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Policy of Funding Higher Education in India: The Paradox

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Abstract:

India faces paradoxical policies in higher education and research funding where, despite increasing investment and focus on expanding access, funding often remains insufficient for maintaining quality, leading to a struggle between quantitative growth and qualitative excellence. Key paradoxes include the government's efforts to increase enrolment through new institutions while simultaneously struggling to adequately fund existing ones, a growing reliance on private funding that can deepen inequalities, and policy proposals for privatization that risk undermining the public, state-funded nature of much of the system. Policies like those under NEP 2020[1] aim to significantly increase the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) by establishing more institutions and promoting distance learning. This expansion often occurs without sufficient funding to maintain the quality of education and research in existing institutions, leading to a paradox where more students are enrolled, but the overall academic rigor and faculty excellence are threatened. While India's higher education system has historically been largely state-funded, there is a recognized need for increased funding and the share of non-governmental sources like fees is increasing, while state budgets are often insufficient for the growing needs. Considering the huge youth population in the age cohort of accessing higher education and their severe economic disadvantage to meet the costs, the call for privatization to supplement public funding creates a paradox. The higher education system may not yet be ready for it, potentially leading to declining access and equity indexes, widening inequalities and over-all stagnation in quality assurance.

Keywords: *GDP, NEP, Public Funding, Public Good, Excellence, Research, Higher Education, HEIs, HEFA, Global Hub, Inclusivity, Paradox.*

1. Introduction:

In the mosaic of human development, education remains a way of empowerment and progress. It is not merely a means to economic growth but a fundamental pillar of social justice, individual freedom and collective wellbeing. Yet in India, a nation teeming with youthful energy and aspirations, the state of higher education presents a paradox. The demographic profile of India indicates more than 50% Indians in the age group below 25 yrs. while more than 65% belong to age

[1] **National Education Policy 2020.**
https://www.education.gov.in/sites/upload_files/mhrd/files/NEP_Final_English_0.pdf

group below 35 yrs. Obviously, India is a nation consisting of an overwhelming proportion of aspiring youth in the population matrix. However, when we look at the educational accomplishments, it is found that while the country has made huge strides in expansion of primary education, its investment in HE and research, remains woefully inadequate when compared to nations with similar socio-economic profiles. For example, Brazil, SA, Indonesia, Mexico, Thailand, Vietnam, Egypt, Turkey, Malaysia and Philippines are all middle-income economies with comparable demographics and aspirations like India. Yet their investment in HE tells a different story of commitment. According to UNESO's Department of Statistics (UIS), these countries spend 0.5% to 1.5 % of GDP for HE. In stark contrast, India spends less than 1% of GDP for entire public funded HE including research[2]. The share of Research is just about 0.69% of GDP.

This results in poor infrastructure, including outdated laboratories, crowded classrooms, and a lack of basic amenities. Libraries are understocked and slow to access digital resources. While India has the world's second-largest higher education system, with over 1200 universities and 50,000 colleges[3], there are serious concerns about the quality of institutions. India's universities lag in infrastructure, facilities, research output, and international rankings compared to global standards[4]. India's investment in higher education is a meagre 1.2% of GDP and the share of Research and Development (R&D) is even more paltry, decreasing from 0.82% of GDP in 2009-10 to 0.69% in 2024-25. As noted by the Department of Science and Technology in a 2023 report, most developed countries spend more than 2% of their GDP on R&D. However, India's R&D investment has been lower than that of Germany (3%), Japan (3.3%), USA (3.5%), and China (2.4%)[5].

2. Research in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs):

The National Education Policy, NEP 2020 is intended to restructure the education system in several ways. The policy identified the need for greater emphasis on research at the university and college levels, and the lack of peer-reviewed research funding as a major hurdle. NEP states under Section 18.4 that "Despite this importance, the Research and Innovation (R&I) investment in India has been only 0.69% of GDP. For the sake of comparison, the levels of R&I investment as a proportion of GDP in some other countries are: United States (2.8%), China (2.1%), Israel (4.3%), and South Korea (4.2%); i.e., all invest at least three times as much as a proportion of GDP. This Policy proposes to

[2] QS World University Rankings 2026, https://www.topuniversities.com/world-university-rankings

[3] Adrita Choudhury, Delay and Denial: Issues with Research Funding in Higher Education Institutions, https://sprf.in/delay-and-denial-issues-with-research-funding-in-higher-education-institutions/

[4] Ibid; See Footnote-1

[5] News by Careers 360, https://www.news.careers360.com.

bring in to focus the need for greater investments in research and coordinated effort from all institutions to place India higher in global knowledge production."[6]

A cursory look at the extant literature reveals that from 2020-2024, funding for scholarships and research fellowships in HEIs had declined by over INR 1500 crore. In the Union Budget 2025, allocations for scholarships for Other Backward Castes (OBCs) and Economically Backward Classes (EBCs) significantly increased, but the funding for multiple scholarships for minority and tribal students was reduced, such as the National Fellowship and Scholarship for Higher Education of Scheduled Tribe Students, the National Overseas Scholarship Scheme, the Pre-Matric Scholarship for Minorities, the Post-Matric Scholarship for Minorities, the Maulana Azad National Fellowship for minority students, among others. The funds for the National Fellowship and Scholarship for Higher Education of Scheduled Tribe (ST) Students, which was provided to 750 fresh ST students every year, witnessed a 99.99% reduction in funding (from INR 240 crore to INR 0.02 crore)[7].

The majority of research publications in India are produced by centrally funded institutions such as IITs, CSIR, and central universities. However, the number of private universities in India has increased during the last decade to 521 in July 2025, and there has been a push for increased research and development initiatives in private institutions. A study[8] by Singh et al. on the institutional shifts in research output noted that 40 institutions that were among the top 100 contributors to research output were replaced by 18 private universities, 9 NITs, 5 IITs, 2 IISERs and a few centrally funded institutions from 2014-23. Among the institutions which lost their position were 18 state universities, and 11 CSIR labs. According to the National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF) 2024 rankings[9], among the top 100 institutions, IITs contributed to 24.29% of research publications, with other publicly funded institutions producing around 30%. The contribution of private universities has increased through the decade, with 23.48% publications by private education institutions and 6% by state private universities. Although the trends denote an increase in research output from private universities, they could also be indicative of barriers to or decline in research in the existing public institutions. It may be noted that the costs are highly prohibitive in the profit oriented private universities resulting induction of only the very rich.

In the case of social science research, universities in the United States and the United Kingdom continue to excel, showcasing the need for a healthy research environment as well as strong

[6] Ekta, Sanket Vij (2025). International Journal of Information Technology and Management, Vol. 20, Issue No. 2, August-2025, ISSN 2249-4510

[7] National Institutional Ranking Framework, Ministry of Education, Government of India, https://www.nirfindia.org

[8] Sukhadeo Thorat (Ed.), Samar Verma (ed.) (2017). Social Science Research in India: Status, Issues, and Policies, 5 January 2017.

[9] PMSSS Students Allege Delay In Fund Disbursement, Kashmir Observer, January 10, 2024

industry ties. NEP 2020 also highlights the need for technical education that engages with other fields. The various disciplines in the social sciences, and the research conducted in these fields, form the basis of the knowledge production through which social policy is shaped. Data collection and fieldwork in India is riddled with barriers, such as lack of accessibility, safety concerns, and delayed funding. These issues are further exacerbated when conducting research in rural India. *Social Science Research in India: Status, Issues, and Policies*[10], published in 2017, states the need of a research ecosystem for improved public policymaking in India. Problems with funding, infrastructure, and data collection continue to persist[11].

3. Concerns for Researchers in HEIs:

The NEP2020 appears to be quite emphatic that education is a public good and must not be a commercial activity or a source of profit. The matter of commercialization of education has been dealt with by the Policy through multiple relevant fronts, including: the 'light but tight' regulatory approach that mandates full public disclosure of finances, procedures, course and programme offerings, and educational outcomes; the substantial investment in public education; and mechanisms for good governance of all institutions, public and private. However, it miserable faulters in public funding, particularly in the sub-sector of higher education and research. Given that about 45% of the higher education space is occupied by private investment, the public spending, as noted elsewhere in this Article, looks piquant and paradoxical. One shudders to think what would have happened with such meagre allocation had there been no private player.

In the face of significant shortage of funding for higher education and research as outlined above, there are serious procedural barriers that hamper research. Bureaucratic delays and an extensive, and often cumbersome, process of verification lead to further delays in the disbursement of stipends to scholars, resulting in more arrears. In 2024, under the National Fellowship for Other Backward Classes (NFOBC), several research scholars faced academic setbacks and financial instability due to issues with stipend disbursement. The All India Research Scholars' Association (AIRSA) also raised the issue[12], writing to the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment. Multiple central universities have reported the same issues with regard to the disbursement of funds. Research scholars have also reported cases wherein their claims have been approved, yet the stipend remains pending or is delayed several months. In 2024, under the National Fellowship for Other Backward Classes (NFOBC), several research scholars faced academic setbacks and financial

[10] Ravina Warkad (2024). OBC research scholars in the lurch as govt chokes fund flow, The Hindu, December 17, 2024.

[11] Kaushik Datta (2025). Budget 2025: Big thrust on research, innovation, AI, but where's the money?, India Today Insight, February 1, 2025.

[12] Higher Education Funding Agency, Govt. of India, https://hefa.co.in/about-us

instability due to issues with stipend disbursement. The All-India Research Scholars' Association (AIRSA) also raised the issue, writing to the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment. Students from Jammu and Kashmir enrolled under the Prime Minister Special Scholarship Scheme (PMSSS) had allegedly faced a delay[13] in fund disbursement under the All-India Council for Technical Education (AICTE). Delays in disbursement also impact fieldwork, quality of research, and academic performance. For research scholars, this can affect their quality of life and have a significant negative impact on their work. in the field. Research Stipend is also another factor that has worked as discouragement. There has been dissatisfaction amongst scholars due to lack of stipend hikes

The future of Academic Research and Development needs to be discussed in context. While the UGC is rolling out reforms based on the NEP 2020, certain states, such as Tamil Nadu, Kerala and West Bengal, are drafting their own State Education Policy. Although the role of the UGC is to regulate and maintain standards in HEIs, it is unclear how the decision by states to opt out of the NEP and establish their own SEP's might impact the UGC. Regardless, universities, including state universities, must work in tandem with government sources and ensure industry-academia collaborators, to ensure progress in the realm of academic R&D.

Following an NEP recommendation, the **Anusandhan National Research Foundation** (NRF)[14] was established in February 2024, intending to 'democratize' research and research funding, as per the Minister of Science and Technology. The Union Government has worked out a five year budget[15] for the NRF at INR 50,000 crore, out of which INR 10,000 crore will be from the central government, and INR 36,000 crore from the private sector. The Budget 2025 states that it aims to 'operationalize the Anusandhan National Research Fund for basic research and prototype Development', and to set up a 'mechanism for spurring private sector-driven research and innovation at commercial scale with a financing pool of INR 1 lakh crore in line with the announcement in the interim budget.' Furthermore, initiatives like the Prime Ministers Research Fellowship (offering 10,000 fellowships, according to Budget 2025) will incentivize researchers in the country.

Addressing the barriers to policy implementation in India's R&D landscape, specifically in higher education institutions, is essential for fostering a more sustainable research ecosystem. For instance, the budget for research related initiatives, namely, the National Initiative for Design Innovation, Startup India Initiative in Higher Educational Institutions, Unnat Bharat Abhiyan, Implementation of the IMPRINT Research Initiative, and other Schemes, dropped from INR 355

[13] Pradhan Mantri Vidyalaxmi (PM-vidyalaxmi) Scheme Guidelines, Govt. of India, https://www.education.gov.in/sites/upload_files/mhrd/files/document-reports/PM_Vidyalaxmi_Scheme_Guidelines.pdf.

[14] https://www.education.gov.in/sites/upload_files/mhrd/files/document-reports/pncftis.pdf

[15] Scholarships & Education Loan, Govt. of India, https://www.education.gov.in/scholarships-education-loan-4-hi.

crore to INR 327 crore. However, only INR 74.5 crore was utilized in the last fiscal year[16]. This is indicative of a gap between policy and implementation, leading to further deceleration in R&D in India. In the case of higher education institutions, ensuring stability for research scholars and developing industry-academia cooperation must be a crucial part of this venture. Furthermore, optimizing funding strategies and ensuring policy implementation is necessary for R&D in India to have a meaningful impact.

Obviously, the Potential Solutions and Reforms should be (a) increased R&D Investment as enunciated in the NEP 2020 (b) improved Industry-Academia Links leading to stronger collaborations and partnerships with industry that can help align research with market needs and provide long-term research contracts (c) development of Alternative Funding : Strategies like endowments from alumni and philanthropists, revenue-generating activities, and social impact bonds can provide alternative revenue streams (d) focus on Infrastructure and ensure dedicated funding to upgrade research facilities, labs, and access to advanced technology. And (e) promoting International Collaboration: Partnerships with international research institutions that can enhance the quality and reach of Indian research.

Grants play an essential role in funding higher education. The Indian government provides various types of grants to universities, each serving a different purpose. These grants can be classified into three broad categories: maintenance grants, development grants, and non-recurring grants. For Central Universities, 100% grants are disbursed by the UGC or Central Govt while for State-aided Universities, about 80% of their fund requirement is borne by respective State Govts. The Deemed Universities are mostly in the private sector where no public funding is allowed.

India's premier educational institutions with high level of intellectual capital needs to be supported by adequate infrastructure. We need to channelize their capabilities into meaningful research and innovation. Presently there is no Indian institution in global top 100 rankings. To revitalize infrastructure and systems in higher education, their needs to be new investments in research and related infrastructure[17].

4. Recent Initiatives:

4.1 Higher Education Financing Agency (HEFA):

[16] National Education Policy, 2020, https://www.education.gov.in

[17] Credit Guarantee Scheme for Education Loans, https://www.ncgtc.in/en/product-details/CGFEL/Credit-Guarantee-Fund-Scheme-for-Education-Loans-(CGFEL)

The Higher Education Financing Agency (HEFA)[18] is a joint venture of MoE, Government of India and Canara Bank for financing creation of capital assets in premier educational institutions in India as part of NEP. The Finance Minister in the Budget speech of 2016-17 announced "We have decided to set up a Higher Education Financing Agency (HEFA) with an initial capital base of Rs.2,000 crores. The HEFA will be a not-for- profit organization that will leverage funds from the market and supplement them with donations and CSR funds. These funds will be used to finance improvement in infrastructure in our top institutions and will be serviced through internal accruals. "HEFA's scope is greatly expanded to cover school education, educational institutes under Ministry of health etc. HEFA is registered under Section 8 [Not-for-profit] under the Companies Act 2013 as a Union Govt company and as Non–deposit taking Systematically Important (NBFC-ND-SI) with RBI. HEFA incorporated on 31st May 2017, is a joint venture of MoE, GOI and Canara Bank with an agreed equity participation in the ratio of 90.91% and 09.09% respectively.

In the HE sectors, HEFA is mandated to the goal of developing India's top-ranked institutions like IIT's, IIIT's, NIT's, IISCs, AIIMS into Globally top-ranking institutions through improvement in their academic and infrastructure quality. HEFA is particularly interested in financing the building of educational infrastructure, R&D infrastructure and thereby enabling the institutions to reach top rankings globally. HEFA is established by GoI after taking note of all the above facts through a Budget announcement in 2016-17 that "We have decided to set up a Higher Education Financing Agency (HEFA). The HEFA will be a not-for- profit organization that will leverage funds from the market and supplement them with donations and CSR funds. These funds will be used to finance improvement in infrastructure in our top institutions and will be serviced through internal accruals." HEFA would incentivize better internal resource generation and at the same time allow substantial investments through market borrowings that can be repaid over a longer period.

4.2 Revitalizing Infrastructure and Systems in Education (RISE):

"Revitalising Infrastructure and Systems in Education (RISE) by 2022", is a major initiative[19] launched by GOI in the FY 2018-19 budget. The Scheme was launched in 2018 to boost infrastructure in higher education and other key institutions, providing ₹1 lakh crore in funding over four years through the Higher Education Financing Agency (HEFA). The scheme is aimed to create world-class facilities, robust research ecosystems, and high-end laboratories by providing low-cost, long-term loans to institutions for physical infrastructure development.

[18] Pradhan Mantri Vidyalaxmi (PM-Vidyalaxmi) Scheme, Govt. of India, https://pmvidyalaxmi.co.in/
[19] Partnering with MHRD for Uchhatar Avishkar Yojana (UAY), https://prism.serbonline.in/RS-UAY

4.3 PM-Vidyalaxmi Scheme:

The Government of India has approved PM-Vidyalaxmi scheme to provide financial support to meritorious students so that financial constraints do not prevent any youth of India from pursuing quality higher education. A special loan product has been introduced to enable for collateral free, guarantor free education loans to meritorious students who get admission in the top 902 quality higher educational institutions of the nation; made accessible through a simple, transparent, student-friendly and entirely digital application process. Furthermore, for students with up to Rs. 8 lakhs annual family income, the scheme will also provide for 3% interest subvention on loans up to Rs.10 lak[20].

The list of 902 quality higher education institutions is at: https://dashboard.aishe.gov.in[21].

5. Central Sector Interest Subsidy Scheme (CSIS):

Department of Higher Education, Ministry of Education has been implementing the Central Sector Interest Subsidy (CSIS) Scheme since 2009. Under this Scheme Interest Subsidy is given during the moratorium period i.e., Course period plus one year on Education Loan taken from the Scheduled Banks under the Model Education Loan Scheme of Indian Banks Association to students belonging to economically weaker sections whose annual parental income is up to Rs. 4.5 Lakh from all sources. The subsidy is allowed for pursuing higher education in professional/ technical courses only from NAAC accredited Institutions or professional/ technical programmes accredited by NBA or Institutions of National Importance or Centrally Funded Technical Institutions (CFTIs)[22]. Canara Bank has been appointed as Nodal Bank for the implementation of the scheme.

5.1 Credit Guarantee Fund Scheme for Education Loan (CGFSEL):

The "Credit Guarantee Fund Scheme for Education Loans (CGFSEL)" was notified on 16.09.2015. Under the CGFSEL, Central Government gives guarantee for the education loans availed by students without any collateral security and third-party guarantee for a maximum loan limit of Rs. 7.5 Lakh. The Fund provides guarantee cover to the extent of 75% of the amount in default through the National Credit Guarantee Trustee Company Ltd. (NCGTC), the Trustee of the Department for this purpose[23].

[20] Prime Minister's Research Fellowship (PMRF), Govt. of India, https://www.pmrf.in

[21] Sources of University Funding in India, Teachers. Institute, December 27, 2023, https://teachers.institute/higher-education/higher-education-india-funding-challenges-solutions

[22] Funding Higher Education In India: Sources, Challenges and Reforms, https://teachers.institute/planning-and-management-of-higher-education/funding-higher-education-india.

[23] Dayakar Peddi and Anushi Tiwary, Higher Education I Unfolding: A Crisis unfolding. https://www.deccanherald.com/opinion/higher-education-a-crisis-unfolding-3439221

There are also other few Schemes like IMPRINT[24] and UAY [25] which aim to identify and fund research projects that have a societal impact. The Prime Minister's Research Fellowship[26] also supports Ph.D. scholars to improve research quality.

5.2 Private Donations:

Private donations and philanthropic contributions are another source of funding for higher education institutions in India. While not as common as government grants or student fees, some universities receive significant donations from alumni, corporations, and other private entities. These funds are often used for specific purposes, such as building infrastructure, conducting research, or supporting scholarships for deserving students. In recent years, the role of private funding has grown, especially in the case of private universities. Some of these institutions rely heavily on private donations and corporate sponsorships to enhance their academic offerings, infrastructure, and global visibility. However, the extent to which private donations are distributed to public institutions remains a point of concern. There is also the issue of donor influence—private donations may come with expectations or conditions that may not align with the educational goals or values of the institution.

6. Other Concerns:

6.1 Declining Government Support:

One of the most significant challenges facing higher education in India is the decline in government funding. Over the past few decades, the share of government expenditure allocated to higher education has decreased, leading to increased pressure on public universities and colleges to find alternative funding sources. As a result, many institutions have had to rely more on student fees and private donations to meet their financial needs.

This shift has led to concerns about the quality of education and accessibility. With increasing reliance on student fees, the cost of education has risen, making it more difficult for students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds to afford higher education. Additionally, the reduction in government funding has impacted the ability of universities to provide adequate facilities and resources for students and faculty.

[24] IMPRINT (Impacting Research Innovation and Technology), 2015, https://www.indiascienceandtechnology.gov.in
[25] Amir Pasic (2023). Philanthropy in Higher Education- Does it Serve Public Good, AGB, Volume 31, Number 3, May-June 2023
[26] Hasanly Tarkan (Sept 2025). Ensuring social equity through education: bridging the gap between urban and rural educational opportunities, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/396145104

6.2 Rising Operational Costs:

Higher education institutions in India are also facing rising operational costs, which include salaries for faculty and staff, maintenance of infrastructure, and investment in new technology and research facilities. The cost of providing quality education has increased due to inflation, rising energy costs, and the growing demand for more advanced teaching and learning resources. These escalating expenses are creating financial strain for many institutions, particularly those that already receive limited government funding.

6.3 Increasing Privatization:

As government funding for higher education continues to decline, the role of the private sector has grown. Private universities and colleges, which were once a small part of the higher education landscape in India, have seen rapid growth in recent years. While privatization has led to increased competition and improved infrastructure in some cases, it has also raised concerns about the commercialization of education. Increased privatization can create a two-tier system where well-funded private institutions offer world-class facilities and attract top-tier students, while public universities struggle with limited resources. This divide exacerbates educational inequality, as students from wealthier backgrounds have access to better opportunities and educational experiences, while those from disadvantaged backgrounds are left with fewer options.

6.4 Potential Solutions and Way Forward:

Addressing the financial challenges in higher education requires a multifaceted approach. Some potential solutions include increasing government investment in public universities, diversifying revenue sources, and promoting equitable access to education. The government needs to recognize the importance of investing in higher education for the future of the nation. A more substantial and consistent allocation of funds to public universities would reduce their dependency on student fees and private donations, helping to make education more affordable and accessible to a wider range of students.

The Universities should be encouraged, as a policy framework, to diversify the revenue sources and explore alternative revenue sources, such as collaboration with industry, international partnerships, and research grants from industry. Establishing endowments and attracting corporate sponsorships can also help reduce financial pressure on universities. Public universities should also focus on offering innovative programs that can generate additional income while maintaining academic integrity.

At the same time, it is essential to promote the principles of equity in higher education. It is essential to ensure that the financial model for higher education in India remains equitable. For

example, efforts should be made to provide scholarships, reduce student loan burdens, and ensure that education is accessible to students from all economic backgrounds. Additionally, increasing access to higher education in rural areas and smaller towns can help bridge the gap between urban and rural students.

7. Conclusion:

The NEP 2020 under Section 25 has categorically and unequivocally stated the policy framework of public expenditure in education at all levels. It has stated that "The Policy commits to significantly raising educational investment, as there is no better investment towards a society's future than the high-quality education of our young people. Public spending on education has not yet even come close to the recommended level of 6% of GDP, as envisaged by the 1968 Policy, reiterated in the Policy of 1986, and which was further reaffirmed in the 1992 review of the Policy.

The current public (Government - Centre and States) expenditure on education in India has hovered around 4.43% of GDP (Analysis of Budgeted Expenditure 2017-18); and only around 10% of the total Government spending goes towards education (Economic Survey 2017-18). These numbers are far smaller than most developed and developing countries. In order to attain the goal of world-class education in India, and the corresponding multitude of benefits to this Nation and its economy, this Policy unequivocally endorses and envisions an increase in public investment in education - by both the Central government and all State Governments - to reach 6% of GDP at the earliest, and reach 20% of all public expenditure over a 10-year period. It is also revealed from data of public expenditure that in 2024-25 only about 1.2 % GDP was incurred by the Central and State Govts. as public expenditure in higher education.

In this Article, we have tried to stress the fact that higher education is not merely a line item in the National Budget. It (HE) reflects the societal commitment to its future. However, it has historically been a low priority compared to defense, infrastructure, subsidies etc. Perhaps it reflects a lack of political will to invest in long-term human capital development notwithstanding the reasonable recommendations incorporated in recommendations of Education Commissions since independence. Funding higher education and research in India is, therefore, a complex challenge that requires a multi-faceted approach.

Public spending receivable from government grants needs to be immediately increased substantially to reach at least 2.5 % of GDP for HE space. Besides this primary source of funding, internal resources from student fees and other ways and means of resource generation must be explored by the HEIs Additionally, external funding from private donations and philanthropy will contribute towards a strong backbone of financing. We hope the HEIs instead of only blame games,

will appreciate the pressing need to diversify funding sources and earnestly explore new models to ensure the sustainability of educational institutions. Public-Private partnerships, alternative funding mechanisms, and international collaborations hold the key to transforming the higher education landscape in India. As these reforms take shape, the future of higher education in India looks promising, with more opportunities for students from all backgrounds to access quality education.

In NEP 2020, it has been repeatedly stressed that India is moving on fast track towards becoming a knowledge society and economy. It has also been outlined that keeping in view the requirements of the fourth industrial revolution, characterized by increasing proportion of employment opportunities for creative, multidisciplinary and highly skilled workforce, the higher education system must, at the earliest, be re-adjusted, re-vamped, and re-energized to meet these requirements. NEP is quite clear in its vision that India should be promoted as a global study destination providing premium education at affordable costs and restore its role as a Viswa Guru. On the other hand, the policies at ground level, particularly the meagre public expenditure, are absolutely contrary to these wish lists. The policies to support some HEIs like Institutes of Eminence, National Institutes, IISERs, IITs, IIMs, Central Universities etc. in preference to other HEIs is also utterly controversial and disappointing to the vast majority of learners. The evolving situation, therefore, is paradoxical indeed.

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