

# Standing Committee Report Summary

## Review of Higher Education Institutions

- The Standing Committee on Education, Women, Children, Youth, and Sports (Chair: Dr. Vinay P. Sahasrabudde) submitted its report on ‘Review of education standards, accreditation process, research, examination reforms, and academic environment in Deemed/Private Universities/other Higher Education Institutions’ on July 4, 2022. Key observations and recommendations of the Committee include:
  - **Higher Education Commission of India (HECI):** The National Education Policy (NEP), 2020 provides for the creation of HECI as the principal regulator for higher education. The Committee observed that a Bill to provide for HECI is under drafting stage. It recommended that while creating HECI, aspects related to specifying its jurisdiction, independence and protection of stakeholder interests should be considered. Instead of having several parallel regulatory authorities for higher education, a simplified hierarchy of regulatory bodies having the final say in implementation of rules/regulations/act should be constituted.
  - **Changing the term ‘deemed university’:** The Committee observed that the term ‘deemed university’ creates confusion in foreign countries as there is no such concept in many countries. It recommended the central government to consider allowing deemed universities to use the term ‘university’ by amending the UGC Act, 1956. Under the Act no institution, other than a university established or incorporated by a central Act, a provincial Act, or a state Act can use the word ‘university’
  - **Examinations in state universities:** The Committee noted that state universities face issues in conducting examinations. These issues include: (i) question paper leak, (ii) rampant cases of copying, and (iii) student-examiner nexus. It recommended that for granting accreditation, the institution’s exam management competency should be considered. Adoption of digitisation of the examination process may be incentivised.
  - **Social sciences and technical education:** The Committee recommended the experiment of providing humanities courses in technology institutions and assess its impact on the academic climate of the institution. Further, social science/humanities/art modules should be included in the technical education curriculum.
- **Research:** The Committee recommended formulating a National Research Policy for social and physical sciences with defined norms and quantifiable parameters. Identified national development needs in different fields should be given high priority. The Committee noted that sincere efforts are required to attract and retain faculty with good research skills. It recommended reviewing the current system of managing the faculty and developing a reward system based on performance measured through research contributions and publications.
- **Faculty:** The Committee noted the shortage of adequate and qualified faculty in higher education institutes. Many young students do not choose teaching as a profession as the recruitment process is prolonged with several procedural formalities. The Committee recommended the Department of Higher Education to consider reforms to shorten the recruitment process.
- **Nexus between coaching classes and colleges:** The Committee noted the trend of many colleges associating with coaching classes to prepare their enrolled students. It recommended that the central government in coordination with states should derecognise such institutions.
- **Accreditations to higher education institutes:** The Committee noted the need to examine issues of National Board of Accreditation and National Assessment and Accreditation Council through a compilation of feedback from higher education institutions. This will help in improving these bodies as a benchmark for quality accreditation. It recommended that the norms for frequency and periodicity of accreditations be defined. This will ensure institutions do not become complacent and carry the same score for years without a review.
- **Shortage of skilled workforce:** The Committee recommended the Department of Higher Education/University Grants Commission (UGC) and universities to collectively review partnerships between academia and the industry. Such partnerships would help mitigate the shortage of skilled workforce. Collaboration between the industry and higher educational institutions would help students develop entrepreneurship skills and provide hands on experience.

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