20.

Maximum enrolment is reported in Undergraduate programmes with 76.8% of total enrolment (3.5 crore students), followed by postgraduate (12.9%) and diploma/certificate levels (7.4%).

Female student enrolment accounts for 49.7% of the total enrolment (2.2 crore). Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST), and Other Backward Classes (OBC) students comprise 15.5%, 6.4%, and 40.1% of total enrolment, respectively, wherein the categories are actual social categories of the students, not their admission category.

GER, i.e., the total enrolment expressed as a percentage of the eligible population aged 18-23 years at all India Level is 30.0. For male students, GER is 28.9 and for female students, it is 31.2. The GPI, i.e., the ratio of female GER to male GER, at all India level is 1.08. It is 1.11 for SC category and 1.08 for ST category. The GPI has crossed 1 since 2017-18, i.e., female GER has surpassed male GER since 2017-18 and it continues.

Total strength of teachers at all India level is 17.3 lakh, with a Pupil-Teacher Ratio (PTR) of 22 for regular mode of study. 55.1% of teachers are male and 44.9% are female. Overall, the survey results underscores India's continued progress towards an equitable, inclusive, and expanding higher education system, while also highlighting areas requiring targeted policy intervention to improve quality, regional balance, and institutional capacity."

SOME KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) The Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) is computed as the ratio of student enrolment to total population in the age group of 18-23 years based on 2011 population projection. The GER, which was 23.7 in 2014-15 has been continuously increasing and reached 29.5 in 2022-23 and 30 in 2023-24. Female GER has risen to 31.2 in 2023-24 from 30.2 in 2022-23 and 22.9 in 2014-15.
- The GER of Scheduled Castes (SC) students have increased to 27.8 in 2023-24 from 18.9 in 2014-15. The GER of Scheduled Tribes (ST) students have increased to 22.8 in 2023-24 from 13.5 in 2014-15.
- The ratio of female GER to male GER is computed as the Gender Parity Index (GPI) which measures the relative access to education of males and females. The GPI for 2023-24 stands at 1.08. The GPI has remained above 1.0 for seven consecutive years, indicating consistently higher female participation in the higher education.
- The enrolment in higher education has been

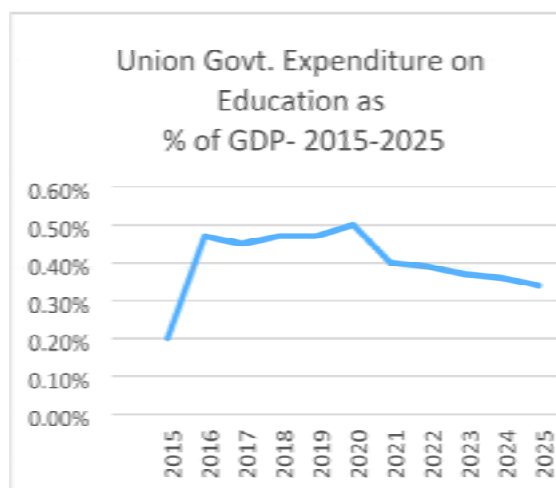
continuously increasing from 3.42 crore in 2014-15 to 4.46 crore in 2022-23 and 4.50 crore in 2023-24 (i.e. 31.5% increase since 2014-15). In 2023-24, 2:37, there was commendable increase in female enrolment in higher education from 1.57 crore in 2014-15 to 2.18 crore in 2022-23 and 2.24 crore in 2023-24 (i.e. 42.2% increase since 2014-15).

- The enrolment of SC students has increased to 69.72 lakh in 2023-24 from 46.07 lakh in 2014-15 (an increase of 51.4% since 2014-15). The enrolment of ST students has increased to 28.83 lakh in 2023-24 from 16.41 lakh in 2014-15 (an increase of 75.7% since 2014-15). Similarly, the enrolment of Other Backward Classes (OBC) students has increased to 1.80 crore in 2023-24 from 1.13 crore in 2014-15

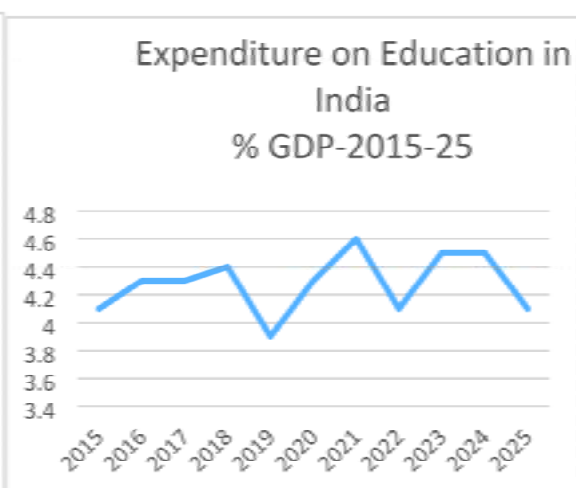
(60.2% increase).

- STEM enrolment has risen significantly over the past decade, from 91.5 lakh in 2014-15 to 1.02 crore in 2023-24, reflecting the growing emphasis on science, technology, engineering, and mathematics education in the country.
- The share of female students in STEM enrolment has also shown a steady improvement over the years, rising from 38.4% in 2014-15 to 44% in 2023-24, reflecting growing gender inclusivity in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics education in the country.

Source: AISHE Report 2023-24 Executive Summary and Press Release of Ministry of Education GoI.



Source: Compiled from RBI and Ministry of Finance - Expenditure at Current price



Source: World Bank up to 2022 and 2023-25 Worldbank.org /Indicator and geofactbook

Enrolment in education is rising, but expenditure on education as % GDP in Union Budget and national budget is declining since 2021 and it is less than the 6% of GDP as committed in NEP 2020

Readers are encouraged to send their comments, opinions, and alternative views on any of the issues published in this issue for consideration by the College Post.

Editor

FOUR YEARS OF THE NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY 2020 IN KERALA- ISSUES OF IMPLEMENTATION AND PROSPECTS

DR. M. USMAN *

The implementation of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 remains a significant challenge. This paper examines how higher education institutions in Kerala are working to implement the policy and assesses the progress made at the institutional and ground levels.

ABSTRACT

This paper reviews briefly Kerala's response to the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 over its first four years (2020-2025), analysing the state's higher-education landscape, the progress of NEP adoption (including partial adoptions and institutional experiments), principal implementation challenges, opportunities that the NEP framework offers Kerala, and lessons that Kerala's experience provides for the wider nation. Evidence is drawn from state reports, HEI's QAR documents, Kerala State Higher Education Council documents and national regulatory documents. The paper concludes with policy recommendations and a pragmatic way forward.

1. KERALA'S HIGHER EDUCATION LANDSCAPE

Kerala stands out among Indian states for high enrolment ratios in school education, comparatively strong social indicators, and a dense network of higher-education institutions (universities, autonomous colleges, government and private aided/self-financing colleges). The state has 16 state public universities out of which four are in general in nature. The Arts & Science Colleges of the state are affiliated to these four universities. The rest of the universities offer specialised courses in specified thrust areas. The affiliated Colleges constitute the most important segment of higher education sector of Kerala. They are classified as Government (202), Government Aided (185), Government Self Financing (48), University Self Financing (44), Constituent (36), Recognised Centres (15) and Private Self Financing colleges (974) - total 1504 colleges (All Kerala Higher Education Survey, KSHEC, 2020).

Kerala's higher-education ecosystem features:

A Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) of 43.2%, the sixth highest in the country among states and Union Territories, much higher than the national average of 27.3%.

A strong public-sector presence and active state regulatory agencies (e.g., Higher Education Department, Kerala State Higher Education Council - KSHEC). Early experimentation and state-level reform commissions created to rethink governance, exam systems and curriculum frameworks even prior to NEP operationalisation.

High student aspirations for employability and professional upskilling, combined with political sensitivity around language, equity and fee-regulation that shape how reforms are accepted and implemented.

These structural and socio-political features mean Kerala is well placed to implement reforms that require systemic coordination, but the dense regulatory web and the plurality of stakeholders (state government, multiple universities, college managements, teachers' unions and students) also complicate uniform, rapid roll-out.

High student aspirations for employability and professional upskilling, combined with political sensitivity around language, equity and fee-regulation that shape how reforms are accepted and implemented.

2. NEP IMPLEMENTATION PROGRESS SO FAR - PARTIAL ADOPTION & INSTITUTIONAL EXPERIMENTS

2.1 Overview of State-level action

Kerala has taken measured steps to align higher education with NEP principles: multidisciplinary learning, flexibility of degrees (including piloting Four-Year Undergraduate Programmes), credit mobility, Academic Bank of Credits (ABC) registration, and curricular reforms through KSHEC and university committees. The KSHEC and some universities have been explicitly analysing and piloting FYUGP curricula and credit transfer mechanisms.

2.2 Institutional experiments

Affiliating universities and colleges of Kerala have initiated experiments:

Four-Year Undergraduate Programme (FYUGP) exploration: Universities has made curriculum review and readiness steps for credit transfer and ABC integration; some autonomous colleges have begun reconfiguring curricula to include interdisciplinary/skill components.

Academic Bank of Credits (ABC): Universities have begun registering and digitising credentials, enabling

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credit mobility though without interim exit certifications. This digital groundwork is a critical enabler for NEP's flexible pathways.

Regulatory alignment: Kerala's Higher Education Department and KSHEC have engaged with national guidelines and have issued minutes/working documents to adapt NEP recommendations. New UGC and central guidelines (including 2024-2025 regulations) have created a changing regulatory environment which Kerala has been responding to.

2.3 Pace and nature of adoption

Adoption has been selective and iterative - Kerala favours institutional experiments and consultations rather than blanket, top-down transformations. This partial adoption approach aims to reconcile NEP goals with Kerala's political economy and high public expectations for quality, equity and oversight.

3. MAJOR ISSUES OF IMPLEMENTATION

Despite clear alignment with NEP goals in principle, Kerala faces several implementation barriers. The most important are:

3.1 Regulatory complexity and shifting national guidelines

NEP's implementation depends on national regulatory instruments (UGC regulations, MHRD/Department of Education guidelines). Frequent updates to national regulations (e.g., UGC regulatory changes in 2024-2025) create a moving target for states and institutions, generating uncertainty for curriculum design, degree nomenclature and accreditation frameworks.

3.2 Governance fragmentation and coordination costs

Kerala's multiple universities, autonomous colleges and state agencies make cross-institutional standardisation (credit portability, academic pathways, standard assessment norms) administratively heavy. Achieving a common operational model for FYUGP or ABC across all institutions requires strong coordination mechanisms and capacity building at university and college levels.

3.3 Faculty capacity, pedagogy and mindset change

NEP emphasizes multidisciplinary education, experiential learning, internships and outcome-based curricula - all of which require faculty training in new pedagogies, assessment reforms and industry linkages. There is a gap between policy aspirations and available faculty development programmes and incentives to change long-standing teaching practices.

3.4 Infrastructure, digital readiness and ABC roll-out

While some universities have digitised credentials and

started registering for ABC, full operationalisation of credit banking, learning records and joint degree administration requires robust IT systems, standard APIs between institutions and secure verification processes. Many smaller colleges lack such technical capacity.

3.5 Equity, language policy and political contestation

Language, reservation and public finance issues are politically sensitive. NEP prescriptions on multilingualism and flexibility in languages have created debates nationally and regionally; implementing a three-language offering in higher education faces practical constraints (faculty availability, faculty workload, student demand) and political pushback in some contexts. Kerala's progressive social policy tradition does not remove these contentious debates, and local political considerations shape pace and form of adoption.

3.6 Accreditation and assessment reforms

The NEP calls for overhaul of accreditation and quality assurance mechanisms. Moves at the national level (including proposals to simplify accreditation models) have implications for Kerala institutions, which must adapt to new metrics and possibly a binary (accredited / not-accredited) approach - an abrupt shift that can unsettle established institutional aspirations and funding formulas. The purely private self-financing institutions are heavily hit by these reforms.

4. OPPORTUNITIES FOR KERALA WITHIN THE NEP FRAMEWORK & LESSONS FOR THE NATION

4.1 Opportunities

Leveraging strong social indicators and high demand for quality: Kerala's literate population and high school completion rates create a ready cohort for NEP's higher-order skill and multidisciplinary programmes. With targeted upskilling and vocational pathways, the state can translate educational gains into employability and entrepreneurship.

Pilot-friendly political economy: Kerala's history of organised teacher networks, consultative commissions, and proactive state bodies (e.g., KSHEC) positions it to run carefully evaluated pilots (FYUGP, ABC experiments) before scale up. The state can develop models that balance standardisation and institutional autonomy.

Digital leadership in credentialing: Early ABC registration, digitisation of marksheets and degree records in some Kerala universities offers an opportunity to become a model for secure credit mobility and micro-credentialing in India.

Multidisciplinary centres of excellence: Kerala can develop interdisciplinary centres that combine traditional strengths (public health, social sciences, arts) with emerging areas (data science, sustainability studies), matching regional development priorities.

4.2 Lessons for the nation

Value of staged, evidence-driven rollouts: Kerala's cautious, consultative experiments underscore that rapid, nationwide imposition of structural changes without piloting can create confusion. Pilots provide crucial lessons on feasibility, resource needs and stakeholder acceptance.

Importance of aligning national regulations with state capabilities: Frequent changes in national guidelines complicate state implementation. A predictable, co-created regulatory roadmap (with clear timelines) aids smoother adoption across diverse state systems.

Criticality of capacity building and incentives: The NEP's transformative aspirations require systematic faculty development, infrastructure funding and incentives for industry engagement - lessons that Kerala's early pilots illustrate for other states.

5. CONCLUSION - WAY FORWARD

Kerala's first four years of engagement with NEP 2020 show a pragmatic mix of alignment, experimentation and caution. The state has begun operationalising key NEP components (FYUGP analysis, ABC registration, curriculum reviews), but significant challenges remain in governance coordination, faculty capacity, digital infrastructure and harmonisation with evolving national regulations.

RECOMMENDED PRIORITIES

Create a State NEP Implementation Taskforce with clear mandates and timelines - include KSHEC, university VCs, college principal representatives, teachers' unions and student representatives. The mandate should focus on standardising ABC/credit processes, FYUGP pilots, and a shared IT interoperability roadmap.

Scale systematic faculty development and curriculum redesign grants - fund "teaching innovation" fellowships,

pedagogy labs, and industry-faculty immersion programmes to fast-track adoption of experiential and multidisciplinary pedagogy.

Invest in interoperable digital infrastructure for ABC and credentialing

- prioritise secure APIs, common data standards and a phased ABC roll-out starting with universities and larger autonomous colleges before smaller affiliated colleges.

Design clear, student-centric transition rules for FYUGP - address degree nomenclature, exit options, lateral entry and credit recognition in published state guidance to reduce confusion among students and employers. Co-ordinate closely with UGC/central bodies to ensure conformity.

Communicate and build consensus on language and equity policies - conduct stakeholder consultations and phased implementation plans for multilingual offerings, ensuring faculty availability and student choice to mitigate backlash.

Monitor, evaluate and publish pilot outcomes - adopt a continuous evaluation framework (learning outcomes, employability metrics, student satisfaction) and publish annual state NEP progress reports to inform national practice.

FINAL REMARK AND CONCLUSION

Kerala's experience is instructive: when policy change is pursued through deliberative pilots, coordinated governance arrangements and targeted capacity investments, NEP's ambitions of flexibility, interdisciplinarity and lifelong learning can be advanced without destabilising existing strengths. The next phase should focus on converting pilots into scalable systems - anchored in strong digital infrastructure, faculty preparedness and clear regulatory alignment with national frameworks.

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KNOWLEDGE, EDUCATION, CAPITAL, AND THE STATE: THEIR INTERFACE IN THE DEVELOPMENT AND DESTRUCTION OF HUMAN SOCIETIES

DR. G.D. SHARMA *

This paper traces the historical evolution of the creation and dissemination of knowledge and examines its role in both the development and decline of societies. It explores the interrelationship among knowledge, education, capital, and the state over time, and offers recommendations for strengthening this interface in the context of NEP 2020.

THE STORY OF KNOWLEDGE

A woman once observed the growth of a plant and discovered that some plants could be consumed to satiate hunger and provide energy. She shared this knowledge with others, and this sharing multiplied—first locally, then regionally, and eventually globally—initially through signs, later through speech, and finally through written language. Over millennia, this process evolved into a systematic body of agricultural knowledge, enabling sustenance for life on Earth and continuing to hold potential for the future.

Similarly, a man once noticed stones falling from a rock. Among them, a round stone rolled down easily while others remained stuck. This observation inspired him to develop the wheel—an invention that revolutionized movement and communication. The domestication of animals further multiplied human capabilities, allowing the use of animal energy to perform tasks and conserve human effort.

The combination of the wheel and new energy sources—first animal and human, then mechanical (water, fire, steam)—catalyzed rapid progress. This eventually led to the Industrial Revolution and, much later, to space exploration, taking humans beyond Earth into the Brahman (the universe). As with agriculture, this knowledge was first shared through signs, then orally, and finally through writing.

KNOWLEDGE GENERATION AND SHARING

This pattern—observation, exploration, and sharing of useful knowledge—runs through all domains: from health (human, animal, and environmental) to architecture, metallurgy, and weapon-making. Weapons initially served to protect

humans from wild animals, but later became instruments to control or dominate other human beings.

As societies evolved, leadership structures emerged—first small groups under a head, then larger communities occupying territories. To coexist peacefully, these groups developed and shared codes of conduct. Violations invited punishment, ranging from ostracism to severe penalties, ensuring adherence to the collective code.

A parallel moral code arose to regulate human behaviour through the idea of an invisible, omnipresent, and omnipotent force—what came to be known as religion. Religion sought to curb excessive freedom or exploration by invoking fear of divine retribution. Whenever religion and the state aligned, they created immense power capable of either nurturing progress or suppressing human inquiry. A benign balance between them fostered social

order and creative growth within moral bounds.

KNOWLEDGE AS THE FOUNDATION OF DEVELOPMENT

At the heart of all progress lies knowledge—accumulated over millennia and transmitted across generations. Initially, this occurred within small groups focused on specific skills. Over time, systems evolved to provide a general foundation of learning, eventually institutionalized as education.

Education became the means through which knowledge could reach large populations—unlike in the animal world—through structured processes of basic, intermediate, and advanced learning: schooling, skill training, and higher education. Simultaneously, research in higher education institutions expanded the frontiers of knowledge, complementing observation and exploration.

CAPITAL AND THE STATE: THEIR INFLUENCE ON KNOWLEDGE AND WEALTH

Throughout history, two powerful forces have influenced

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knowledge and its fruits-Capital and the State. The first represents the accumulation of material wealth derived from the products of knowledge (goods and services). The second embodies control over people and territories-the exercise of power.

Both forces can be constructive-organizing societies, enabling development, and facilitating the well-being of humans and other beings. Yet, both can also be exploitative, distorting the natural flow of knowledge and concentrating wealth and power in the hands of a few.

Social organisation evolved from small communities to kingdoms and empires-sometimes benevolent, sometimes despotic. With time, democratic systems emerged, allowing people to participate in governance. However, even democracies vary-some genuine, some mixed, and others authoritarian.

The degree of justice and equity within any system depends largely on the distribution of knowledge (through education) and the distribution of wealth (through economic endowments). When education and wealth are confined to a small elite, societies become distorted and prone to exploitation. Conversely, broad and inclusive access to education and resources strengthens democracy and social harmony.

TOWARDS A WELL-MEANING SOCIETY

Few societies truly embody the ideal of a "well-meaning" society. To move toward that goal, nations must design and implement policies that ensure two essential distributions:

1. Knowledge through Education - accessible and inclusive, allowing every child to pursue learning to the fullest of their capability.
2. Economic Endowments - equitable, ensuring every individual can live a dignified human life.

THE INDIAN CONTEXT

While this dynamic can be observed globally, it is particularly meaningful to examine it in the context of Bharat-the Indian state-whose civilizational history spans millennia. Understanding how knowledge, education, capital, and the state have interacted through India's past and present offers valuable insights into the pathways for building a just, knowledgeable, and prosperous society.

Knowledge, Education, Capital, and State Interface in Framing Education and Economic Endowment Policies

I. Prior to the Present Nation-State - Bharat (India)

Bharat has a history spanning over 5,000 years-one of the few civilizations whose evolution can be traced so far back. Without delving into its deep antiquity, we begin from the time when Bharat was called the "Golden Bird." The "gold" symbolized immense value and prosperity,

while the "bird" represented vitality and life-reflecting the high worth of the people who inhabited this part of the earth.

This prosperity was underpinned by the widespread generation and equitable distribution of knowledge. Gurukulas and universities served as centres of learning and excellence. Agriculture, housing, health care (Ayurveda and ShalyaChikitsa), metallurgy, mathematics, astronomy, weather forecasting, and trade systems flourished-all harmonized with nature and driven by human and animal energy. The economy was vibrant, supported by indigenous financial systems and trade with neighbouring regions.

At the core of these developments was the inclusive dissemination of knowledge through education, and an equitable sharing of economic endowments guided by the principle of Aparigraha-non-accumulation of material wealth. This ethos sustained a balanced and humane civilization.

II. Transition through Subjugation and Freedom

The Indian subcontinent-Bharatvarsha or Jambudweep-witnessed repeated cycles of creation and destruction, knowledge and ignorance, domination and liberation. The land endured foreign invasions and centuries of subjugation before reclaiming its sovereignty. The freedom struggle, stretching roughly from 1857 to 1947, was both violent and non-violent. Its later phase (1930-1945) saw an intensified movement across the length and breadth of the land to regain self-rule.

III. The Constitution - The Code of Conduct for a Well-Meaning State

After independence, the aspiration to build a "well-meaning" state was articulated in the Constitution of India-a document born of intense debate, disagreement, and consensus. The Constitution laid the foundation for the creation and distribution of knowledge through education policy, and the creation and equitable distribution of economic endowments through economic policy.

Adopting a federal structure-the Union of States-the Constitution delineated powers between the Centre and the States, enshrined the rights and duties of citizens, and established institutions for checks and balances: the Executive, Legislature, and Judiciary. It also empowered citizens through universal adult franchise, ensuring participation in governance regardless of caste, creed, gender, economic status, or location.

Therefore, the Constitution inherently mandates that knowledge creation and dissemination through education be broad-based and inclusive, and that economic endowments be equitably distributed to secure dignity for every citizen. If either condition fails, exploitation and

distortion ensue, defeating the vision of a "well-meaning" state.

IV. India as a Sovereign People's Power Nation-State

Under the Constitution, education was initially placed in the State List, with the Centre responsible for maintaining standards in higher education. It was later moved to the Concurrent List, allowing both levels of government to legislate on education. The University Grants Commission (UGC) was established to coordinate and maintain standards in higher education.

Education assumed central importance in independent India. The University Education Commission (1948-49) under Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, and the Secondary Education Commission (1952-53) under Dr. L. Mudaliar, laid the groundwork for reform. They faced the immense task of transforming a colonial education system—designed to serve imperial interests—into one that fostered free thought and national development.

During British rule, education had been reduced to a means of creating clerical manpower, as outlined in Macaulay's infamous Minute on Education (1835). It displaced indigenous systems and curtailed independent inquiry. In response, reformers and philanthropists established alternative institutions—such as Arya Samaj's Indo-Vedic Schools, Ramakrishna Mission Schools, and later, universities like Santiniketan (Rabindranath Tagore), Banaras Hindu University (Madan Mohan Malaviya), and Aligarh Muslim University (Sir Syed Ahmad Khan)—which sought to revive Indian knowledge systems while engaging with global developments.

Mahatma Gandhi, the moral compass of India's freedom movement, criticized the British system as one "born of sin"—the sin of subjugation. His concept of Nai Talim (Basic Education) emphasized self-reliance (Atmanirbharta) and learning through productive work linked to one's environment. Gandhi envisioned education as a means of liberation, not dependency—preparing individuals and communities for dignified, interdependent living rather than exploitative dependence.

V. Post-Independence Developments

The early decades of independence saw an ambitious drive to expand schooling and higher education. The Kothari Commission (1964-66) provided a comprehensive blueprint, leading to the National Policy on Education (1968)—the first of its kind. It emphasized equality, quality, and expansion. However, economic limitations constrained its implementation. Despite efforts by reformers like Vinoba Bhave, whose Bhoodan Movement aimed at voluntary redistribution of land and wealth, disparities persisted in both economic resources and educational access.

The Teachers' Commission (1983-85) reviewed the profession and led to the National Policy on Education (1986), which introduced autonomy for colleges, professional development through Academic Staff Colleges (now Human Resource Development Centres), and initiatives like the Mid-Day Meal Scheme to improve access and retention in schools.

Nevertheless, financial constraints remained. Successive governments failed to allocate the recommended 6% of GDP to education, with actual spending hovering around 3%. Despite the Right to Education Act (2010), universal access and quality remain elusive.

VI. Liberalization and the Changing Paradigm

The 1990s marked a shift with economic liberalization. The World Trade Organisation's General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) in 1995 redefined education as a tradable service, diluting the state's moral and constitutional responsibility to ensure equitable access. Policymakers began treating higher education as a private good rather than a public or merit good. The Ministry of Finance's White Paper labeled expenditure on higher education as a "subsidy," contrasting with economist Theodore W. Schultz's Nobel-recognized theory of human capital investment.

Influenced by World Bank economists like George Psacharopoulos, policymakers adopted a view that higher education primarily benefits individuals rather than society—an idea later challenged and discredited. Yet, this paradigm shift led to growing privatization and inequities in both access and quality.

CAPITAL, KNOWLEDGE, AND THE STATE: THE CONTEMPORARY INTERFACE

Capital in Education

"Capital" gradually found direct entry into the education system. Earlier, it entered through philanthropy—supplementing state efforts to expand access and quality. Over time, however, it entered as a business proposition. Although the law of the land required educational institutions to function on a not-for-profit basis, many began operating under the model of self-financing institutions—that is, charging students fees equivalent to full cost plus margins.

This trend gained full momentum by 2012, with the establishment of a large number of private self-financing universities whose count now rivals that of state-funded universities. Likewise, the number of self-financing colleges grew rapidly, adopting a model where students bore the full operational cost of education. The surplus thus generated was used to expand networks of such institutions across India.

State and quasi-state institutions also began offering self-financing programmes, charging cost-plus fees for certain courses to meet funding gaps. However, as the middle class increasingly found it difficult to afford such education, the state and financial institutions introduced the concept of education loan financing. Students could now borrow at prime lending rates-with or without collateral-and repay with interest after graduation.

Through these mechanisms, capital began to directly influence the distribution of knowledge, determining who could access education. Moreover, capital's influence deepened through the monetization of knowledge under the regime of Intellectual Property Rights (IPR). The commodification of knowledge profoundly affected its creation, use, and dissemination worldwide.

STATE RESPONSIBILITY AND THE EMERGING IMBALANCE

The growing role of capital coincided with the state's dilution of its moral and constitutional responsibility to ensure equitable and inclusive access to education. The cost-plus fee model effectively excluded large sections of citizens who lacked the means to pay, reinforcing economic inequalities. Consequently, the distribution of economic endowments-and hence educational opportunities-became increasingly skewed.

NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY 2020: HOPE AND CONTRADICTIONS

With a new government at the Centre, expectations rose for a shift towards citizen-centric reforms. The ruling party announced its intent to formulate a new education policy. After wide consultations during its first term, the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 was announced in the second term, based on the recommendations of the Dr. K. Kasturirangan Committee. Notably, unlike earlier policies, NEP 2020 was not tabled in Parliament for debate before adoption; it was directly implemented.

KEY FEATURES OF NEP 2020

The policy seeks to introduce far-reaching structural changes in higher education, including:

- Revamping undergraduate, postgraduate, and research programmes;
- Promoting flexibility, interdisciplinarity, and outcome-based education linked to the National Qualifications Framework;
- Restructuring the university system by granting autonomy to colleges and enabling them to become degree-granting institutions;
- Establishing a unified apex body-the Higher

Education Commission of India (HECI)-to subsume existing regulators such as UGC, AICTE, and NCTE;

- Promising to raise public expenditure on education to 6% of GDP by 2030-2035;
- Encouraging philanthropic initiatives while aiming to check commercialization and privatization;
- Promoting internationalization by inviting foreign universities and collaborations.

While these proposals are progressive in design, many mirror trends long observed in the United States. In practice, however, the invitation to foreign universities-especially under Special Economic Zones (SEZs)-risks undermining the foundational principle of education as a not-for-profit public good.

NEED FOR AN HONEST REVIEW

Five years since the policy's announcement, an honest and comprehensive review of its implementation is essential. The fundamental question remains: What kind of knowledge should the education system distribute, and for whose benefit?

As Paulo Freire observed, education is never neutral-it is inherently political. The politics of education in India today risks straying from the constitutional ethos of equity, inclusion, and democratic coexistence.

GROUND REALITIES

Despite policy promises, the dominance of self-financing institutions and courses-both in private and public sectors-continues. This perpetuates inequity in access to education, as the majority of citizens lack sufficient economic endowments. Recent studies indicate that income and wealth inequality in India has widened over the past decade, reaching levels unseen in half a century. The uneven distribution of economic resources has, in turn, curtailed the equitable and qualitative distribution of knowledge.

CONCLUSION

The central thesis is clear: Either the state must assume full responsibility to distribute knowledge freely, widely, inclusively, and with quality, or it must redistribute economic endowments to enable all citizens to access and benefit from education.

Without such measures, the goal of education leading to Atmanirbharta-self-reliance in its true Gandhian sense-will remain an unrealized ideal. In a world increasingly driven by competitive markets and rapid technological advances such as Artificial Intelligence, the challenge before India is not only to educate its citizens but to do so justly, inclusively, and meaningfully.

This column brings out briefs of: Ph.D and M.Phil Research in Education, Economics of Education, Social, Political, Psychology aspects of education/economics conducted in University /College departments. It also brings out briefs on researches done by Research Institutions, Industry and NGOs. This column was introduced from April-June, 2016 issue of College Post. Method of reporting the researches completed and in progress was given in that issue. Interested researchers, professors and Heads of institute are requested to send their brief accordingly. Purpose of this column is to highlight the researches in education conducted in university and college departments and in any other institution / industry and NGO for the benefit of policy makers, research scholars, thinkers. Readers are welcome to encourage relevant person and institute to send briefs on research done and being done in education/economics.

This issue brings to you brief on the following Research in Education/Economics.

PhD Thesis

Search of Development Tribal District -Tapi in Surat, Gujarat, Title: Role of Government and NGOs in the Economic Development of Tribal Areas of Gujarat: A Study with Special Reference to Tapi District in South Gujarat Researcher: Sweta Sadanandsingh Thakur, Supervisor: N. B. Patel, Discipline: Development Economics, University: Gujarat University, Year of Completion: 2019

FOCUS OF THE STUDY

The study examines the role of government agencies and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in promoting the socio-economic development of the Scheduled Tribes of Tapi district in South Gujarat. It assesses the availability, accessibility, and effectiveness of educational, health, and developmental services across all five talukas of the district. Using the Human Development framework, the research evaluates the impact of public interventions on the quality of life of the tribal population and identifies areas requiring policy attention.

MAJOR FINDINGS

Educational Development

1. Literacy levels have improved over time, although significant regional and gender disparities continue to exist. The study recommends greater investment in educational infrastructure in backward areas and special incentives to improve girls' education.
2. Although the Government of Gujarat has waived tuition fees for girl students, this concession constitutes only a small proportion of the total private expenditure incurred on education. Additional financial support is therefore required to encourage female education.
3. The factors responsible for the relatively lower

educational attainment of girls compared to boys need to be systematically identified and addressed through targeted interventions.

4. Tapi district has a reasonably well-developed educational infrastructure in terms of the number of schools and the availability of physical facilities. However, better maintenance and effective utilisation of these facilities remain essential.
5. Safe drinking water and adequate sanitation facilities are available in many schools but are often poorly maintained. Their proper functioning is critical for improving students' health and reducing absenteeism.
6. The absence of separate toilets for girls continues to affect girls' enrolment and retention in schools. Gender-sensitive school infrastructure is therefore essential.
7. Many schools lack proper boundary walls, making them vulnerable to encroachment and affecting the security of school premises.
8. Since tribal communities in Tapi speak different indigenous languages and dialects, the use of mother tongue instruction during the early years of schooling would improve learning outcomes and sustain students' interest in education.
9. The district has achieved nearly universal enrolment, with very few out-of-school children. The Gender Parity Index is close to one and compares favourably with the state average.
10. Student retention and progression rates have steadily improved, while repetition and dropout rates have declined. However, greater attention is needed to improve girls' participation at the upper primary level.
11. Besides infrastructural deficiencies, several socio-economic factors prevalent among tribal and rural households continue to influence access to and quality of elementary education.

Health Development

12. Tapi district was carved out of Surat district in 2007-08 to facilitate focused development, as its socio-economic characteristics differed significantly from those of Surat.
13. Despite being a predominantly tribal and rural district, Tapi possesses a relatively well-developed public health infrastructure.
14. While healthcare facilities are available, shortages of medical officers, specialists, and trained paramedical personnel limit their effective utilisation. Existing medical equipment is often underutilized because of inadequate staffing.
15. Several health institutions require modernization, renovation, and staff training in line with the objectives of the National Rural Health Mission.
16. Access to private healthcare providers is limited, increasing dependence on government health facilities.

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most suitable candidates for higher education? Competitive examinations often reward memorisation, test-taking strategies, and repetitive practice rather than critical thinking, creativity, problem-solving, and the application of knowledge. While there are notable exceptions, such exceptions are frequently highlighted and marketed as evidence of the system's success.

From this perspective, a stronger contribution to higher education may come from reducing excessive centralization and restoring greater autonomy to institutions. Universities and colleges should be allowed to develop their own admission criteria, academic programmes, and assessment systems. Such diversity would enable institutions to establish distinctive identities and educational philosophies. A uniform, one-size-fits-all approach to admissions may ultimately be detrimental to students, institutions, and the nation.

There are, of course, arguments in favour of centralised examinations. They reduce the burden on students of appearing for multiple entrance tests and may improve administrative efficiency. However, these benefits must be balanced against the values of diversity, institutional autonomy, and inclusiveness. Decentralised admission systems can provide greater opportunities for students educated in regional languages and for those from rural, economically disadvantaged, and lower-middle-class backgrounds.

There is also a constitutional dimension to this issue. Education is a subject in the Concurrent List, giving both the Union and State Governments important roles in policymaking. Consequently, several state governments have expressed concerns regarding centralised admission systems and have sought the authority to conduct their own entrance examinations. At various points, ordinances and legal challenges have reflected these tensions between centralization and federal autonomy.

In our view, centralised examination systems reduce the role of state governments and diminish the powers traditionally vested in universities through their respective Acts to design and administer their own admission processes. Advocates of centralization often argue that such systems benefit students. However, it is necessary to ask: Which students benefit the most? Equally important is the question of which sections of the coaching industry stand to gain from such arrangements.

The broader issue of centralization versus decentralization deserves renewed national debate. The prevailing tendency has been towards greater centralization, often justified by isolated instances of malpractice or administrative irregularities. While such aberrations certainly need to be addressed, it is equally important to examine the underlying causes that produce them. If these problems are

manifestations of deeper systemic issues within our educational and governance structures, then addressing those root causes should be the priority. The rest will follow. G. D. Sharma" The position taken by the College Post-the higher education journal in 2016 holds valid in 2026.

The New Development

While this editorial was being finalized, students across the country had taken to the streets, demanding accountability for the serious lapses in the conduct of the examination. They called for the resignation of the Union Education Minister, Shri Dharmendra Pradhan. The scale and intensity of the protests were unprecedented. Thousands of students organized demonstrations, staged hunger strikes, and continued their agitation despite repeated attempts to disperse them. Their principal demand was that those responsible for the crisis be held accountable, including the Education Minister.

The student movement received strong support from opposition parties, both inside and outside Parliament, and nationwide student protests were organized. Eventually, the Government of India responded to the mounting public pressure. The Education Minister resigned, and the Government announced a series of corrective measures. It also introduced a Bill in Parliament aimed at addressing the deficiencies in the existing examination system.

In our view, however, the problems associated with NEET are not confined to a few administrative or procedural lapses. They are conceptual, structural, and systemic in nature. Consequently, merely plugging one or two loopholes is unlikely to resolve the deeper issues inherent in the NEET framework. A comprehensive review and fundamental restructuring of the examination system are essential if the objectives of fairness, transparency, equity, and academic integrity are to be achieved.

Since 2014, India has witnessed an increasing trend towards centralization that, in several respects, has overridden the principle of democratic decentralization. The introduction of the National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test (NEET), along with several other policy initiatives, has significantly altered the autonomous and decentralized functioning of a number of democratic institutions. These developments have contributed to growing tensions between the Union and State governments, particularly in the governance of higher education, where the political parties in power at the two levels often differ.

NEET is not an isolated example but part of a broader pattern of centralization in educational governance. Increasing reliance on nationally designed regulatory frameworks, centralized entrance examinations, uniform curricular prescriptions, digital governance platforms, and common policy directives has shifted decision-making authority from universities and State governments to institutions at the

national level. While these measures have often been justified on the grounds of ensuring uniform standards, transparency, and efficiency, they have also reduced the policy space available to States and institutions to address their diverse educational, social, linguistic, and regional needs.

Such centralising measures have, in many ways, weakened the federal and participatory character of higher education governance in India. They have diminished institutional autonomy, constrained innovation at the State and institutional levels, and limited the capacity of universities to evolve context-specific admission, academic, and governance practices. The cumulative effect has been an increasing concentration of authority in national institutions, raising important questions about the balance

between national coordination and constitutional federalism.

India's higher education system has historically derived its strength from diversity, institutional autonomy, and democratic decentralization. National standards are undoubtedly necessary to safeguard quality and promote mobility. However, these objectives should be pursued through cooperative federalism rather than excessive centralization. A more balanced governance framework would combine national benchmarks with meaningful autonomy for States and institutions, enabling them to respond effectively to local needs while maintaining academic excellence.

GD Sharma

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The Bill is expected to be introduced in Parliament during the Monsoon Session, commencing on 20 July 2026. A report on the subject has also been published in this issue of College Post under the column "Education News Analysis."

The next meeting of the Executive Committees of the ICF State Chapters is proposed to be held towards the end of August 2026. Members are invited to send their agenda items and suggestions for consideration at the meeting.

DEVELOPMENT OF SELF-STUDY REPORTS FOR QUALITY ASSESSMENT

At the request of members of the Forum, a committee has been constituted to assist colleges in preparing their Self-Study Reports (SSRs) for assessment by the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC).

The committee will assist interested colleges in developing their SSRs based on the parameters specified by NAAC, supplemented by relevant international norms and best practices in quality assessment. The proposed format will also explore the appropriate use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) to support the preparation, organisation and analysis of institutional information required for quality assessment.

Interested member colleges may apply for

assistance in the development of their Self-Study Reports.

ONLINE CERTIFICATE COURSES

SEED-ICF, through SEED-CHEST, has launched online certificate courses in Ethics, Values and Life Skills, as well as courses in Communication Skills and Critical Thinking for students and faculty members.

Interested member colleges may apply to implement these courses. The courses will be jointly implemented by SEED-CHEST and the participating colleges. A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) will be signed between SEED-CHEST and the participating college for the implementation of the courses.

Students and faculty members who successfully complete the courses will receive a joint certificate issued by SEED-CHEST and the participating college.

The online courses in Ethics, Values and Life Skills are currently being implemented at MES Keveeyam College, Kerala. Two batches of students have successfully completed the courses, while another batch is currently in progress. The next batch is scheduled to commence in September 2026.

Interested colleges may apply by writing to seedicf@gmail.com with the subject line "Online Certificate Course."

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World University News has recently published a series of insightful commentaries on some of the most pressing challenges confronting global higher education. Among the most significant are: "What University Leaders Must Learn in the Age of AI" by James YoonilAuh (South Korea, 8 July 2026), "We Must Reimagine Higher Education for a Multipolar World" by Imanol Ordorika (11 March 2026), and "Xenophobic Politics Has No Place Within the University" by AslamFataar (9 July 2026). Together, these three commentaries illuminate distinct yet interconnected dimensions of the evolving global higher education ecosystem.

CHALLENGES FOR HIGHER EDUCATION LEADERSHIP:

The first commentary examines how artificial intelligence is fundamentally transforming the traditional role of universities. Unlike previous technological innovations that primarily changed the ways universities stored knowledge, delivered education, or managed institutional operations, AI penetrates much deeper. As Auh observes:

"Previous technologies changed how universities stored knowledge, delivered education, and managed operations. Artificial intelligence reaches much deeper. It enters the cognitive domain itself - the very domain universities have long considered their primary responsibility."

The commentary argues that AI is reshaping the cognitive division of intellectual labour in unprecedented ways. Students, researchers, and administrators increasingly depend on AI to generate ideas, analyse information, accelerate scientific discovery, and support decision-making across teaching, research, and institutional management. Consequently, the university's historic monopoly over knowledge creation and dissemination is being fundamentally challenged.

Auh further notes: "No prior educational technology has so profoundly altered the cognitive division of intellectual labour. Students, researchers and administrators increasingly rely on AI to generate ideas, analyse information, accelerate discovery and support decision-making across teaching, research and institutional management."

The article emphasizes that access to intellectual assistance is no longer confined to classrooms, libraries, or faculty expertise. Instead, it is available on demand to anyone with an internet connection. While knowledge has become increasingly abundant and universally accessible, the ability to exercise critical judgment in interpreting, validating, and applying that knowledge remains a uniquely human responsibility.

As Auh aptly concludes: "The defining scarcity of the 21st century is no longer access to knowledge. It is the capacity to exercise sound judgment amid an abundance of machine-generated information."

This profound shift compels university leaders to confront a fundamental question: If knowledge is available

almost everywhere through AI, what distinctive value does a university continue to provide? Although AI can generate answers with unprecedented speed and scale, evaluating their reliability, contextual appropriateness, ethical implications, and societal consequences remains an indispensable human responsibility. The future relevance of universities, therefore, will depend less on their role as repositories of knowledge and more on their ability to cultivate critical thinking, ethical reasoning, sound judgment, creativity, and responsible leadership in an AI-driven world.

HIGHER EDUCATION IN A MULTIPOLAR WORLD

The commentary "We Must Reimagine Higher Education for a Multipolar World" by Imanol Ordorika highlights the profound transformation taking place in the global higher education landscape in the post-Second World War and post-Cold War era. The article is a response to the University World News lead story by Philip G. Altbach, Hans de Wit, and Chris Glass, "Not All Aspects of Shift in HE World Order Are Positive." Ordorika argues that the concerns expressed by these eminent scholars reflect an anxiety that is increasingly evident across sections of the North Atlantic academic community.

According to Ordorika, the earlier article frames the ongoing redistribution of influence in global higher education as a source of "turmoil," implicitly judging contemporary developments against benchmarks historically established by Anglophone and European universities. He contends that while such concerns are understandable, they also reveal what he terms a "soft-colonial reflex"-one that universalizes Western academic norms while portraying the emergence of alternative centres of knowledge as potential threats. Instead, he argues for provincializing Western standards, recognizing multiple centres of excellence, exposing coercion wherever it occurs, and building collaborative institutional architectures suited to a genuinely multipolar world.

Ordorika questions the worldview embedded in traditional conceptions of global academic excellence. For decades, international university rankings, citation metrics, and the dominance of English as the lingua franca of scholarship have shaped academic visibility and prestige, overwhelmingly favouring institutions embedded within Euro-Atlantic academic networks. However, the rapid rise of Asian research systems and the growing contributions of universities across the Global South are fundamentally reshaping this intellectual geography.

He cautions that if the historical dominance of Western institutions continues to be treated as the normative benchmark of quality, the diversification of global higher education will inevitably be misinterpreted as institutional decline rather than healthy pluralization. Referring to the observations of Futao Huang, Ordorika argues that the future of higher education lies in moving beyond Cold War binaries and fostering international cooperation based on diversity, reciprocity, and mutual

learning rather than civilizational hierarchies. This requires abandoning the assumption that Western academic centres represent neutrality while emerging systems represent risk.

Ordorika further observes that the first step towards a more equitable global academic order is to acknowledge that the old claims of universalism were never politically neutral. Equally important is recognizing that contemporary threats to academic freedom and institutional autonomy are not confined to authoritarian regimes but are increasingly visible across both the Global North and the Global South.

He argues that if only those forms of knowledge recognized by Anglophone metrics are considered legitimate, global higher education will continue to confuse international visibility with academic quality and auditability with excellence. Such practices reinforce long-standing centre-periphery hierarchies and marginalize diverse intellectual traditions and locally relevant knowledge systems.

The commentary also draws attention to the political economy of higher education. Over the past four decades, market-oriented managerialism has normalized competition, rankings, performance metrics, and accountability frameworks as the dominant language of higher education governance. In many countries, these developments have created conditions for more assertive state intervention, where governments increasingly employ selective funding, curricular surveillance, regulatory controls, and ideological oversight to discipline universities and scholars.

Ordorika emphasizes that these developments are not confined to authoritarian political systems. Similar tendencies are becoming visible across several established Western democracies, where culture-war politics, funding mechanisms, restrictions on campus protest, and political pressures on peer review increasingly shape university governance and academic freedom.

Consequently, he argues that any credible defence of academic freedom must apply universal standards rather than selective criticism. As he succinctly observes:

"To defend academic freedom credibly, we must name coercion everywhere, not just on the far side of our geopolitical preferences."

Ordorika concludes that the debate initiated by Altbach, De Wit, and Glass provides an important opportunity to rethink the future of global higher education, provided the academic community resists the gravitational pull of soft colonialism. A genuinely multipolar world will inevitably redistribute intellectual authority, institutional visibility, and academic influence. The challenge is to ensure that this redistribution strengthens rather than fragments the global commons of knowledge.

Achieving this objective requires decentring Western benchmarks of excellence, recognizing multiple knowledge traditions and research ecosystems, exposing

coercive practices irrespective of geography or ideology, and creating plural, inclusive, and protected institutional frameworks for international collaboration. Such an approach would enable higher education to respond more effectively to the realities of an increasingly interconnected yet multipolar world.

UNIVERSITIES AND THE CHALLENGE OF XENOPHOBIC POLITICS

In his commentary, "Xenophobic Politics Has No Place Within the University" (9 July 2026), Aslam Fataar examines the growing threat that xenophobic nationalism and exclusionary politics pose to universities across the world. He argues that in many countries universities are increasingly becoming entangled in political debates over immigration, national identity, and public inclusion. Governments and political groups are exerting growing pressure to restrict international student mobility, question the legitimacy of foreign scholars, and redefine higher education primarily in terms of national interests.

Fataar contends that such debates overlook a fundamental truth about the university. Universities have historically been built upon the free exchange of people, ideas, and knowledge across national, cultural, and intellectual boundaries. They are institutions of encounter, dialogue, and openness rather than instruments of exclusion. As he observes:

"In numerous countries, universities are increasingly embroiled in political disputes concerning immigration, national identity and public inclusion. There is rising pressure to limit international students, challenge the role of foreign scholars and prioritise national interests."

He argues that xenophobia strikes at the very foundations of the university because it undermines one of its defining characteristics:

"Consequently, xenophobia attacks one of the fundamental qualities that define universities: their capacity to bring diverse people, ideas and knowledge traditions into productive conversation for the public good."

Fataar emphasizes that while universities are public institutions, they should not merely reflect prevailing public opinion or political sentiment. Their responsibility is far more demanding. Universities exist to expand public understanding, cultivate informed and critical judgment, and generate knowledge capable of addressing society's most complex challenges. When public discourse becomes polarized, exclusionary, or driven by fear, universities have a democratic obligation not to reinforce these tendencies but to broaden intellectual horizons and promote reasoned dialogue.

The commentary makes a fundamental philosophical point about the nature of the university:

"This is because the university is fundamentally a place of encounter. It exists because knowledge grows through dialogue, scholarly exchange and intellectual mobility. It cultivates what Edward Said described as a worldly intellectual disposition: an openness to ideas, histories and cultures beyond one's own."

REPLACING UGC ACT, 1956 BY VIKSIT BHARAT SHIKSHA ADHISHTHAN BILL, 2025

Viksit Bharat Shiksha Adhishthan Bill 2025 was placed in parliament and subsequently it was referred to a Committee headed Smt. Purendeswari to deliberate and interact with stakeholders and make recommendation. This bill is expected to be placed in the coming Monsoon session of the Parliament starting from 20th July, 2026. News report of 18th July, 26 of Hindu, says that one of ally of the NDA - AP Government, has made several suggestions and expressed the concern for centralized nature of WB Shiksha Adhishthan Bill, 2025 in particular it made reference to Clause 11(4) "Single and most significant structural Change" to affiliating university model. It stated that the clause would allow the Regulatory Council to bypass state universities in deciding if colleges affiliated to them can or cannot award the degrees. The state government had sought mandatory concurrence before any such decision affecting colleges affiliated to state university. In response to that it is stated that Central Government has agreed and proposed that amendment stating "if a higher educational institution is substantially funded by any state government, it can be authorised to grant degrees by this regulatory council on objection certificate (NOC) from the state government concerned."

The reports that "the panel went a step further, recommending that the Regulatory Council obtain an NOC from the State government concerned before taking any such decision. The Ministry also accepted the NPP - led Meghalaya government's suggestion to include a provision in Clause 12 allowing State universities to establish constituent colleges, off-campus centres, and multiple campuses as per the State laws under which they were set up.

The Meghalaya government had suggested that requiring all universities, including State universities, to obtain the regulatory Council's approval for setting up new colleges as per Clause 12 would go against the stated objective of promoting institutional autonomy and lead to duplication, procedural delays, and administrative inefficiencies.

The panel has also recommended a "comprehensive review" of Clause 47, which empowers the central government to suspend or supersede the apex regulatory commission and three councils' accreditation, regulatory and standards.

The report said that "ambiguity" has to be removed and the government has to make it more transparent by specifying that the power of supersession shall be invoked only in extraordinary and exceptional circumstances, for a limited duration, and as a measure of last resort when all other remedial mechanisms have been exhausted."

The report further mentions that "The committee has also called for limiting the new regulatory framework's role strictly to the "coordination and determination of standards" and recommended removing references to establishing a "system of regulation" from Clause 4 of the bill. Which sets out the aims of the VBSA architecture.

Opposition members had pointed out that by trying to establish a system of "regulation", the Union government was overstepping its jurisdiction under Entry 66 of the Union List, which limits Parliament's power."

The editorial of College Post -the journal of higher education, October- December, 2025 issue compared the University Grants Act 1956 with the proposed Viksit Bharat Shiksha Adhishthan Bill 2025 which seeks to replace UGC Act. It stated that "This Bill marks a decisive break from the earlier philosophy of academic autonomy and cooperative federalism." The editorial concluded that "The Viksit Bharat Shiksha Adhishthan Bill 2025 represents a fundamental shift in higher education governance - from an autonomous, academic -led and developmental model to a centralized, regulatory, and compliance driven regime,. Whether such a system can sustain academic creativity, institutional diversity, and cooperative federalism - while remaining consistent with the constitutional mandate under the entry 66- remains an open and consequential question for the future of Indian Higher Education."

Our assessment is that the amendments recommended by the panel may soften certain stringent provisions of the proposed bill, yet they do not alter its fundamental character or underlying philosophy of command and control. In our view, given the rapidly evolving technological landscape shaped by the Fifth Industrial Revolution driven by AI, it is imperative that the higher education system and its governance structures be reimagined to effectively respond to the emerging domains of quantum and AI technologies. The system must be made more autonomous, with trust placed in its institutions to achieve academic excellence and to address emerging challenges. Furthermore, both the central and state governments should ensure adequate financial provisions to enable the system to perform effectively and meet these challenges.

HIGH-POWERED COMMITTEE TO REFORM THE NEET EXAMINATION SYSTEM

Following the nationwide protests by students over the alleged NEET paper leak, which received strong support from opposition parties, and in the wake of the reported loss of lives among young aspirants and the resignation of the Union Minister of Education, the Government of India took two major initiatives. First, it introduced a Bill in Parliament to strengthen the legal framework governing public examinations. Second, it constituted a high-powered committee headed by Shri Nandan Nilekani, along with five other members, to recommend measures for making the conduct of examinations by the National Testing Agency (NTA) more effective, transparent, and credible.

This is not the first committee constituted by the Government to address shortcomings in the NEET examination system. Following the NEET paper leak in 2024, another high-level committee, chaired by Dr. K.

Radhakrishnan, former Chairman of ISRO, was appointed to review the functioning of the NTA and recommend reforms. In response to a petition before the Supreme Court regarding the implementation of the committee's recommendations, the Government filed an affidavit stating that, of the committee's 101 recommendations, 60 were short-term measures and 35 were long-term measures, while the remaining six related to monitoring and periodic appraisal, which, according to the affidavit, had already been put in place (The Indian Express, 28 July 2026).

The newly constituted committee has a much broader mandate. Besides examining the immediate causes of the 2026 examination crisis, it must critically assess why the recommendations of the earlier committee failed to prevent another major breach of the examination system. It should identify the gaps in implementation, evaluate emerging challenges, and recommend structural reforms capable of restoring public confidence in the integrity of national-level entrance examinations.

More fundamentally, the committee should examine whether the present model of the National Testing Agency—a highly centralized system responsible for conducting numerous national examinations—has reached the limits of its effectiveness. A centralized examination mechanism of such enormous scale inevitably becomes a monolithic institution, with administrative, technological, and logistical constraints. Moreover, a single standardised examination system has inherent limitations in assessing the diverse academic abilities, intellectual potential, creativity, critical thinking, and problem-solving capacities

of millions of students from varied educational and socio-economic backgrounds.

The committee should therefore explore the possibility of developing a more innovative and decentralised examination framework that maintains nationally accepted standards of fairness, transparency, and comparability while allowing greater institutional participation and contextual flexibility. Many countries combine national benchmarks with decentralised assessment mechanisms, thereby reducing systemic risks and promoting more comprehensive evaluation of student abilities.

Finally, it must be recognized that examinations represent only the final stage of the educational process. No testing system, however sophisticated, can ensure quality outcomes if the preceding stages of education suffer from inadequate public investment, shortages of qualified teachers, weak institutional capacity, and deficiencies in teaching-learning processes. Improving the integrity of examinations is therefore necessary but not sufficient. Meaningful reform requires strengthening the entire educational ecosystem, from school education to higher education admissions.

The new committee thus has a far more challenging responsibility than merely reforming examination procedures. It must reimagine the architecture of assessment in India in a manner that is credible, equitable, academically sound, and aligned with the broader goals of educational quality and democratic decentralization.

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the evolution of economic thought at Cambridge through influential scholars such as John Maynard Keynes and Joan Robinson. The book also discusses the impact of Keynesian economics, Marxist ideas on capital accumulation and fiscal policy, and the influence of Soviet-style economic planning on newly independent South Asian states.

One of the book's greatest strengths is its discussion of MahbubulHaq's pioneering work in developing the Human Development Index, which challenged the dominance of GDP as the sole measure of development. Engerman also provides an engaging account of Manmohan Singh's role in India's economic liberalization and his remarkable journey from academic economist to Prime Minister.

The author effectively explains the contrasting economic philosophies of P.C. Mahalanobis and JagdishBhagwati while also highlighting the contributions of K.N. Raj and Amartya Sen. Sen's critique of conventional measures of development and his emphasis on human welfare receive thoughtful treatment. The book carefully traces India's transition from a socialist planned economy before the 1980s to a more market-oriented

economy in the decades that followed.

Engerman also examines LalJayawardena's influence on Sri Lanka's economic institutions and RehmanSobhan's contribution to Bangladesh's emergence from East Pakistan into an independent nation. The differences in perspective between MahbubulHaq and RehmanSobhan enrich the discussion of development strategies in South Asia.

Throughout the book, Engerman combines rigorous scholarship with an engaging narrative style. His analysis of political and economic developments in India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka is both perceptive and, at times, delightfully witty. The writing is deeply researched, intellectually stimulating, and remarkably accessible.

Apostles of Development is a valuable contribution to the literature on development economics and South Asian political economy. It will be of particular interest to scholars, students, policymakers, and readers seeking to understand the evolution of development thinking and the intellectual foundations of economic policy in the Global South.

- GD Sharma

AGENTIC AI IN EDUCATION

By Rahul Agarwal

What is Agentic AI?

Agentic AI represents a fundamental paradigm shift in artificial intelligence—moving from passive models that generate content upon request to autonomous systems that pursue complex, goal-oriented outcomes with minimal human supervision.

Generative AI acts like a content engine. It operates on a single prompt-and-response model, generating text, images, or code based on user inputs. It is like a single musical instrument that produces a sound (content) only when a musician hits a key (prompt).

An AI Agent is single task executor. It is a modular, single-purpose software routine built to handle a specific, bounded action when triggered (e.g., an automated email responder or a standalone quiz grader). It is like an individual musician who knows how to play their specific sheet music impeccably whenever given the cue.

Agentic AI on the other hand acts like an Orchestrator. With a network of AI agents it owns end-to-end outcomes. It dynamically plans workflows, invokes external APIs, manages short and long term memory, detects its own errors, and adjusts strategy mid-course to reach an overarching objective. It is like the orchestra conductor who does not play every instrument directly. Instead, they interpret the score (the goal), pace the performance, instruct individual musicians (specialized agents) when to enter, listen to the overall sound, and adjust the tempo or volume in real-time to create a harmonious symphony.

Applying these concepts to education highlights how agentic AI systems transform academic functions of student remediation and guidance.

When a student inputs: "Explain calculus integration", the generative AI model provides a textual explanation. A grading AI agent can check a completed quiz, score the integration questions, and display an answer key. An Agentic AI system detects that a student scored 40% on integration. It analyses past test history, identifies conceptual gaps in algebraic substitution, builds a 2-week personalized recovery study schedule, issues daily practice problems via SMS, tracks accuracy, and alters lesson difficulty based on performance.

Another example of how Agentic AI can help is in course design.

An Agentic AI system acting like an autonomous course manager receives the directive:

"Develop an accredited 12-week module." It directs a research agent to scrape market skill gaps, orchestrates a content agent to write slides and practice sets, routes materials to an accreditation agent to check syllabus compliance, and builds the entire package directly within the institution's Learning Management System (LMS).

Implementation in Learning Tools

Commercial EdTech platforms are actively incorporating agentic capabilities directly into consumer and institutional platforms.

Khanmigo (Khan Academy) acts as an autonomous Socratic tutor and instructional co-pilot. Rather than providing immediate answers to homework questions, the agent evaluates student input, identifies underlying misconceptions, and formulates guided, step-by-step questioning strategies to lead the learner toward self-discovery. For teachers, it scans class-wide assignment performance, suggests tailored lesson plans, and drafts individualized progress reports autonomously.

Duolingo is an advanced adaptive learning platform. Its core system personalizes learning through performance analysis, progression and adaptive practice. Through Video Call feature, Duolingo leverages agentic AI to simulate open-ended conversational environments. The AI character (such as Lily) initiates dynamic conversations, remembers user details across sessions, adapts syntax complexity in real time based on user proficiency, and delivers targeted feedback on grammar errors after the call.

Real World Applications in Education Systems

Agentic AI shifts educational technology from a passive repository of content to an active operational backbone. Key real-world applications include:

- o Proactive Early-Intervention: Continuous background monitoring of student engagement metrics across multiple systems (LMS logins, assignment submissions, digital library activity) to flag retention risks and trigger early counseling workflows before a student fails.
- o 24/7 Autonomous Teaching Assistants: Systems that manage course discussion boards, answer routine syllabus and logistical queries, guide students through complex homework step-by-step, and aggregate common error trends for professors.
- o Administrative and Lifecycle Automation: Autonomous routing of complex, multi-departmental workflows including credit transfers, financial aid document verification, and international student onboarding.

Implementation and Acceptance at Institutional Level

At the institutional level, adoption is moving at varying speeds based on operational risk and systemic necessity. The implementation and acceptance profile of institutes can be divided into three operational zones:

Zone 1: Operations & Student Lifecycle (High Implementation / High Acceptance)

There is high adoption and enthusiasm in this area. Agents

handle cross-departmental administrative workflows, admissions processing, and retention alerts. The ROI is immediate, measurable, and presents low pedagogical risk.

Some of the institutes are using education-native agent platforms which are designed specifically around the education sector. Examples include DRUID AI which has higher education agents for enrollment, admissions, academic planning, advising, student support and retention. Another example is Element 451 which is student lifecycle and higher education CRM.

Some of the pioneers in this field are Georgia Southern University, Illinois Institute of Technology and University of Lynchburg.

In India, Manipal Academy of Higher Education has announced Student Lifecycle Management platform with AI-powered agents, covering admissions, enrollment, academic progress, alumni engagement, and administrative workflows.

Zone 2: Instruction & Learning Support (Moderate Implementation / Mixed Acceptance)

There is growing adoption with caution in this area. Agentic systems serve as formative tutors, lab assistants, and instructional drafting tools. Faculty accept these tools as optional support systems, though adoption varies widely between technical and non-technical disciplines.

University of Pennsylvania (Penn GSE) has tested specialized teaching-assistant agents like JeepyTA to analyze student submission patterns, draft contextual feedback, and highlight class-wide knowledge gaps for professors.

University of Michigan also uses AI in instruction and learning support. It has developed Maizey and MiMaizey that are custom tools for AI-based teaching assistance, faculty training, and student support designed for self-directed learning.

Zone 3: High-Stakes Evaluation & Academic Integrity (Low Implementation / High Resistance)

This area is strictly controlled or prohibited. Full agentic autonomy in assigning final course grades, issuing academic discipline, or verifying degree completion faces heavy pushback due to ethical, legal, and accreditation risks.

Major research institutions globally (e.g., Harvard, Oxford, UT Austin) enforce strict Human-in-the-loop (HITL) mandates. While AI can evaluate preliminary coursework, autonomous systems are explicitly barred from issuing final official grades or granting degrees without human oversight.

Barriers and Challenges

Despite rapid progress, scaling agentic AI across education faces significant hurdles:

1. **Systems Integration & Technical Debt:** Legacy Student Information Systems (SIS) and Learning Management Systems often lack modern API access, requiring extensive engineering to allow agents to execute actions safely.
2. **Data Privacy & Governance:** Agents require broad read-and-write permissions across sensitive financial, academic, and personal data, raising serious concerns regarding compliance with privacy regulations.
3. **The "Governance Gap":** University policy development moves slower than technological innovation, leaving educators without clear guidelines on acceptable agent use.
4. **Cognitive Over-reliance:** Educators worry that over-deploying autonomous systems might encourage "cognitive offloading," where students rely on agents for critical thinking rather than mastering core competencies themselves.

Addressing these barriers requires institutions to build robust human-in-the-loop oversight frameworks. The theme should not be to consider agentic AI as replacement for human judgment, but as an empowering orchestrator of learning.

SUMMARY

AI in Education is shifting from passive content generation to goal-driven execution, evolving from basic Generative AI to fully coordinated Multi-Agent Educational Ecosystems.

Under human governance, these systems unify specialized agents (e.g., Tutors, Assessment, and Analytics) through an orchestration layer. The core transformation moves AI from answering questions to taking action.

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History of South Asian Political Economy, Apostles of Development: Six Economists and the World They Made, By David C. Engerman, Penguin Random House, 2025

David C. Engerman's *Apostles of Development: Six Economists and the World They Made* is an insightful account of six influential South Asian economists whose ideas shaped the discourse on development, poverty, and inequality in the Global South.

The book opens with a striking observation on the enduring legacy of colonialism. Engerman notes that economic inequality between the colonizer and the colonized reflected the true cost of empire: "Per capita income in Britain in 1947 was eleven times greater than in British India-up from a ratio of 2.5 at the beginning of British rule." While political independence secured former colonies representation in the United Nations General Assembly, real economic power remained concentrated in the hands of the industrialized North. Britain and other major powers retained veto authority in the UN Security Council, while institutions such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) continued to be dominated by wealthy North Atlantic countries. This unequal international order forms the backdrop of the book.

Against this historical setting, Engerman presents six Cambridge-trained economists who sought to redefine development for the Global South: Amartya Sen, Jagdish Bhagwati, and Manmohan Singh from India; Mahbubul Haq from Pakistan; Lal Jayawardena from Sri Lanka; and Rehman Sobhan from Bangladesh. Each contributed to development economics in distinctive ways. Amartya Sen transformed welfare economics by emphasizing human capabilities and well-being, while Jagdish Bhagwati became a leading advocate of international trade and export-led growth. Manmohan Singh helped steer India's economic liberalization, Mahbubul Haq pioneered the Human Development Index (HDI), Lal Jayawardena influenced Sri Lanka's development institutions, and Rehman Sobhan played a significant role in Bangladesh's economic and political evolution.

The title of the book is thoughtfully explained. Engerman notes that the Cambridge Conversazione Society, founded in the nineteenth century, was popularly known as "The Apostles," and two of the six economists belonged to this tradition. More importantly, he argues that the term aptly describes all six because they became "apostles of development," spreading ideas that profoundly influenced development policy across South Asia and beyond.

The author examines the personal, social, and intellectual backgrounds of these economists and observes that, individually and collectively, they left a

lasting imprint on development theory and practice-not only in their own countries but across the Global South and the wider world.

The book is organized into five parts, along with an introduction and an epilogue.

Part I, "Economists as Young Men" (1930s-1950s), traces their intellectual formation at Cambridge. Engerman explores the influence of Keynesian economics, debates surrounding economic planning, and the academic environment that shaped the thinking of these future development economists.

Part II, "Growth and Its Discontents" (1960s-1970s), examines changing ideas about economic growth and development. It discusses the costs of rapid growth, the pursuit of equity, socialist planning, and competing approaches to development in South Asia.

Part III, "The Battle to Democratize the International Economy" (1970s-1980s), focuses on debates surrounding the World Bank, the IMF, and the demand for a New International Economic Order. Engerman shows how the six economists sought to reform these institutions so that they would better address the financial and developmental needs of poorer countries. The section also critically examines the structural adjustment policies promoted by the IMF and the World Bank and their economic and social consequences.

Part IV, "The Rightward Turn" (1980s), discusses the global shift toward market-oriented reforms. Engerman's account of India's gradual and often understated economic reforms-described as "reform by stealth"-is particularly engaging. The section also explores the emergence of the human development approach as an alternative to purely growth-oriented models.

Part V examines the era of liberalization and globalization. It discusses India's economic reforms, the transition from liberalization to globalization, questions of governance, and the continuing search for inclusive growth.

The epilogue offers a balanced assessment of global development initiatives. Engerman observes that although the United Nations succeeded in making development a global concern, it often produced "more declarations than dollars." He reviews the Millennium Development Goals (2000), which sought to halve extreme poverty and promote productive employment by 2015, and the Sustainable Development Goals (2015), which ambitiously called for ending extreme poverty by 2030. While acknowledging their significance, he questions the gap between global aspirations and practical implementation.

More than a collective biography, this book is a history of development economics, political economy, and policymaking in South Asia. It examines the interaction between academic ideas and public policy while tracing

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Online Course on Critical Thinking - Foundations, Skills & Applications for – Students & Professionals

Course Code: 02, Credit Hours: 4 Credits, Course Duration: 1 Semester

Learning Outcomes:

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

- Recognize the key components of critical thinking and logical reasoning.
- Analyse and evaluate arguments for validity, soundness, and clarity.
- Identify common logical fallacies and cognitive biases.
- Construct well-reasoned arguments and communicate them effectively.
- Apply critical thinking skills to solve problems and make decisions in real-world situations.

Course Overview:

This course aims to develop students' critical thinking skills by encouraging logical reasoning, effective argumentation, and problem-solving. Students will learn to identify fallacies, construct sound arguments, evaluate evidence, and make well-informed decisions in academic, professional, and personal contexts.

Course Modules

Module 1: Introduction to Critical Thinking

- Unit 1: Definition and importance of critical thinking
- Unit 2: Critical thinking vs. ordinary thinking
- Unit 3: Characteristics of a critical thinker.

Module 2: Basics of Logic and Reasoning

- Unit 1: Arguments: Premises, conclusions, and structure
- Unit 2: Deductive vs. inductive reasoning
- Unit 3: Evaluating validity and soundness of arguments

Module 3: Identifying and Avoiding Fallacies

- Unit 1: Common logical fallacies: Unit 1.1: Ad hominem
- Unit 1.2: Straw man argument
- Unit 1.3: False dichotomy
- Unit 1.4: Slippery slope Unit 1.5: Hasty generalization
- Unit 2: How to detect and address fallacies in arguments

Module 4: Cognitive Biases and Critical Thinking

- Unit 1: Understanding cognitive biases: Confirmation bias, anchoring, etc.
- Unit 2: The role of perception, memory, & heuristics in reasoning
- Unit 3: Techniques to mitigate biases in decision-making

Module 5: Critical Reading and Media Analysis

- Unit 1: Evaluating credibility and reliability of sources
- Unit 2: Analysing media, news, and online content for bias and manipulation
- Unit 3: Recognizing fake news and misinformation

Module 6: Argument Construction and Effective Communication

- Unit 1: Structuring arguments: Claims, evidence, and reasoning
- Unit 2: Writing and presenting arguments clearly and persuasively
- Unit 3: Debates and discussions: Techniques for effective argumentation

Module 7: Problem-Solving and Decision-Making

- Unit 1: Strategies for solving complex problems critically
- Unit 2: Decision-making frameworks
- Unit 3: Ethical reasoning and moral decision-making

Module 8: Applications of Critical Thinking

- Unit 1: Applying critical thinking in academics and research
- Unit 2: Critical thinking in professional and workplace settings
- Unit 3: Case studies: Real-world problems requiring critical thinking

Teaching Methods Online: (i) Contents on LMS (ii) Interactive sessions (iii) Group activities, debates, and role-plays (iv) Case studies and analysis (v) Assignments and presentations

Online Assessment Methods: (i) Reading of Modules: 10% (ii) Quizzes/Tests: 20% (iii) Assignments and Essays: 25% (iv) Group Debate/Presentation: 15% (v) Final Exam: 30%

IMPORTANT NOTE -

Course will be offered in collaboration with the institutions. Also, students can directly enroll for the Courses. Certificate will be provided jointly by SEED-CHEST and Collaborating Institute(s).

CONTACT DETAILS:-

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SOCIETY FOR EDUCATION AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

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Online Course on Communication Skills



A 4 Credit Course
8 MODULES COURSE WITH SUB-MODULE UNITS
DURATION: 60 HRS. 6-8 WEEKS

Average Per week self-study 8 Hrs.

and contact /test on Virtual mode 2 Hrs.

Course on Canvas Platform

Virtual Meet on Google Meet platform

Course Over View

This course helps participants develop effective communication strategies for various contexts, improving verbal, non-verbal, written communication, and skills for conflict Resolution, Negotiation techniques, collaboration and effective Teamwork.

Course Objectives

- Develop clear and concise verbal communication.
- Enhance active listening skills.
- Master non-verbal communication techniques (e.g., body language, tone).
- Improve writing skills for reports, emails, and formal documents.
- Overcome barriers to effective communication.
- Build confidence for public speaking and presentations.
- Build skills for Conflict Resolution and Negotiation
- Cultivate interpersonal skills for teamwork and leadership.



Course Modules

Module1: Introduction to Communication

- Understanding the basics of communication.
- Components: Sender, message, receiver, and feedback.
- Barriers to communication and how to overcome them.

Module2: Verbal Communication

- Speaking with clarity and confidence.
- Vocabulary building.
- Formal vs. informal communication.
- Handling difficult conversations.

Module3: Non-Verbal Communication

- Role of body language and facial expressions.
- Reading non-verbal cues.
- Using gestures effectively.

Module4: Listening Skills

- Active listening techniques.
- Empathetic listening.
- Improving concentration and retention.

Module5: Written Communication

- Email and business letter etiquette.
- Writing reports, proposals, and resumes.
- Editing and proofreading skills.

Module6: Public Speaking & Presentations

- Overcoming stage fright.
- Structuring effective presentations.
- Engaging your audience.

Module7: Conflict Resolution & Negotiation

- Dealing with conflicts constructively.
- Persuasion and negotiation techniques.

Module8: Communication in Teams

- Building rapport with colleagues.
- Collaboration and effective teamwork.

IMPORTANT NOTE -

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