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Unique perspectives on the Indian education sector

Monograph: March 2014

Rashtriya Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyan – Future of Indian Higher Education

Rashtriya Uchchatra Shikska Abhiyan (National Higher Education Mission) or RUSA is a holistic centrally sponsored scheme for the development of higher education at the state level and enhancement of allocations for the State Universities & Colleges steered by the Ministry of Human Resource and Development.

Built on the success story of *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan* (Education for All Movement) and *Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan* (National Mission for Secondary Education) , RUSA will be spread over two plan periods, for improving access, equity and quality in the state higher education system.

This paper provides an overview of the key components of this landmark scheme, its benefits to the Indian higher education system, as well as its attempts to address some of the key challenges plaguing higher education in India today.

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Higher Education in India

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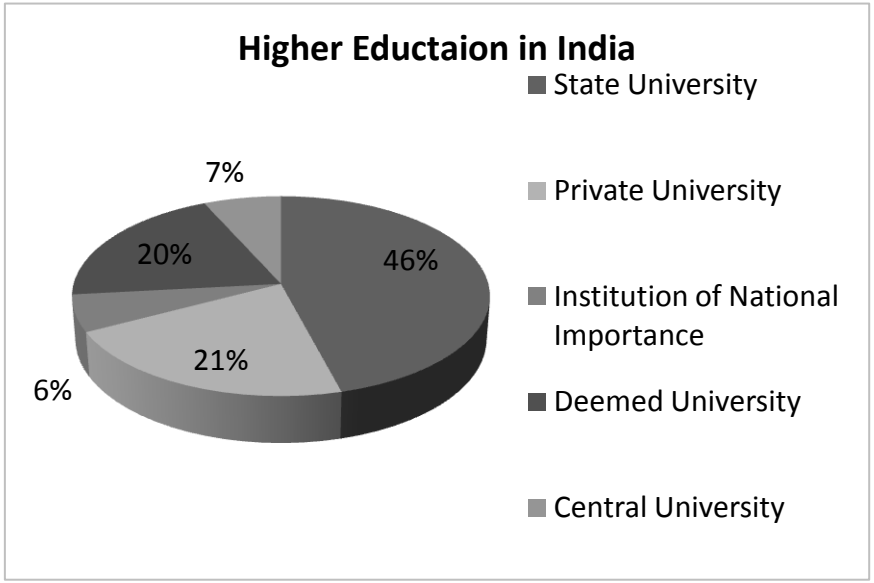
Structure of Education in India

- For the economic growth and development of India, a stable higher education system plays a vital role. Mentioned below is the education structure in India across various age groups.

6 – 14 years	Elementary Education	
14 – 16 years	Secondary Schooling	
16 – 18 years	Higher & Senior Secondary Schooling	Technical Education (Polytechnic)
18 – 23 years	Graduate Education (General)	Graduate Education (Professional)
	Post Graduate Education (General)	Post Graduate Education (Professional)
>23 years	Doctoral Education	

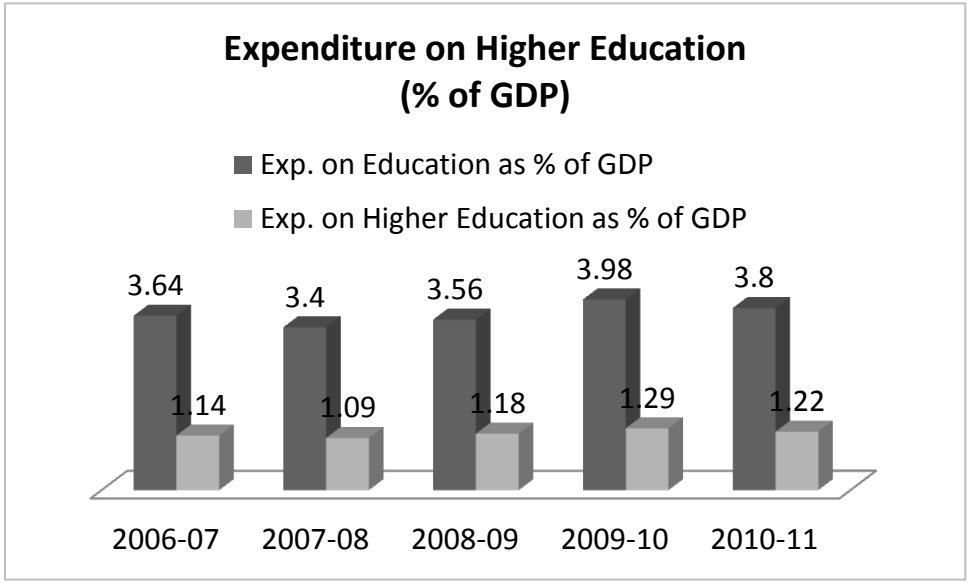
- There are four broad categories of higher education institutions in India:
  1. Centrally funded institutions
  2. Deemed institutions
  3. State funded institutions
  4. Private institutions



Funding in Higher Education

Funding Trends in Higher Education

- While the centrally funded institutions (Central Universities, IITs, NITs, IISERs, Institutes of National Importance etc) receive generous funding from the center, they have a limited coverage in terms of enrollment.
- ~94% of the students enrolled in government funded (48% of total enrolments) or government controlled private institutions come under the state higher education system.
- Most private education institutions (52% of all enrolments) are affiliated to state universities and come under their academic and administrative control.
- Thus, any efforts for development in this sector must recognize the importance of state higher education institutions and aim to improve their status.



Funding for State Higher Education

- The sources of funding for state universities include Plan and Non-Plan grants from state governments, funding from the UGC and other Central government projects as well as fees and other university receipts through avenues such as affiliations.
- Plan expenditure on higher education in states has been declining with the expenditure on higher education as a proportion of the GSDP at an average of only 0.5%.
- UGC also lacks the mandate to fund new institutions in a state. Additionally, funding to state institutions and universities is often done on an ad-hoc basis, and based on item-wise allocations instead of block grants. This leads to bureaucratic hurdles and difficulties in utilization of funds.
- As a result, over the years, this shortage of funding has been a key factor responsible for several of the issues plaguing higher education institutes, including poor infrastructure, faculty shortages and inadequate research output.

Key Issues Plaguing Higher Education

- Currently the key challenges in higher education can be broadly encapsulated in the following areas pertaining to – Access, Quality, Equity, Governance and Finance.

1

Access

- Low enrolment rates in higher education with GER Of 19.4 at the higher education stage (18-23 years) remains below the world average of 30% (as of 2013).
- The low GER indicates inadequate no. of institutions to meet demand or limited access to higher education.
- GER significantly less than in countries such as US (89), Russia (76), UK (59), Malaysia (40), China (24)

2

Quality

- Significant levels of faculty vacancies in institutes and inadequate research opportunities.
- Varying quality of education provided in institutes with inadequate focus on research in higher education and low employability and skills of graduates.
- Very few institutes get regularly accredited and lack adequate infrastructure and equipment.

3

Equity

- Gender disparities in higher education (GER of 17.1 for males and 12.7 for females in 2009-10).
- Social inequities in access to higher education (GER of 12.2 for SCs and 9.7 for STs in 2009-10).
- Regional disparities in higher education including rural-urban variations.

4

Governance and Financing

- Issues in universities arising from affiliation resulting in administrative burden on universities.
- Governance issues in universities such as lack of appropriate structures and limited autonomy.
- Financial constraints in higher education, particularly for state level institutions.
- Lack of clear regulatory framework for private sector participation in higher education .

Scope for Improvement

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Need for Improving Access

- With regard to access, the higher education system requires much needed reforms, especially if India wants to reach its target of 30% GER by 2020.

1

Access

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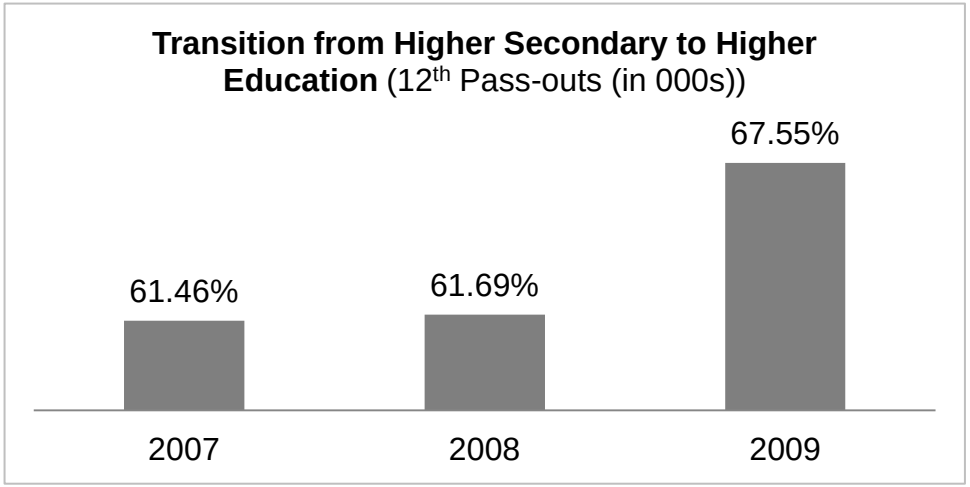
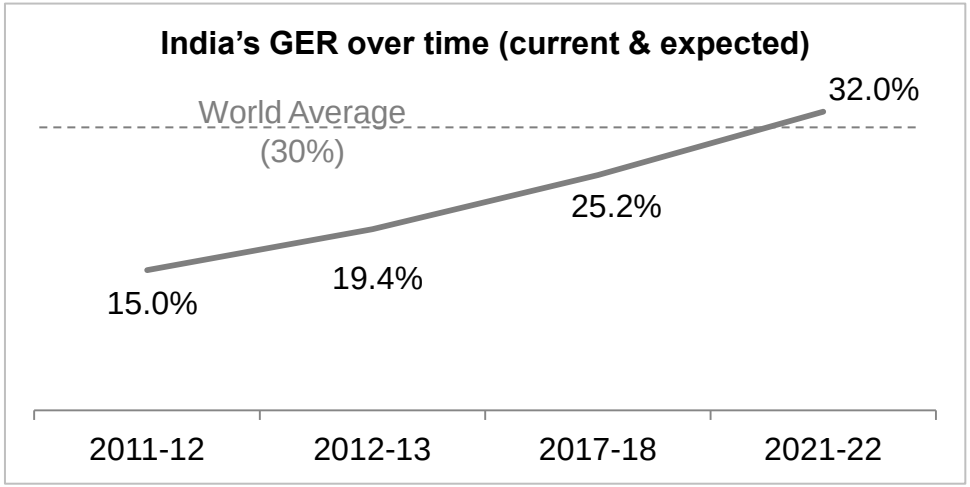
- GER significantly less than in countries such as US (89), Russia (76), UK (59), Malaysia (40), China (24)

Need for Reform

- The success of SSA and RMSA and the consequent improvement in transition rates is going to increase the number of students who will opt for higher education and thus, it makes a strong case for enhancement of financial support for expansion, up-gradation and quality improvement of higher education system.
- India moved from an "elite" system of higher education to a "mass" system when the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) crossed the threshold of 15%.





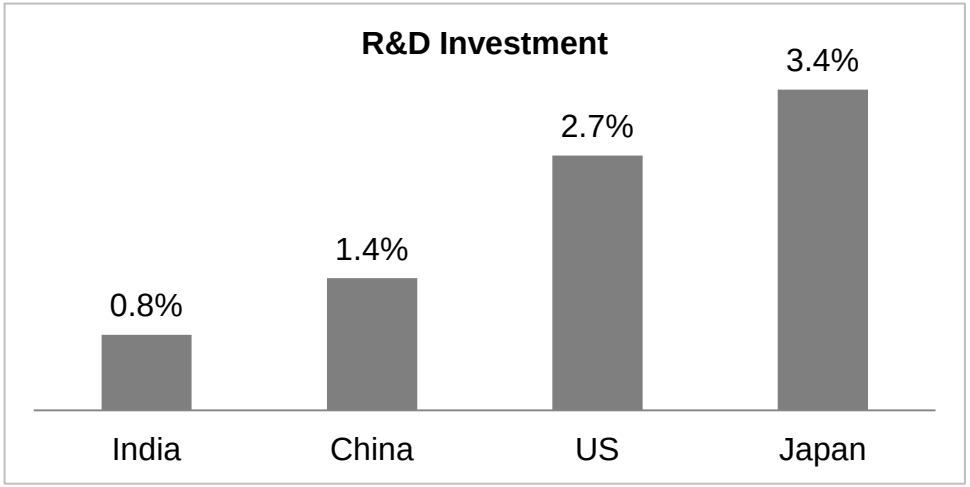
Need for Quality Enhancement

- Quality enhancement is an important challenge that needs to be addressed immediately in the higher education system.

2

Quality

- Significant levels of faculty vacancies in institutes and inadequate research opportunities.
- Varying quality of education provided in institutes with inadequate focus on research in higher education and low employability and skills of graduates.
- Very few institutes get regularly accredited and lack adequate infrastructure and equipment.



Need for Reform

- Innovation and creation of new knowledge are the major areas in which universities in the developed countries have an edge over their Indian counterparts.
- The number of teachers in the system has not kept pace with the growth in student enrolments and this aspect needs considerable and concerted attention to ensure the sustainability of the higher education system.
- None of the Indian HEIs features on the list of top 200 institutions, which is a reflection of quality of HEIs in the country.
- A recent study conducted by NASSCOM reveals that only 25% of engineering graduates are readily employable in the IT industry.
- Approximately 62% of the universities and 90% of the colleges were rated average or below average on specified quality parameters.

Need For Consistent Equity, Governance and Financial Management

3

Equity

- Gender disparities in higher education (GER of 17.1 for males and 12.7 for females in 2009-10)
- Social inequities in access to higher education (GER of 12.2 for SCs and 9.7 for STs in 2009-10)
- Regional disparities in higher education including rural-urban variations

Need for Reform

- There are significant regional variations in enrolments in higher education across the country.
- The public expenditure on higher education is highly uneven amongst states; the states with lower capacities and poorer infrastructure may have to allocate more to catch up to the leading state and the national targets.
- Improving enrolment in general will not ameliorate inequities and special efforts will be required to deal with problems of geographically backward areas, women and backward classes.
- The multiplicity of central and state run schemes and scholarships and cumbersome application processes prevent many students from being aware of and availing many benefits.

4

Governance and Finance

- Issues in universities arising from affiliation resulting in administrative burden on universities
- Governance issues in universities such as lack of appropriate structures and limited autonomy
- Financial constraints in higher education, particularly for state level institutions
- Lack of clear regulatory framework for private sector participation in higher education

Need for Reform

- Education being on the concurrent list has resulted into a multiplicity of regulators and regulations, which sometimes are in conflict of each other.
- Majority of HEIs have no autonomy, thereby are not able to offer programs as per global standards through innovative pedagogy.
- A significant number of state universities and colleges are not eligible for UGC grants and state government funding is not adequate.
- The existing policies in higher education does not provide much clarity on aspects of private sector participation and a clearer and unambiguous policy direction is essential to encourage a meaningful and effective private sector participation.

Centrally Sponsored Schemes

Centrally Sponsored Schemes under MoHRD

- Centrally Sponsored Schemes (CSS) are schemes that are implemented by a State Governments in India but are largely funded by the Central Government with a defined State Government share.
- Schemes implemented through the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MoHRD) have been classified under the following departments.

Ministry of Human Resource Development

**Indicative list of schemes in different departments under the MoHRD.*

Department of Higher Education*

University and Higher Education

- National Research Professorship
- Scheme for incentivizing state governments for expansion of higher education institutions
- Schemes implemented through Autonomous Organizations

Technical Education

- Scheme of Apprenticeship Training
- Support For Distance Education & Web Based Learning
- Technology Development Mission

Higher Education Statistics and Public Information System

Department of School Education & Literacy*

Elementary Education

- Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA)
- Mid Day Meal
- Mahila Samakhya

Secondary Education

- Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA)
- National Merit cum Means Scholarship
- Model School, ICT at School

Adult Education

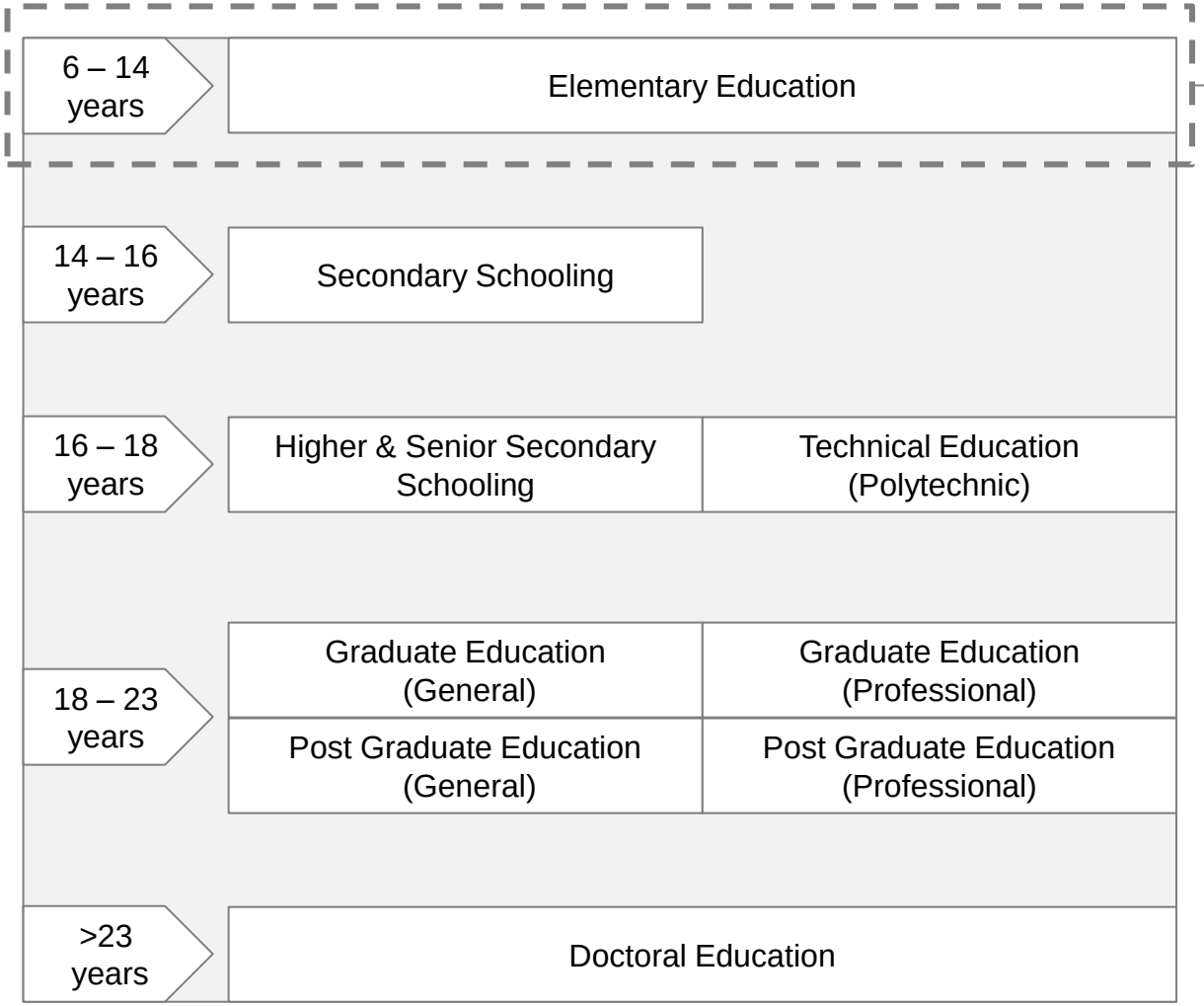
- Jan Shikshan Sansthans(JSSs)

Teacher Education

- Strengthening of Teachers Training Institute

CSS for Elementary Education - SSA

- **Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA)** is the government's flagship programme for achievement of Universalization of Elementary Education in a time bound manner, making free and compulsory Education to the Children of 6-14 years age group, a Fundamental Right.



Launch Date: 2001

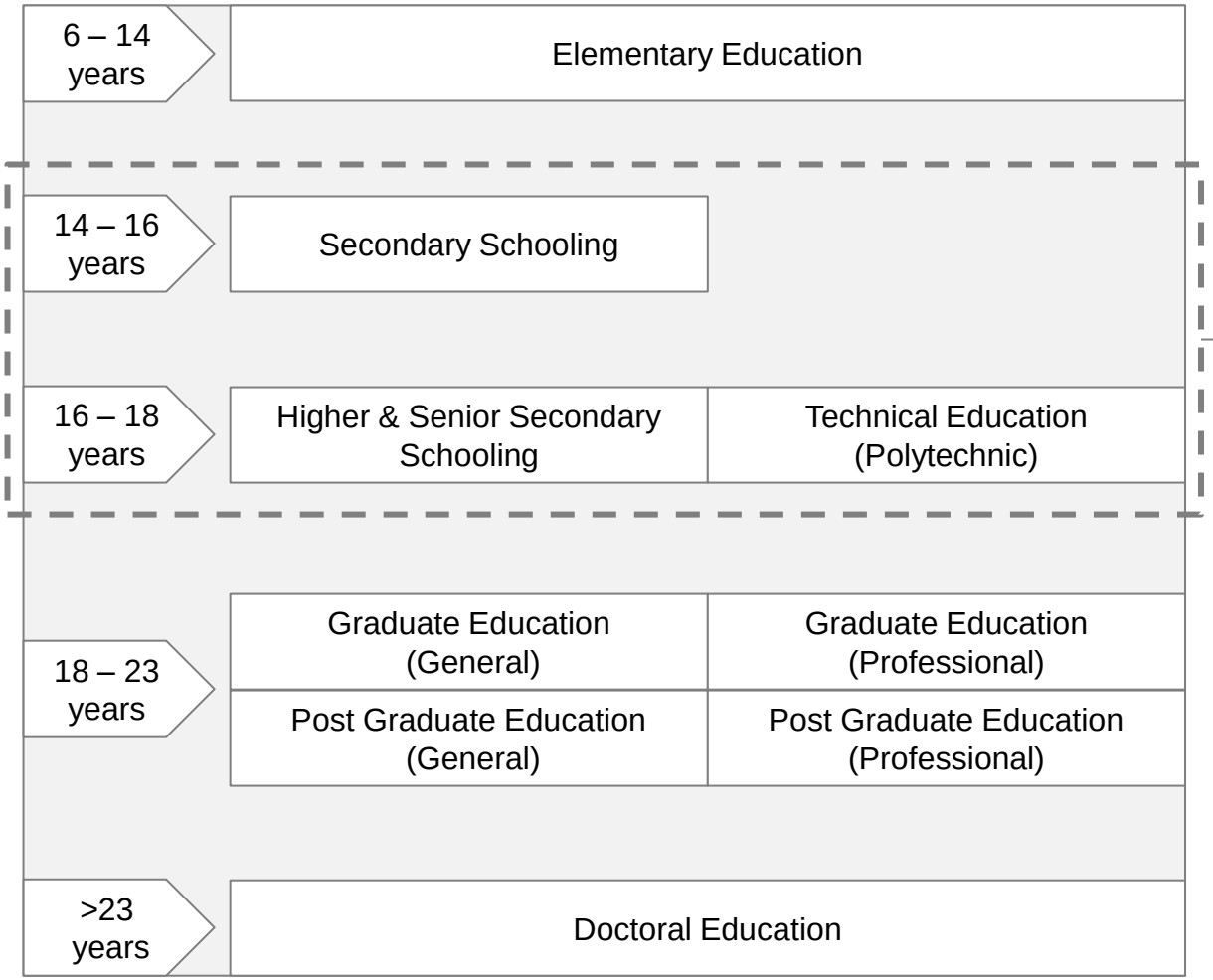
Objective: Provide quality elementary education to all children in the 6-14 age group

Key Achievements:

- SSA is being implemented in partnership with State Governments to cover the entire country and address the needs of 192 million children in 1.1 million habitations.
- 98% of India's rural population has access to primary schools within a km of the habitation
- Decline in drop-out rates in elementary education and upswing in girl enrolment

CSS for Secondary Education - RMSA

- **Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA)** envisages to achieve an enrolment rate of 75% from 52.26% in 2005-06 at secondary stage within 5 years of implementation of the scheme by providing a secondary school within a reasonable distance of any habitation.



Launch Date: 2009

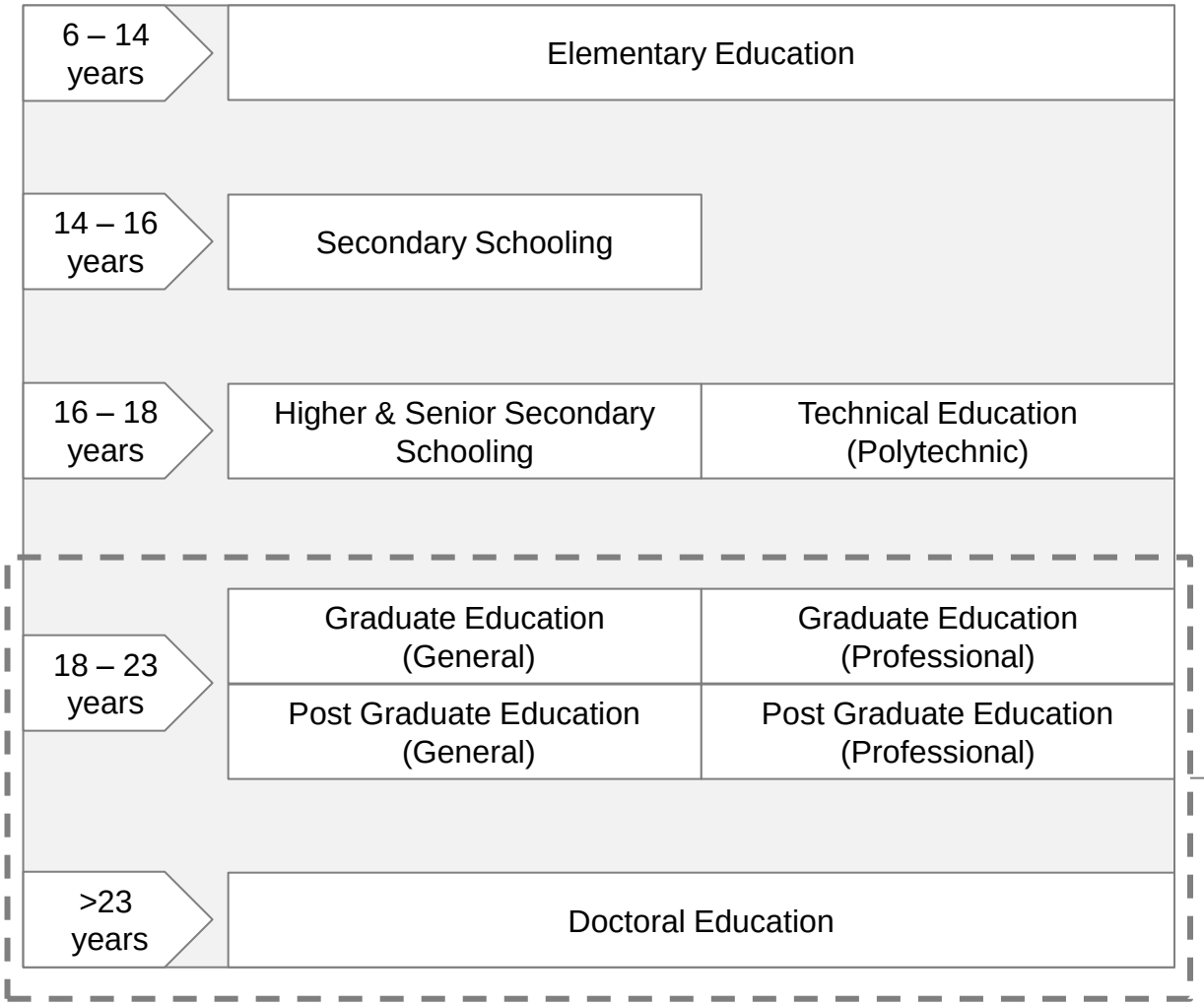
Objective: Enhance access to secondary education and improve its quality

Key Achievements:

- 10,230 new schools sanctioned out of which 9219 schools have become functional (as on 31st October 2013)
- In-service training of all Govt. teachers including Govt. aided school's teachers have been sanctioned.
- Strengthening of existing schools have been approved in which new science lab, computer rooms, libraries, art/craft/culture rooms, toilet blocks, drinking water facilities and residential quarters have been approved.

CSS for Higher Education - RUSA

- **Rashtriya Uchchattar Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA)** is the centrally sponsored scheme aimed at providing strategic funding to higher educational institutions throughout the country.
- Funding is provided by the central ministry through the state governments and union territories (UTs).



Launch Date: Yet to be launched

Objective: Improve access, equity and quality of higher education across India.

Riding on the success of SSA, RMSA and the recommendation of Planning Commission, implementation of RUSA in the sphere of higher education will add to the initiatives brought forward in formal education sector in India.

Structure of Rashtriya Uchchatra Shikska Abhiyan

Background and Overview

Background

- Higher education systems in India face issues relating to inadequate financing, ineffective planning at the state level and lack autonomy, thereby ushering in the immediate need for strategic intervention.
- With over 96% of students enrolled in the state higher education system, there is a need for state colleges and universities to be strengthened through strategic central funding and implementing certain much needed reforms.

Overview

- The National Development Council (NDC) approved **Rashtriya Uchchatra Shikska Abhiyan (RUSA)** as part of the 12th Plan. It was subsequently included in the list of 66 schemes approved by the Cabinet on 20th June 2013, as part of the restructured CSSs for implementation in the 12th Plan.
- RUSA will be a new CSS spread over two plan periods, for improving access, equity and quality in the state higher education system.
- RUSA also aims to incentivize States to step up plan investments in higher education.
- An umbrella scheme to be initiated in mission mode project that would subsume other existing schemes in the higher education sector.
- The central funding would flow from MHRD to institutions, through the State budget.

Benefits of RUSA

- RUSA introduces a significant strategic shift in the approach towards developing the higher education system, by focusing on state level institutions which have been neglected over the years in relation to centrally funded institutions.
- Seeks to introduce measures such as performance and norm based funding as well as governance and academic reforms at the institutional and state levels to address some of the challenges in higher education in India.
- If implemented swiftly and efficiently, RUSA will be a turning point for the Indian higher education system as it seeks to achieve higher enrolment rates and address access, equity and quality related concerns.

Rationale for Implementation of RUSA

1 Inadequate Financing

- State universities catering to large number of students face severe constraints in terms of access to finances, particularly in comparison to central institutions and with state government support to state institutions being inadequate, the resources are spread thinly over an increasing numbers of institutions.
- State universities are provided some funds through UGC funding, UGC is only mandated to fund institutions that are categorized as compliant to Sections 12B and 2(f) of the UGC Act, which stipulate norms in terms of physical facilities, infrastructure and quality to be eligible for central funding, thereby excluding ~37% of the universities and 81% of the colleges which, therefore, lack funding support because they do not have the facilities to begin with, thereby accentuating the problem.

Overview

Benefits of RUSA

2 Ineffective Planning

- The growing number of institutes in the country has made it extremely difficult for the UGC to effectively plan, manage and monitor fund disbursements.
- Planning at the state level is further hampered by the fact the UGC does not provide funds for setting up new institutes.

strengthened through strategic central funding and implementing certain much needed reforms.

- Seeks to introduce measures such as performance and norm based funding as well as governance and academic reforms at the

RUSA also aims to incentivize States to step up plan investments in

3 Affiliations and Lack of Autonomy

- Without access to adequate funds, affiliated institutions have become an alternative source of finances for universities, through their affiliation fees.
- The increasing numbers of affiliated institutions has also had a negative impact in terms of quality of education as well as added administrative burden for universities.
- It has also resulted in reduced autonomy of affiliated institutions with respect to aspects such as teaching, curriculum development and research.

Key Goals and Objectives

Key Objectives

1. Improving the overall quality of existing state higher educational institutions by ensuring conformity to prescribed norms and standards and adoption of accreditation as a mandatory quality assurance framework.
2. Correct regional imbalances in access to higher education through high quality institutions in rural and semi urban areas as well as creating opportunities for students from rural areas to get access to better quality institutions.
3. Setting up of higher education institutions in un-served and underserved areas.
4. Improve equity in higher education by providing adequate opportunities to socially deprived communities; promote inclusion of women, minorities, SC/ST and OBCs as well as differently-abled persons.
5. Ensure adequate availability of quality faculty in all higher educational institutions and ensure capacity building at all levels.
6. Create an enabling atmosphere in higher educational institutions to devote themselves to research and innovation.
7. Integrate skill developments efforts of the government with the conventional higher education system through optimum interventions.

Key Goals

Through planned development of higher education at the state level, the overall aim is to improve access, equity and quality in higher education across the country.

The goal is to improve the current GER from 19% to 32% by 2022, thereby incentivizing states to increase 'plan investments' in higher education.

Scope and Resource Allocation

Scope

- All State Universities and colleges from all states and UTs across the country would be eligible to be covered under RUSA.
- Private aided colleges will be entitled to some component but the funding ratio would be 50:50. Funding to such colleges would be decided based on their antiquity and relevance.
- Funding will be available to even private-aided institutions, for permitted activities based on certain norms and parameters, in a ratio of 50:50.

Category	Total Number (Estimated)
State Universities	306
Colleges	8,500

Resource Allocation

- Under RUSA, socio-demographic variables like rural/urban distribution; proportion of SC/ST and vulnerable groups; districts with adverse education indicators; difficult, most difficult and inaccessible areas, left wing affected districts etc. would be considered while allocating resources to the districts.

Centre-State Funding Share**

*** 50% of the state share can be mobilized through private partnership*

Key Components

The following are the primary components of RUSA that capture the key action and funding areas that must be pursued for the fulfilment of the key goals and objectives of RUSA.

1 Infrastructure related

New

- New Universities
- New Model Colleges (General)
- New Colleges (Professional)
- Research Universities

Up gradation of Existing

- Up gradation of existing autonomous colleges to Universities
- Conversion of colleges to Cluster Universities
- Up gradation of existing degree colleges to model colleges

Funding

- Infrastructure grants to Universities
- Infrastructure grants to colleges
- Equity initiatives

2 Administration & Faculty related

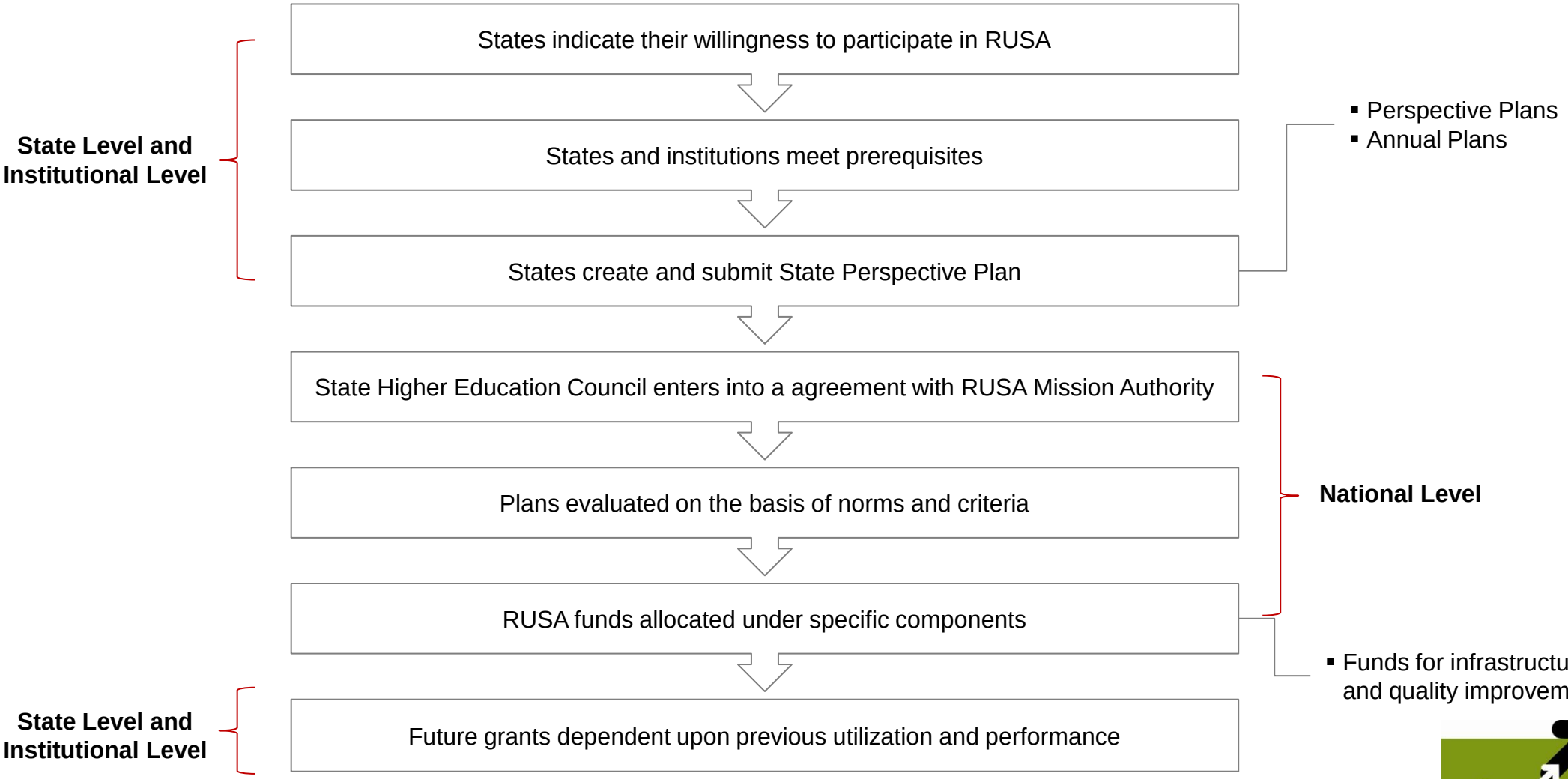
- Faculty Recruitment Support
- Faculty improvements
- Leadership Development of Educational Administrators
- Institutional restructuring & reforms
- Research, innovation and quality improvement

3 Capacity Building related

- Capacity building & preparation
- Data collection & planning
- Management Information System
- Vocationalisation of Higher Education

Institutional Structure – Approach Utilized

- RUSA will fund higher education institutions under a few key components where the yardstick for deciding the quantum of funds for the states and institution will be the norms that will reflect the key result areas i.e. access, equity and excellence.
- The State Higher Education Plans (SHEP) will capture the current position of the states and institutions on the basis of these norms as well as the targets that need to be achieved.



Institutional Structure – Roles and Key Bodies

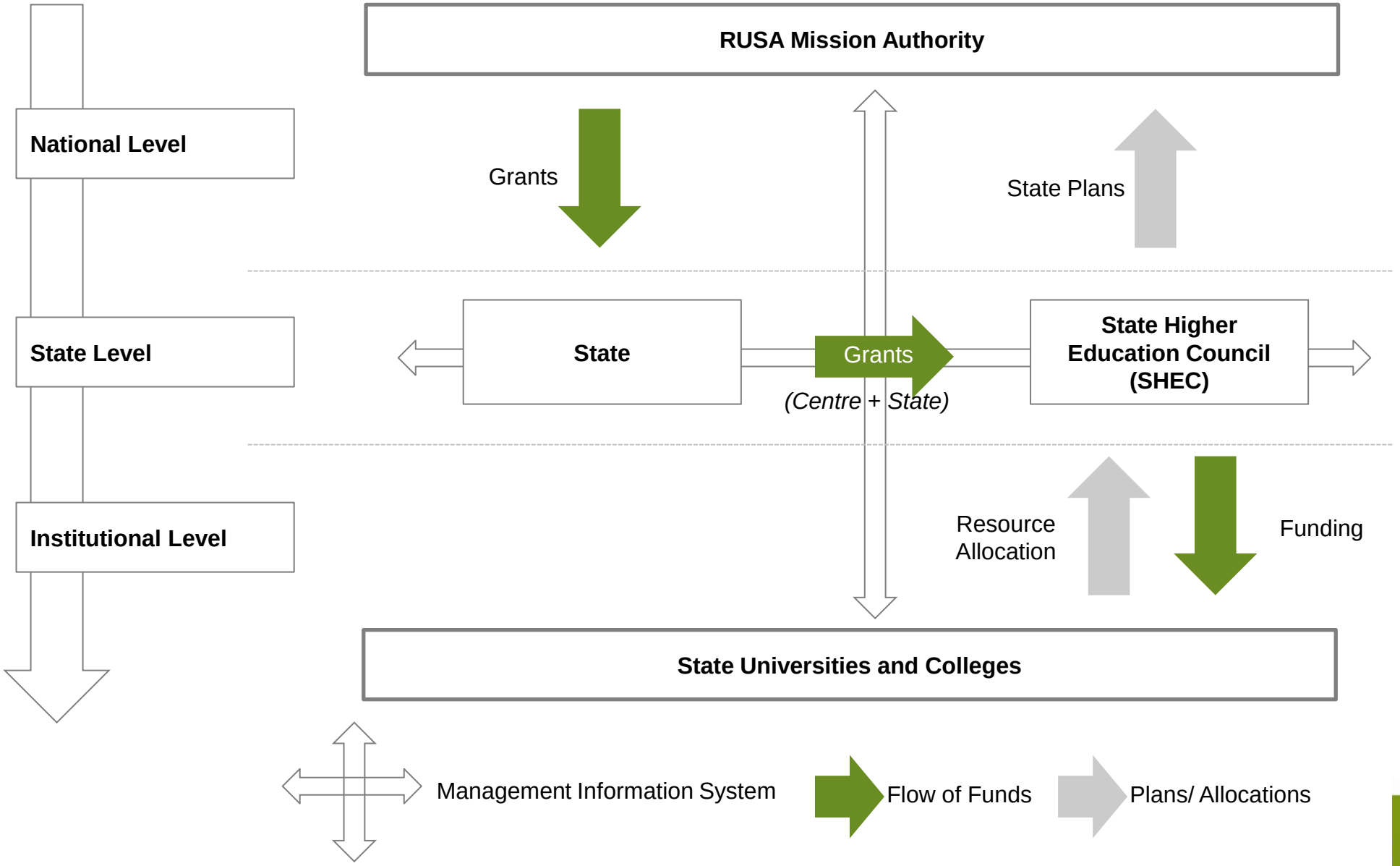
- The three (3) tier institutional structure at the national, state and institution levels would facilitate the monitoring of RUSA at the respective levels.

Roles	Key Bodies
▪ For overall guidance, policy decisions and project management, coordination and implementation.	1. RUSA Mission Authority 2. Project Approval Board (PAB) 3. Special Purpose Vehicle (will create and run TSG) 4. Project Directorate (in MoHRD)
▪ For management, coordination, implementation and monitoring of the project at the state/UT levels.	1. State Higher Education Council (SHEC) 2. Project Directorate (State Government) 3. Technical Support Group (TSG)
▪ The main institutional structures for RUSA.	1. Board of Governors (BoG) 2. Project Monitoring Unit

- Government of India will conduct annual reviews of the project, based on **action plans** prepared by each project institution and achievements made on a set of norms defined in the institutional plans.
- **Management Information System (MIS)** will also be established for the purpose of monitoring and evaluation.

Institutional Structure – Implementation Process Flow

- The institutional structure for RUSA comprises of institutions at the national, state and institutional levels.



Prerequisites for States and Institutes

- A cornerstone of RUSA will be the stipulation of a set of a priori prerequisites, or commitments that must be made by the state government as well as institutions in order to be eligible for receiving grants under RUSA.

Prerequisites

State

1. Establishment of State Higher Education Councils (SHEC)
2. State Perspective Plan (for 10 years period with an interim review after 5 years)
3. State contribution to higher education in a prescribed SHEP format
4. State commitment to adhere to timelines for fund release
5. Agreement to create separate fund for RUSA
6. Filling faculty vacancies
7. Assessment and accreditation reforms in a transparent and informed manner
8. Affiliation and examination reforms
9. Governance and administrative reforms at State Level
10. Institutional governance (administrative) reforms

Institution

1. Application of governance (administrative) reforms at Institute level
2. Academic reforms and facilitating inter-disciplinary learning
3. Examination reforms: Continuous and end semester evaluation
4. Affiliation reforms
5. Separate project management teams
6. Perspective planning
7. Equity commitment (especially in aided sector)
8. Commitments on research and innovation efforts
9. Mandatory faculty recruitment and improvement
10. Regularizing MIS for information flow at all levels
11. Regulatory compliance

Financial Strategy Employed

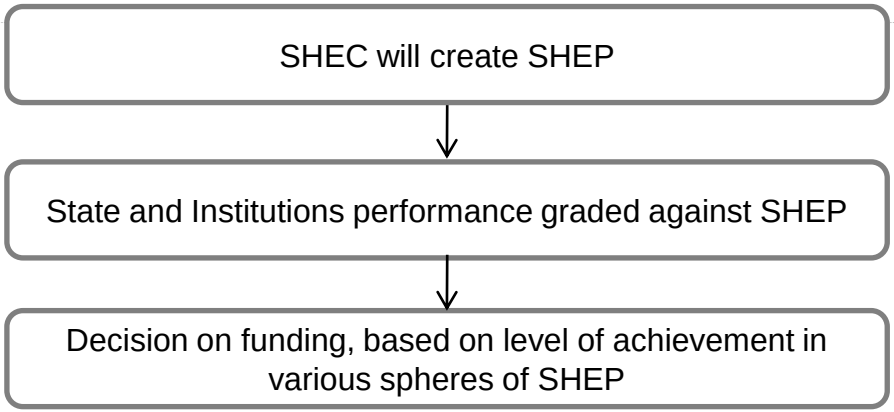
- Central funding would be strategic, based on SHEP which would be leveraged to stimulate enhanced state funding. It is imperative also that central funding is linked to sectoral academic and governance reforms.
- The following are financing strategy adopted by RUSA.

1 Norm Based Funding

- The transparent and objective way of funding is norm-based funding
- The overall norm based funding schema will apply filters at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels to determine the eligibility of institutions to receive funding.

2 Performance Based Funding

- Performance based assessment will gauge the state and institutions ability to fulfil the targets it sets for itself; it will also trigger healthy competition amongst the institutions.



Future of Rashtriya Uchchatra Shikska Abhiyan

Key Differentiators – Academic

- Some of the key **academic provisions** which RUSA seeks to address with regard to the current Indian higher education system have been listed in the table below:

Higher Education System (current system)	Academic	Higher Education System RUSA provisions
▪ GER is19.4% currently, not in a position to achieve 30% by 2020	Access	▪ Consolidating and developing through capacity addition, usage of ICT and distance learning
▪ Vast disparity among regions across India	Equity	▪ Model Colleges in each district and integration of various equity schemes currently in place
▪ Major faculty across the country at all levels of study	Faculty	▪ States ensure faculty positions are filled in a phased manner ▪ Proactive steps for faculty recruitment and development
▪ Lack of flexibility, examination centered approach towards ▪ Curriculum revisions not consistent, admission processes are ad-hoc and not transparent	Academic	▪ Credit Based Credit System across HEIs ▪ Reform in admission process, curriculum development and examination process
▪ Insufficient funding and focus on research ▪ Limited research output in Indian higher educational institutions	R&D	▪ Provision of research and innovation grants/funds ▪ Support for state endeavors to create Research Universities

Key Differentiators – Governance

- Some of the key **governance provisions** which RUSA seeks to address with regard to the current Indian higher education system have been listed in the table below:

Higher Education System (current system)	Governance	Higher Education System RUSA provisions
▪ Weak quality assurance mechanisms, with financial planning and allocation not linked to performance. ▪ Lack of autonomy for universities from state and central governments ▪ Administrative burden for universities due to affiliation system	Administration/ Governance	▪ Reforms at state level and institutional level including 'Accountability Framework ' for universities ▪ Provision for greater academic, financial and administrative autonomy for universities ▪ Limit on colleges affiliated to a university and creation of College Cluster Universities
▪ Funding only to institutes compliant under sections 12B and 2(f) of UGC Act ▪ Direct funding by Centre and UGC to higher education institutions. ▪ Ad-hoc in nature	Funding	▪ Funding to non 12B and 2(f) institutions as well ▪ Funding through State Councils ▪ Norm and performance based
▪ Poor infrastructure and facilities, particularly in state institutes	Infrastructure	▪ Infrastructure up gradation of existing institutions with focus on quality and equity

Key Differentiator – Quality Assurance

- Some of the key **quality assurance provisions** which RUSA seeks to address with regard to the current Indian higher education system have been listed in the table below:

Higher Education System (current system)	Quality	Higher Education System RUSA provisions
▪ Ineffective monitoring and evaluation mechanisms	Monitoring	▪ Three-tier institutional structure to monitor progress and implementation of reforms ▪ All institutions to be linked to a web-based Management Information System (MIS)
▪ Few recognized accreditation agencies ▪ Limited numbers of accredited colleges	Accreditation	▪ Creation of state level accreditation agencies ▪ Requirement of mandatory accreditation for HEIs
▪ Lack of clear framework for private sector participation in higher education ▪ Concerns over commercialization of higher education by private sector	Private Sector	▪ Establishment of appropriate regulatory framework to set quality standards ▪ Creation of enabling conditions to attract investments - aim to mobilize 50% of the state contribution through private participation

Challenges Faced Moving Forward

- Achieving such landmark scheme would be a large task in for the MoHRD and the government.
- The following are some of the key challenges which the GOI may face during the implementation of RUSA.

Key Challenge	Description
Improvement Across India	▪ Homogeneous improvement in all the three areas i.e. access, equity and quality across India would be a key challenge. ▪ Parts of India which is in the nascent stages of higher education may only be able to work on access and equity, while quality improvement may take some more time. ▪ Reaching out to rural India and socially and educationally backward class maybe a key challenge.
Co-ordination between RUSA Mission Authority and State Higher Education Council (SHEC)	▪ A Management Information System (MIS) is proposed for all co-ordination between National, State and Institutional level. ▪ During the initial years, it would be a challenge to train and align each individual to comply and feed information into MIS system

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