

1. Higher Education - Quality Mandate

Prelims Level: Institutional Reforms

Mains Level: Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector or Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources.

Context:

- Human Resource Development Minister had launched five documents developed by University Grants Commission (UGC) covering the 5 verticals of Quality Mandate.

Quality of Higher Education

- Innovation and human capital** - the two pillars of **labour productivity and GDP growth**, largely depends on the quality of the higher education. According to the **India Skills Report-2019**, only 47% of Indian graduates are employable, which is, exacerbated by startlingly low Faculty Figures.
- Of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), adopted in 2015, SDG4 is dedicated to education.
- Higher education is mentioned in target 4.3 of SDG4 - "By 2030, ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university."



**ENSURE INCLUSIVE AND
EQUITABLE QUALITY
EDUCATION AND PROMOTE
LIFELONG LEARNING
OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL**

Structural flaws in Indian Higher Education System:

- Faculty shortage** - Faculty vacancies at government institutions are at 50% on average. The problem lies in increased demand, and stagnant supply.
 - ✓ The number of institutions has surged in India since the 2000s, while the number of students doing PhD has remained constant.
 - ✓ Meanwhile, there are over a 1,00,000 India-born PhDs in universities around the world, kept away by paltry salaries and poor funding.
 - ✓ Indian R&D expenditure at 0.62% of GDP is one of the lowest in emerging economies.
- Research and publications** - Faculty are under pressure to produce a certain number of papers to Gain Promotion.
 - ✓ This often makes them publish papers in journals that may not be of high quality.
 - ✓ This also means that there is more emphasis on publishing papers than on teaching.

3. **Quality Faculty** - Teaching and research in any university depends on the quality of faculty as well as the quality of students.
- ✓ The quality of teaching depends on the quality of teachers.
 - ✓ For teachers to impart knowledge to students they must have a broad knowledge of their subject matter as well as enthusiasm and a desire for learning throughout the course of their career.
4. **Expensive Education** - Quality education is expensive in India.
- ✓ India has severely under-invested in education over the last 40 years, not much have been invested in R&D, and today even the top institutions are having very poor laboratory facilities.
5. **Expansion** - We expanded education very rapidly - India has larger number of institutions than China, both in terms of colleges and universities.
- ✓ In the process of standardisation of such institutions, India has erred by creating one single framework, where examinations became the only way to judge merit.
 - ✓ This led to the mushrooming of coaching classes and anybody who could get ranks by studying in such coaching institutes were celebrated.
6. **Leadership** - The heads of universities are often appointed with Political Motivations.
- ✓ Vice-Chancellors are selected merely because they have the right political connections in the Ministry of Human Resource Development in the case of central universities, or appropriate political or caste affiliations in the concerned state.
 - ✓ Also, in many cases, they pay huge amounts of money for the posts that are most visible symbols of the university system.

University Grants Commission and its Mandate:

- The University Grants Commission (UGC) of India is a statutory body set up in 1956, and is charged with coordination, determination and maintenance of standards of higher education.

The UGC's Mandate Includes:

- Determining and maintaining standards of teaching, examination and research in universities.
- Framing regulations on minimum standards of education.
- Overseeing distribution of grants to universities and colleges in India.
- Providing scholarships/fellowships to Beneficiaries.

- Monitoring conformity to its regulations by universities and colleges.
- Serving as a vital link between the Union and state governments and institutions of higher learning.

Is UGC a Failure:

- Though the number of universities and student enrolment has been increasing, the quality of education is still lagging behind, which is attributed to UGC.
- UGC's policies suffer from two diametrically opposite issues—under-regulation and over-regulation. While it lets smaller substandard institutions slip by as deemed universities, it also instigates witch-hunts against reputed deemed universities.
- Hence, it is argued that UGC has not only failed to fulfil its mandate but also has not been able to deal with emerging diverse complexities.

Quality Mandate in 2019:

- The quality mandate aims at evolving higher education system to equip the country's next generation with vital skills, knowledge and ethics for leading a rewarding life.
- UGC released five documents concerning the 5 verticals of Quality Mandate, which covers-
 - ✓ Evaluation Reforms
 - ✓ Eco-Friendly and Sustainable University Campuses
 - ✓ Human Values & Professional Ethics
 - ✓ Faculty Induction
 - ✓ Academic Research Integrity
- **SATAT**- Framework for Eco-Friendly and Sustainable Campus development in Higher Educational Institutions.
- **Mulya Pravah** – Guidelines for Inculcation of Human values and Professional Ethics in Higher Educational Institutions.
- **Guru-Dakshta** – A guide to Faculty Induction Programme (FIP) to improve student centricity.
- **Consortium for Academic and Research Ethics (UGC-CARE)** to continuously monitor and identify quality journals across disciplines.
- **'Paramarsh'** - To mentor aspirant institutions for promoting quality assurance in higher education and facilitate National Accreditation and Assessment Council (NAAC) Accreditation.

Will Higher Education in India Ever Be “World-Class”?

- India is one of the youngest nations in the world, where the college-age group is growing at large. Where as in the QS World University Rankings-2015, only two Indian universities were featured in the top 200, while just 10 made it into the top 700.
- Therefore, the quality of education should be oriented more towards **employability** than rote learning.
- **Information and Communication Technology (ICT)** – should be utilized to improve the quality of higher education.
- India shall consider moving towards **Learning Outcome based curriculum framework**.
- **Continuous internal evaluation** – can help in identifying **Behavioural outcome** of individuals.
- In terms of **faculty selection and promotion** – it should be based on proper selection committee.
- **Brain Drain from the country** – shall be reduced by appropriate schemes.
 - ✓ China solved this problem by attracting Chinese-origin PhDs back home with dollar salaries and monetary incentives for published research.
- With the advent of Artificial Intelligence (AI), almost 40-50% of existing jobs would be heavily automated. This is the right time for the Indian Higher Education institutions to improve their quality to match the international standards and enhance the employability of the students.