



Reforms in Education Sector

For Prelims: University Grants Commission, National Assessment and Accreditation Council, National Education Policy, Parliamentary Committees

For Mains: Reforms in Education Sector, Features of National Education Policy, Effects on Accreditation, Significance of Education in Economic Growth

Why in News?

The Parliamentary Standing Committee carried out a review of education standards, accreditation process, research, examination reforms and academic environment in India's higher education institutes.

What are the Findings of the Report?

- The higher education department of the Union ministry of Education informed the committee that only 30% of the universities and 20% of the colleges are in the accreditation system.
 - Less than 9,000 colleges out of a total of 50,000 colleges are accredited.
- Many deemed universities, in order to make quick money, have started Open Distance Learning courses undermining qualitative research work.
- Several state universities regularly fail to carry out assessments smoothly, often reporting instances like question paper leaks and rampant cases of copying.

What Do We Know About the Accreditation System?

- **About:**
 - Accreditation is a procedure wherein standardisation happens as to what minimum benchmarks are to be created.
 - It is a formal, independent verification that a program or institution meets established quality standards in terms of testing, inspection, or certification.
- **Significance:**
 - It is an important tool to improve the quality of product and services in the field of health, education, food as well as other areas.
 - It also promotes the adoption of quality standards relating to Quality Management Systems, Food Safety Management Systems and Product Certification.
 - It helps in realizing the objective of improving quality competitiveness of Indian products and services.
- **Grading Process:**
 - Presently, the **National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC)**, an autonomous body under the **University Grants Commission (UGC)**, evaluates higher education institutions on a range of parameters, including teaching-learning, research and infrastructure, and gives institutions grades ranging from A++ to C.
 - If an institution is given a D, it means it is not accredited.
 - The grading remains valid for five years.
- **The International Accreditation Forum:**

- **IAF** is the world association of Conformity Assessment Accreditation bodies and other bodies interested in conformity assessment in the fields of management systems, products, services, personnel and other similar programs of conformity assessment.
 - **Conformity Assessment Bodies:** These are bodies that can certify product, process or services, management systems or persons.
 - E.g. International Organization for Standardization (ISO).
- India is also a member.

What are the Key Recommendations of the Committee?

- **Analysis of Issues:**
 - **Issues faced by NAAC and the National Board of Accreditation (NBA)**, which recognises courses offered by higher education institutions, should be analysed and worked on.
- **Frequent Accreditations:**
 - The norms for **frequency and periodicity of the accreditations** be defined so that institutions do not develop a tendency to carry the score for years without a review, which leads to complacency and undermines quality mechanisms.
- **Exam Management:**
 - The committee recommends that the parameter of the institution's exam management competency be also considered as a mandatory norm towards consideration of accreditation.
 - It also suggested strict actions, including derecognition, for higher institutions involved in malpractices in collaboration with coaching centres.
 - All universities and colleges must be scored on how foolproof their examinations are.
- **Deemed Universities:**
 - The **So-called “deemed universities”** should also **be allowed to use the term ‘university’** since there is no such concept in other countries.
- **Funding of Institutions:**
 - To encourage more funding, it suggested **“donations by individuals, alumni and institutions”** should be 100% tax deductible.
- **Digital Courses Norms:**
 - It also noted that **there was an urgent need to revisit and revamp the norms** for starting online courses.
 - With regard to Open Distance Learning courses, the **committee strongly recommended adequate measures** to curb such tendencies after carefully examining the options.

What Initiatives have India Taken for the Education Sector?

- **National Education Policy:**
 - **NEP 2020** aims at making **“India a global knowledge superpower”**.
 - The Cabinet has also approved the renaming of the Ministry of Human Resource Development to the Ministry of Education.
 - The NEP cleared by the Cabinet is only the third major revamp of the framework of education in India since independence.
 - The two earlier education policies were brought in 1968 and 1986.
- **Margadarshan:**
 - Institutions having good accreditation records or the top-performing institutions are selected to mentor relatively newer 10 to 12 potential institutions.
 - Best teaching and learning practices followed in the mentor institute will be simulated in the identified mentee institutions.
 - The mentee institutions will also be provided with funding up to Rs. 50 lakhs (per institution) over a period of three years (in installments), for carrying out various activities like training, workshops, conferences, etc.
- **Academic Bank of Credit:**
 - It is envisaged as a digital bank that holds the credit earned by a student in any course.
 - It is a major instrument for facilitating multidisciplinary and holistic education.
 - It will provide multiple entry and exit options for students in Higher education.
 - It will make the youth future-oriented and open the way for an **Artificial Intelligence (AI)**

- driven economy.

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