NITI Aayog

Expanding Quality Higher Education through States and State Public Universities

Policy Brief

Research and Analysis Team

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About the Photographs

Photographs of architecturally diverse State Public Universities have been displayed on the following page.

College of Engineering Guindy

Cochin University of Science and Technology
കൊച്ചി ശാസ്ത്ര സാങ്കേതിക സർവ്വകലാശാല
Administrative Office

Asutosh Building

Ch. Ranbir Singh Auditorium
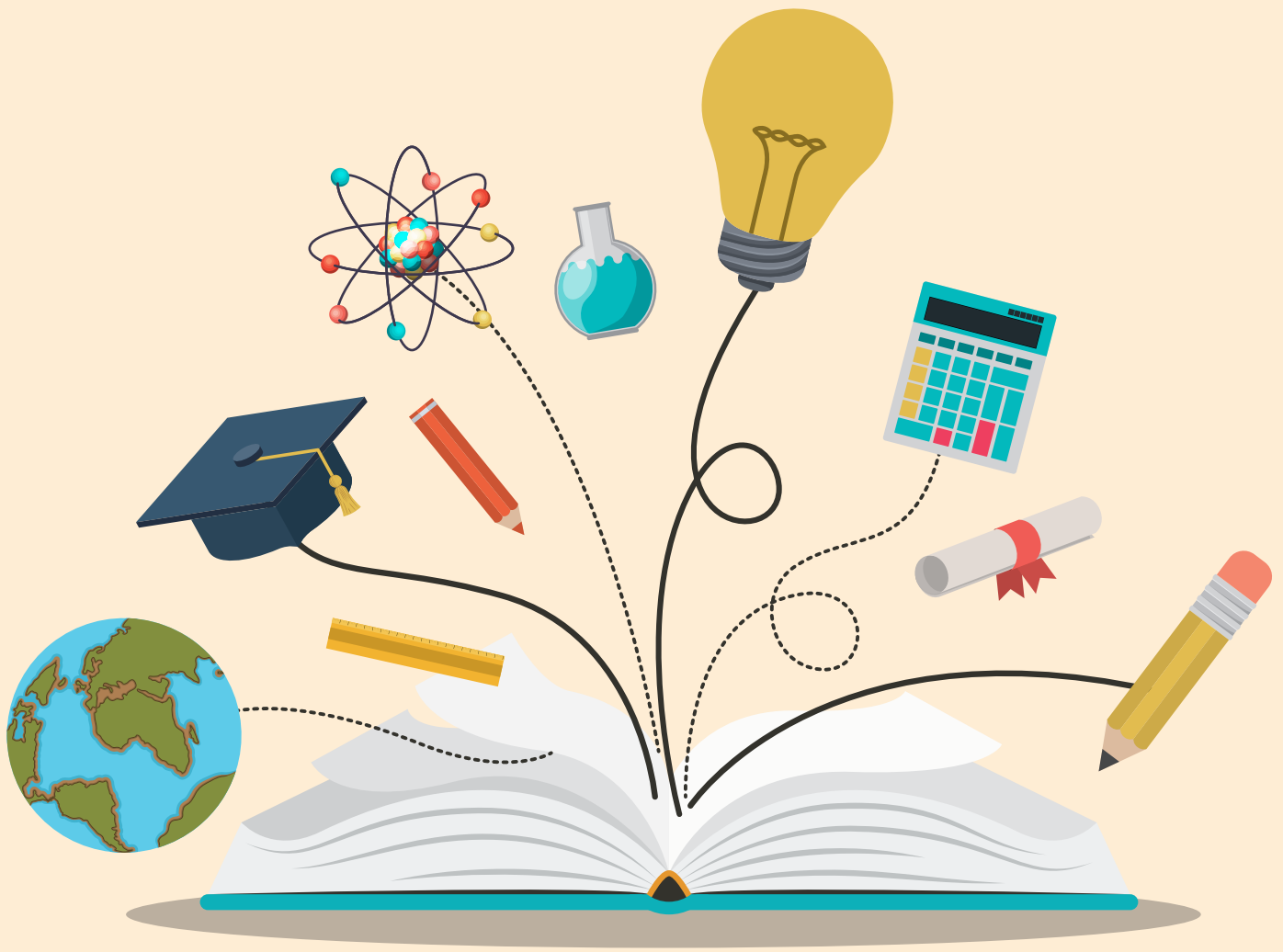
INTRODUCTION

Quality and holistic education serves as the bedrock for the socio-economic development and growth of every nation. For India to unlock its full potential and become the global hub of talent and innovation, our higher education and research ecosystem must adapt to the demands of an evolving world and be brought centrestage in the development dialogue of the nation. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 offers a blueprint for transforming Indian higher education to become the key driver of progress and prosperity and achieve the vision of a Viskit Bharat by 2047.

Central Universities and Institutes of National Importance are the flagship institutions of higher education in India that excel in frontier areas of knowledge on national and international platforms. However, it is important to note that it is the 495 State Public Universities and their over 46,000 affiliated institutions that account for 81% of the total student enrolment and hence play a vital role in ensuring access to higher education across the length and breadth of India. Technically, Universities established or incorporated by a Provincial Act or by a State Act, and funded by the State Government are called State Public Universities (SPUs). Hence, they come under the predominant responsibility of State Governments. However, given their phenomenal reach and hence their vital role in grooming talent across the country, their transformation is a collective national responsibility.

Over the last 75 years, the nationwide growth and expansion of SPUs has been primarily driven to increase access to affordable higher education, particularly in remote and underserved regions. This has been essential in meeting the rising demand for higher education and addressing regional imbalances in educational access. Hence, SPUs serve as regional hubs for higher education, reaching nearly 3.25 crore students. While this expansion has undoubtedly improved access to higher education, it also presents challenges in striking a balance between access and quality.

Going forward, the role of SPUs will increase even further. By 2035, the NEP 2020 target is to double enrolment in our higher education institutions from 4.33 crores to nearly 9 crore students. Nearly 7 crore of these students will continue to study in SPUs. Hence, it is of utmost importance that SPUs transition from focusing only on access to higher education to delivering world-class higher education to achieve the primacies of the NEP 2020 and create the high quality human resource required to power the vision of becoming a Viksit Bharat by 2047. To facilitate this transition, there is an urgent need to power certain policy, regulatory and fiscal levers that directly or indirectly affect SPUs.

The purpose of the report on 'Expanding Quality Higher Education through States and State Public Universities' is to provide an overview of the higher education sector in India, highlight the challenges faced by SPUs, and recommend pragmatic interventions along with an implementation roadmap to address them. Extensive stakeholder consultations with Central and State Government officers, vice chancellors and senior academicians of leading SPUs, and heads of State Higher Education Councils have been undertaken to understand these challenges and explore policy solutions and strategic interventions that can address them. The recommendations assimilated from the consultation process are aimed at improving the quality of research, pedagogy and curriculum, augmenting institutional and systemic funding and financing capacity, upgrading and empowering institutional governance structures, and strengthening industry-academia interface to boost employability. This policy brief captures the recommendations that could be implemented by Central and State Governments, SPUs and various other stakeholders in the aforementioned areas in the short, medium and long-term time horizons[1].

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[1] Throughout the policy brief, SPUs have been frequently referred to as Leading SPUs and Aspirational SPUs. Leading SPUs are those which feature in the top 50 ranked SPUs in the NIRF Rankings 2024. Aspirational SPUs are those which do not feature in the top 50 ranked SPUs in NIRF Rankings 2024. Also, all recommendations with respect to SPUs may be appropriately applied to the affiliated colleges.
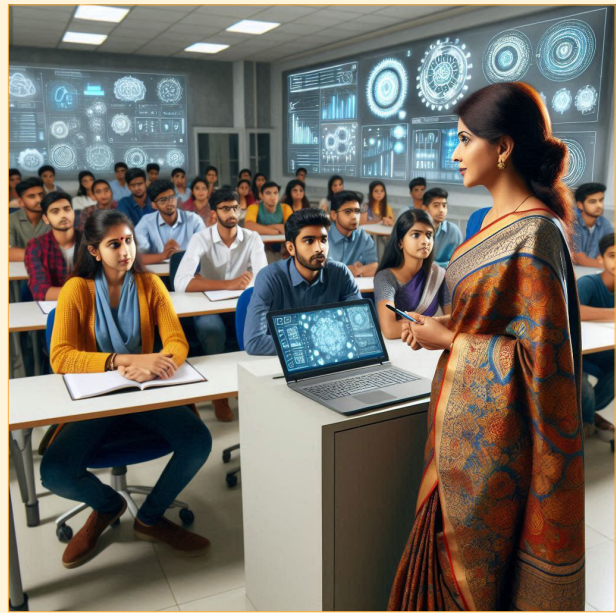
RECOMMENDATIONS: SHORT-TERM, MEDIUM-TERM, AND LONG-TERM

1. QUALITY

A. Improving Quality of Research

Short-Term (0-2 Years)

1. Policy & Framework Development

- Develop a draft National Research Policy framework in alignment with the Anusandhan National Research Foundation (ANRF) outlining funding, collaboration, and performance metrics.

- Identify and establish Research Hubs in cluster of SPUs, based on core competencies of identified universities.

- Setup/establish an industry/government/community outreach/engagement centre in every SPU.

- Establish Research Support Offices in SPUs.

- Training and capacity building programmes to be conducted for faculty members to effectively utilise the services of Research Support Offices.

- SPUs to chart out an action plan in the Institutional Development Plan to offer and implement performance-based incentives to the faculty for research.

- Create curated list of high-quality journals in STEM and non-STEM areas. (UGC CARE list to be regularly updated).

- Develop and offer scholarships and fellowships for students and teachers from SPUs with research potential.

- Consolidated information on available scholarships/fellowships from Central Government (available on NSP Portal), State Governments, international institutions, other councils and agencies, and those given by individual universities to be provided on a single platform.

- Implement student-faculty research pairing programmes in SPUs.

- Establish researcher mentorship programmes in SPUs.

- Establish Patent Cells in all SPUs to create awareness and for handholding.

- Implement 'single-window' clearances for research and testing facilities for SPUs.

- Designate Leading SPUs with an established track record in research and policy/project evaluation as Research and Knowledge Partners for projects of the Central and State Governments.

2. Resource Allocation

- Allocate earmarked grants for R&D activities in STEM and non-STEM areas in SPUs and higher education development in the state budgets and through the Anusandhan National Research Foundation (ANRF).

- Enhance funding for post-doctoral fellowships, especially for women in SPUs.

- Increase INFLIBNET and ONOS support for free access to research resources in all SPUs.
- Grant exemptions for taxes on R&D equipment for SPUs.

3. Infrastructure & Capacity Building

- Implement flexible administrative policies to prioritize research and reduce the administrative workload of teachers.
- Allocate resources to SPUs for upgrading research facilities.
- Provide dedicated funding to hire technical support staff for research laboratories in Leading SPUs for efficient utilisation and maintenance of research infrastructure.
- Grant allocation for the maintenance of research equipment.
- Provide handholding to Aspirational SPUs to apply and benefit from ANRF and other research grants.

Medium-Term (2-5 Years)

1. Policy Implementation & Monitoring

- Finalize and implement the National Research Policy.
- Establish mechanisms to monitor and evaluate the policy's impact.

2. Collaboration & Partnerships

- Facilitate collaborative research partnerships with other universities, research institutions, industries, and government bodies through organisations like AIU, CII and FICCI.
- Promote SPU consortia and networking by creating a platform to share best practices, solutions to problems, innovations, resource mobilization mechanisms and sharing of resources.

3. Sustainability & Growth

- Establish R&D Advisory Committees for clusters of SPUs.
- Setup incubators to provide comprehensive support for research commercialization and start-ups in all Leading SPUs.
- Strengthen support for humanities research through infrastructure and collaborations of SPUs with research organisations.

Long-Term (5+ Years)

1. Research Culture & Excellence

- Create Centres of Excellence in cluster of SPUs to address local challenges.
- Enhance research funding for fundamental research and attract diverse students from India and abroad.

B. Improving Quality of Pedagogy and Curriculum

Short-Term (0-2 Years)

1. Teaching Quality Measurement

- Develop a framework with clear parameters to evaluate teaching effectiveness. This may

include student feedback, peer evaluations, classroom observations, and course completion rates.

- Implement the framework to measure the quality of teaching on a semester basis in SPUs.
- Utilize evaluation results to provide constructive feedback to faculty for continuous improvement. Consider using the evaluation system for performance-based incentives or recognition programmes for outstanding teachers.

2. **Curriculum Review & Alignment**
   - Establish curriculum review committees within each SPU to review and update existing curricula across various disciplines on a regular basis.
   - Partner with industry experts to identify current job market needs and emerging skills requirements.
   - Update curricula to reflect industry standards and integrate emerging fields of study.

3. **Multidisciplinary Education and Academic Flexibility**
   - Offer electives and minor programmes that complement students' major fields of study.
   - Align with Academic Bank of Credits and multiple entry-multiple exit system.

4. **Student Support Services**
   - Enhance support services for students facing academic challenges, such as tutoring, counselling, and academic advisory services to guide students in course selection and academic planning to ensure their success and retention.
   - Develop and implement mental health and wellness programmes for students and research scholars.

5. **Holistic Education**
   - Integrate thematic focus areas of Holistic Education (including Environment, Human Values and Global Citizenship Education) from the UGC National Higher Education Qualifications Framework (NHEQF) into the curricula and co-curricular activities of SPUs.
   - Establish partnerships between SPUs and community organisations to promote community engagement and service.
   - Integrate sustainability concepts and themes across core and elective courses.
   - Develop specialized courses or programmes in sustainability-related fields.
   - Partner with NGOs or organisations working on SDGs to offer internship opportunities for students.
   - Organize workshops and seminars to raise awareness about the SDGs among students and faculty of SPUs.

Medium-Term (2-5 Years)

1. **Teaching Quality Measurement**
   - Analyse the results of the semester-based teaching quality evaluations across all SPUs and refine the framework, if necessary.

2. **Curriculum Innovation & Flexibility**

    •   Introduce new courses related to identified emerging and sunrise sectors.

3. **Holistic Education**

    •   Introduce interdisciplinary courses focused on environmental sustainability, universal human values, and multicultural competence.

    •   Establish dedicated units or cells within all SPUs to facilitate and monitor the implementation of holistic education initiatives.

    •   Develop SPU-level strategies to integrate UNSDGs with the teaching-learning and research ecosystems.

Long-Term (5+ Years)

1. **Continuous Improvement & Innovation**

    •   Regularly review and refine the teaching quality measurement system based on new developments in higher education.

    •   Encourage faculty participation in research and professional development opportunities to stay updated in their fields.

    •   Foster a culture of innovation in curriculum design by encouraging faculty to develop new courses and teaching methods.

2. **Multidisciplinary Education and Research Universities (MERUs)**

    •   Create a worldclass framework for establishment of MERUs.

    •   Handhold and finance Leading SPUs to transition to MERUs.

3. **Holistic Education**

    •   Institutionalize holistic education as a core philosophy of all SPUs through policy frameworks.

    •   Ensure all HEIs adopt measurable indicators of holistic education to monitor planetary, societal, local community, and individual contributions.

    •   Facilitate global collaborations to share innovations and best practices in holistic education.

C. Digitalization of Higher Education

Short-Term (0-2 Years)

1. **Infrastructure Assessment & Upgradation**

    •   Conduct a thorough assessment of existing IT infrastructure in SPUs and identify universities with the most significant infrastructure gaps for initial upgrades.

    •   Invest in high-speed internet connectivity across campuses to support digital learning initiatives.

    •   Upgrade classrooms and labs with technology conducive to online and blended learning. This may include interactive whiteboards, projectors, and video conferencing equipment.

    •   Establish dedicated digital learning centres or computer labs equipped with necessary software and hardware.

- Integrate credits and curricula to utilise existing online and digital platforms of the Ministry of Education, Government of India.
- Adopt digital platforms for student lifecycle management which includes admissions, registration, fee payment, academic records, examinations, pedagogy and courses. AI may be effectively integrated in the processes.

Medium-Term (2-5 Years)

1. Digital Infrastructure & Capability Building

- Continue upgrading of IT infrastructure across all SPUs based on the initial assessment.
- Provide technical support staff for maintaining and troubleshooting technology issues within SPUs.
- Bridge the digital divide by providing affordable access to laptops, tablets, or other necessary devices for students from underprivileged backgrounds.
- Train faculty, staff, and students on using new platforms.

Long-Term (5+ Years)

1. Collaboration and Capacity Building

- Foster collaboration between SPUs, technology companies, and educational technology experts to develop innovative digital learning solutions.
- Offer training and support programmes to enhance digital literacy among students and faculty.

D. Internationalization of Higher Education

Short-Term (0-2 Years)

1. Infrastructure Improvement and International Student Recruitment

- Identify and prioritize Leading SPUs with existing infrastructure suitable for international students.
- Allocate resources for necessary upgrades to classrooms, laboratories, and student accommodation facilities.
- Enhance campus Wi-Fi connectivity and provide access to international academic databases.
- Develop an international marketing strategy to promote Leading SPUs abroad.
- Enable Leading SPUs to participate in international education fairs and conferences.
- Establish dedicated International Student Support Offices to guide overseas students through the application process and address their needs on campus.
- Offer scholarship programmes for deserving international students pursuing courses in Leading SPUs.

2. Faculty Development & Internationalization

- Develop training programmes on internationalization for faculty members of Leading SPUs to provide them international exposure and to enhance their teaching methodologies

and research capabilities, covering topics like cross-cultural communication, global perspectives in teaching, and international student support.

- Organize webinars and workshops for the staff of International Students Support Offices on various aspects related to internationalization and collaborations.
- Implement faculty exchange programmes for Leading SPUs with select foreign universities for short-term visits.
- Identify and support faculty participation for research presentations in international conferences and research collaborations.

3. **Curriculum Review & Standardization**
   - Conduct a review of existing model curricula to identify areas needing adjustments to align with international standards.
   - Partner with international language organizations to offer English and other foreign language proficiency programmes for students.
   - Encourage foreign language learning by offering additional language courses and exchange programmes.

4. **Talent Attraction from Abroad**
   - Conduct outreach programmes to identify Indian scientists, professors, and researchers working abroad.
   - Develop fellowship programmes and faculty development opportunities tailored to attract them back to Leading SPUs on sabbaticals.

5. **Institutional Collaboration & Mobility**
   - Identify foreign universities for long-term partnerships for joint research projects, faculty exchange programmes, and student exchange programmes.

6. **Institutional Capacity Building**
   - Include Leading SPUs alongside national institutes in existing funding schemes for capacity building initiatives.

Medium-Term (2-5 Years)

1. **Institutional Collaboration & Mobility**
   - Establish long-term partnerships of Leading SPUs with identified foreign universities.
   - Develop mechanisms for smooth student mobility between Leading SPUs and partner universities abroad.

Long-Term (5+ Years)

1. **Global Recognition & Reputation**
   - Encourage and handhold Leading SPUs to participate in international university rankings to improve their global visibility.
   - Continue international collaborations and faculty development programmes to establish a strong reputation for research and education excellence.

II. FUNDING AND FINANCING

A. Government Funding

Short-Term (0-2 Years)

1. Larger and Timely Funding

- Increase Central and State government's allocation towards education, aiming to reach the NEP-recommended 6% of GDP.

- Analyse funding gaps of existing SPUs and allocate increased grants to address immediate needs and operational expenses.

- Ensure timely release of allocated funds and disbursal of student and researcher fellowships and scholarships for smooth financial functioning.

- Prioritize allocating resources to strengthen existing SPUs.

2. Dedicated Infrastructure Finance Agency

- Establish a dedicated infrastructure finance agency specifically for SPUs. This agency should focus on providing loans and grants for infrastructure development, state-of-the-art research facilities and student, scholar, and faculty accommodation.

3. Funding and Financing Models

- Conduct a comprehensive review of existing funding and financing models for SPUs.

- Develop a new funding model based on a combination of factors like student enrolment, faculty strength, and research output.

4. Evaluation of RUSA (PM-USHA) Guidelines

- Conduct audits and evaluations of existing RUSA (PM-USHA) projects in SPUs. Identify areas where RUSA funds were effectively utilized and where improvements are needed.

- Based on the evaluation results, recommend adjustments to PM-USHA guidelines and resource allocation strategies.

Medium-Term (2-5 Years)

1. Resources to Newly Established SPUs

- Provide dedicated funding for newly established SPUs during their initial years of operation.

B. Diversification of Revenue Sources

Short-Term (0-2 Years)

1. Self-Financed Programmes

- Conduct market research to identify areas of high demand for specialized courses.

- Develop and launch self-financed programmes in these areas, catering to industry needs and professional skill development. Ensure high-quality standards for self-financed programmes to maintain student enrolment and reputation.

2. Consultancy Services

- Establish dedicated consultancy units within Leading SPUs to connect faculty expertise with industry and government needs.

- Develop a database of faculty expertise and research capabilities across various disciplines.

- Proactively market consultancy services to potential clients through industry outreach programmes.

3. Alumni Engagement

- Conduct outreach programmes to reconnect with alumni and build a strong alumni network.

- Establish online alumni portals for communication, career mentoring, and fundraising opportunities.

- Explore creating alumni chapters and associations in every major country/region to foster connection and encourage financial contributions.

4. Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Funds

- Partner with industry bodies and encourage mobilization of CSR funds towards R&D infrastructure in SPUs.

- Develop clear proposals outlining research/infrastructure project's objectives, potential impact, and how it aligns with the CSR priorities of the target companies.

- Establish dedicated teams within SPUs to manage and report on CSR-funded projects.

5. Public-Private Partnerships (PPP)

- Explore innovative PPP models for infrastructure development, research collaboration, and skill development programmes.

- Develop clear legal frameworks and transparent partnership structures to ensure accountability and mutual benefit.

Medium-Term (2-5 Years)

1. Sustainable Self-Financed Programmes

- Analyse the performance and profitability of self-financed programmes.

- Continuously update curriculum and course offerings to maintain relevance and attract students for UG, PG and mid-career programmes.

- Explore offering online or blended learning formats for self-financed programmes to reach a wider audience.

C. Fee Autonomy (Pilot Mode Test)

Important Caveats:

- *The decision to grant fee autonomy is complex and requires careful consideration of its potential impact on various stakeholders.*
- *Concerns regarding affordability and potential exclusion of underprivileged students from higher education must be addressed.*
- *Alternative funding mechanisms, such as scholarships and financial aid programmes, should be strengthened alongside any fee autonomy initiatives.*

Short-Term (0-2 Years)

1. Pilot Programme for Fee Flexibility

- Identify a group of Leading SPUs with strong financial management practices to pilot a programme with limited fee autonomy.
- Establish clear guidelines for fee adjustments within the pilot programme, considering factors like inflation, programme costs, and student affordability.
- Monitor the pilot programme closely to assess its impact on university finances, student enrolment, and educational quality.
- Implement a reasonable fee structure with merit-cum-means scholarships.

Medium-Term (2-5 Years)

1. Evaluate Pilot Programme and Expand Fee Autonomy

- Analyse the results of the pilot programme on fee autonomy, considering both financial and educational outcomes.
- Based on the evaluation, determine the effectiveness of fee flexibility in addressing financial challenges and maintaining quality education.
- Refine the fee autonomy framework based on the pilot's learnings, considering potential adjustments to eligibility criteria, fee adjustment limits, or transparency measures. If the pilot programme proves successful, consider expanding fee autonomy to a wider range of SPUs with robust financial management and transparency systems.

D. Taxation and Utility Payments

Short-Term (0-2 Years)

1. Tax Exemption

- Implement policy changes at the State and Central Government levels to grant tax exemptions on revenue from CSR grants and educational and research activities.

2. Review of Utility Rates

- Conduct a comprehensive analysis of current utility bills for SPUs, and identify areas where commercial rates are applied to essential utilities like water and electricity.
- Negotiate with utility providers for special discounted rates or establish separate categories for educational institutions, especially SPUs.

III. GOVERNANCE

A. Improving Governance and Autonomy of State Public Universities

Short-Term (0-2 Years)

1. **Regulatory-Facilitator Model**
   - Enable a shift towards a 'regulatory-facilitator' model for SPUs and enable policy changes at the State Government level to grant SPUs greater autonomy in areas like curriculum development, faculty recruitment, and financial management.
   - Establish clear guidelines and performance indicators to ensure universities exercise autonomy responsibly and transparently.

2. **Ease of Governance Structures**
   - Establish effective Management and Academic Councils with clearly defined roles and responsibilities.
   - Develop and implement integrated management systems to promote transparency and accountability in financial and administrative processes.
   - Model Act in every state for all SPUs to offer ease of governance may be drafted and released.

3. **State Councils for Higher Education (SCHEs)**
   - Empower SCHEs to have greater control over sanctioning posts and allocating funds to SPUs. Facilitate SCHE to take forward the initiatives of UGC in the state.

4. **Inter-Departmental Collaboration**
   - Establish mechanisms for regular communication and collaboration between Technical and Higher Education Departments of the State Government.

5. **State-Level Higher Education Vision**
   - Each state to develop a unique Higher Education Vision and Policy framework through SCHE by consultative process with stakeholders (universities, industry, policymakers). This framework should consider the specific needs and priorities of SPUs within the states. NITI Aayog and the State Institutions for Transformation (SITs) established on the lines of NITI Aayog may be knowledge collaborators in this process.

6. **Representation of Diverse Stakeholders**
   - Increase representation of top quality academicians and alumni in decision-making bodies of university administration in SPUs.
   - Ensure inclusion of academicians from Humanities disciplines besides STEM areas in decision-making processes.

7. **Accreditation**
   - Restructure accreditation fees to make the accreditation process more affordable for Aspirational SPUs and their affiliated colleges.
   - Provide mentoring/handholding support to new and Aspirational SPUs.

8. **De-affiliation Processes and Autonomy**

- Enable regulatory bodies to streamline the affiliation process, reduce delays in course approvals, and establish clear de-affiliation procedures for SPUs and their affiliated colleges.

- Create a roadmap for de-affiliation of high potential affiliated colleges while ensuring adequate and one-time compensation to SPUs for loss of affiliation fees.

- Grant autonomy to SPUs to update and modify syllabi to address local needs, avoiding contradictions with ranking /grading organisations like NAAC/NIRF.

- Grant flexibility to SPUs with respect to admissions, seat transfer, and course approval processes.

Medium-Term (2-5 Years)

1. **Inter-Departmental Collaboration**

- Develop joint initiatives to optimize resource allocation, streamline approvals for new courses and programmes, and ensure alignment between Technical and Higher Education Department of State Governments.

2. **State-Level Higher Education Vision**

- Develop micro-level policy frameworks for individual SPUs based on the overall state-level vision.

3. **Credit Transfer System**

- Streamline credit transfer procedures between SPUs through Academic Bank of Credits, ensuring clarity and consistency in credit evaluation.

4. **Streamline Regulatory Processes**

- Implement roadmap for de-affiliating high potential affiliating colleges and creating autonomous degree granting institutions or cluster universities.

5. **Localize Accreditation**

- Implement localized accreditation and assessment frameworks for SPUs and their affiliated colleges considering local needs, industry requirements, and national priorities while maintaining global relevance.

B. Recruitment and Capacity Building of Faculty and Administrators

Faculty
Short-Term (0-2 Years)

1. **Streamline Recruitment**

- Review and simplify faculty recruitment processes and expedite approval timelines.

- Develop online application portals and e-verification systems to streamline application processing.

- Establish dedicated recruitment committees with clear timelines and a merit-based selection process.

- Finalize recruitment rules to address staff shortages and streamline the hiring process in SPUs.

2. **Centralized Recruitment**
   - Create a centralized recruitment model for faculty positions across SPUs in the state, ensuring merit-based selection and fair opportunities for candidates.

3. **Capacity Building**
   - Develop and offer capacity-building programmes for faculty members focusing on teaching methodologies, curriculum development, and effective use of technology; partner with educational technology companies or online learning platforms to provide training on utilizing digital tools for online teaching.

4. **Alignment of Evaluation & Expectations**
   - Review faculty evaluation criteria to ensure alignment with university goals and expectations.
   - Clearly communicate performance expectations to faculty members and provide them with opportunities for professional development to meet those expectations.

5. **Faculty Workload Management**
   - Analyse and adjust faculty workloads to ensure sufficient time for research and scholarly activities in addition to teaching responsibilities.
   - Develop workload management policies that prioritize a healthy work-life balance for faculty members.

6. **Faculty Resource Optimization**
   - Conduct a comprehensive assessment of faculty expertise and current utilization.
   - Identify underutilized faculty and potential areas for redeployment; restructuring of departments or programmes, if needed, to create suitable roles for redeployed faculty.

Medium-Term (2-5 Years)

1. **Streamlined Recruitment**
   - Prioritize the recruitment of full-time faculty members in SPUs to ensure stability and continuity within the academic workforce.

2. **Centralized Recruitment**
   - Implement a centralized recruitment model for faculty positions across SPUs.

3. **Faculty Resource Optimization**
   - Optimize faculty resources by establishing Equivalence Committees to assess faculty members' transferability across related disciplines (e.g., production engineering to mechanical engineering); and after restructuring and training, redeployment of the faculty members. (This initiative improves resource utilization, faculty engagement, and the overall education quality.)

Administrators
Short-Term (0-2 Years)

1. **Leadership and Governance**
   - Make statutory provisions for creating Dean positions (Academic, College Development Council, Research).
   - Promote Appointments of Registrars, Finance Officers, and Examination Controllers from Teaching fraternity.

2. **Capacity Building Initiatives for Vice-Chancellors and Administrators**
   - Conduct leadership development programmes for Vice-Chancellors and administrators focusing on strategic planning, resource management, and fostering a positive academic environment.
   - Launch training programmes for administrators on topics like communication skills, financial management, student support services, alumni outreach, industry collaboration, and application of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in university processes.

Medium-Term (2-5 Years)

1. **Leadership and Governance:**
   - Revise the composition of Governing Councils to include a majority of top quality academicians, researchers, alumni, and administrators, with minimal or no political appointees.
   - Fill the statutorily created Dean positions.

IV. EMPLOYABILITY

A. Skilling and Employability Enhancement for Students across Streams

Short-Term (0-2 Years)

1. **Curriculum Integration for Internship & Apprenticeship Programmes**
   - Review and revise SPU curricula to integrate employability-focused modules.
   - Develop learning outcomes that emphasize practical skills, problem-solving abilities, and communication skills. Internships or apprenticeships to be made mandatory as part of the curriculum, ensuring proper credit and guidance.
   - Establish dedicated "Internship Banks" within SPUs to connect students with internship opportunities. Leverage internship opportunities promoted by UGC/AICTE platforms. Partner with local industries, businesses, government agencies, and NGOs to create internship placements.
   - Explore collaboration with NSDC Sector Skill Councils to develop apprenticeship programmes that bridge the gap between education and industry needs.

2. **Entrepreneurship & Innovation**
   - Implement schemes or programmes to provide financial and mentoring support to student entrepreneurs.
   - Organize business plan competitions and innovation workshops within SPUs.
   - Attract alumni entrepreneurs to handhold high potential student and faculty entrepreneurs.
   - Encourage industry mentorship for student and faculty-led entrepreneurship ideas with high potential for commercialisation.

3. **Language Training Programmes**
   - Invest in developing and launching language proficiency programmes for students.
   - Establish language labs in SPUs equipped with necessary resources and technology.
   - Integrate language training modules within existing curricula or offer them as elective courses.

4. **Physical Fitness, Student Wellness and Emotional Intelligence**
   - Introduce mandatory physical education and wellness courses as part of the undergraduate curriculum, focusing on fitness, mental well-being, and ethical grounding to enhance Emotional Intelligence.
   - Establish dedicated wellness centres in all SPUs equipped with gym facilities, yoga spaces, and mental health support services.
   - Conduct annual health and fitness assessments for students and faculty, tracking key health indicators such as BMI, endurance, and mental wellness.
   - Promote the importance of physical activity through fitness challenges, and interuniversity sports competitions.

Medium-Term (2-5 Years)

1. Entrepreneurship & Innovation

- Establish incubation centers or co-working spaces to support student-led startups.

2. Physical Education, Sports and Wellness

- Develop and implement a one-year diploma in physical fitness for individuals aspiring to become gym trainers, ensuring a standardized approach to fitness education.
- Establish collaborations between SPUs and sports organisations to provide hands-on training, internships, and mentorship opportunities in fitness and wellness.
- Ensure that every SPU has trained professionals such as fitness and nutrition advisors, physiotherapists, and mental health counselors available for students.

3. Lifelong Learning Centres

- Allocate resources for establishing Lifelong Learning Centres within SPUs.

Long-Term (5+ Years)

1. Physical Education and Wellness - Credits and Accreditation

- Institutionalize physical education as a fundamental component of holistic student development, making participation in structured fitness programmes a credit requirement.
- Establish national accreditation for physical education programmes and fitness trainers to ensure quality standards in fitness education.

B. Academia-Industry Collaboration

Short-Term (0-2 Years)

1. Industry Relations Cell (IRC)

- Establish an IRC within each SPU to act as a central liaison point with industry partners. Staff the IRC with dedicated personnel responsible for identifying industry needs, facilitating collaborations, and managing communication channels.
- Develop a database of potential industry partners, focusing on local companies and industry associations within the state.

2. MoUs and Collaborative Projects

- Utilize existing industry association platforms like CII, FICCI, ASSOCHAM, NASSCOM to connect with industry partners for collaborative opportunities.
- Develop and sign MoUs with industry partners outlining areas for collaboration, such as joint research and consultancy projects or internship programmes.

3. Professor of Practice Initiatives

- Encourage appointment of Professors of Practice in all relevant programmes.

4. Skill Certifications and Industry Training

- Collaborate with industry partners to identify relevant industry certifications and training programmes valuable for students' future careers.

Medium-Term (2-5 Years)

1. **Professional Certifications and Soft Skills Training**

   - Encourage corporate partners and industry bodies to provide professional certifications to students, enhancing their marketability and employability.
   - Collaborate with industry stakeholders to provide soft skills training to improve employability.

2. **Curriculum Review and Relevance**

   - Establish mechanisms for regular curriculum reviews and updates, incorporating feedback from industry partners and alumni.
   - Develop and implement processes for incorporating emerging industry trends and technological advancements into the curriculum to ensure its continued relevance.

WAY FORWARD

The nearly 80 policy recommendations highlighted in the main report span 12 sub-themes across the 4 domains of quality, funding and financing, governance, and employability, and include over 125 performance success indicators. This policy brief provides a snapshot of the policy recommendations, which are based on extensive consultations with government officers across 20 States and UTs, and vice-chancellors and senior academicians from nearly 50 SPUs.

SPUs are the backbone of India's vast and wide-reaching higher education system. It is hoped that the report will not only serve as a valuable resource for all concerned stakeholders but also inspire a collective effort of transforming SPUs into hubs of top quality talent, research and innovation.

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