

Consultative Meeting on State Higher Education Councils
March 16-17, 2022

Concept Note



Centre for Policy Research in Higher Education (CPRHE)
National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration
17-B, Sri Aurobindo Marg
New Delhi-110016

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Background

Higher education in India has expanded rapidly and reached a massification stage with a Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) of 27.1 percent. There is diversification of higher education providers offering courses and study programmes in various modes. The Covid pandemic has further impacted the higher education system and led to a shift towards online modes of teaching and learning.

The expansion of the sector coupled with the emergence of multiple providers and modes of transactions necessitates reforms in the way higher education is governed at Central and State government levels. As a leading higher education functionary at the State level, State Higher Education Councils (SHECs) are expected to play a significant role in the reform process in the state higher education sector and help different types of higher educational institutions to achieve the goals of access, equity, and quality.

SHECs were created following the National Policy on Education 1986 recommendations. The University Grants Commission (UGC) issued guidelines to set up SHECs in 1988. According to the UGC guidelines, SHECs are entrusted with planning and coordination, academic, advisory, and administrative functions. The Twelfth Five-year plan, National Mission on Higher education 2013, has placed a greater premium on the need for state-level planning for higher education, wherein state councils for higher education are expected to play a key role. The centrally sponsored programme of RUSA relies on SHECs for the planning and implementation in each of the states.

SHECs are expected to carry out the functions of planning, monitoring and evaluation, quality assurance, advisory, and funding. Although all the SHECs were established under the same regulations and norms, they vary in terms of functions undertaken. The SHECs were envisaged as "intermediary bodies" that will be at an arm's length from the state as well as the national level and will work closely with the state universities and colleges to improve access, equity, and quality in higher education. SHECs have formal powers and responsibilities, but in practice, the implementation shows they have yet to exercise full authority.

NEP 2020 Recommendations on Multidisciplinary Educational Institutions

Both at central and state levels, the governments are taking multiple initiatives for NEP 2020 implementation. The plan for the overhaul of higher education is its structural reorganization into an ecosystem of large, multidisciplinary universities and colleges. NEP 2020 proposes to have only three types of higher education institutions: Research-intensive Universities, Teaching-intensive Universities, and Autonomous degree-granting Colleges. The NEP 2020 suggests that higher education institutions (HEIs) will have the autonomy and freedom to move gradually from one category to another, based on their plans, actions, and effectiveness. NEP 2020 suggests restructuring the higher education system and creating world-class multidisciplinary HEIs.

The NEP 2020 envisages a new conceptual understanding of what constitutes a higher education institution (HEI), i.e., a university or a college. A university will mean a multidisciplinary institution of higher learning that offers undergraduate and graduate programmes, with high-quality teaching, research, and community engagement. NEP 2020

suggests that India needs a holistic and multidisciplinary education to step into the future. It expects arts and humanities students to learn more science and incorporate more vocational subjects and soft skills. NEP 2020 envisions that large multidisciplinary universities and colleges will offer flexibility in curriculum and offer novel and engaging course options to students, in addition to rigorous specialization in a subject. NEP 2020 also suggests that pedagogy will emphasize communication, discussion, debate, research, and opportunities for cross-disciplinary and interdisciplinary thinking in multidisciplinary institutions.

NEP also recommends a flexible and innovative curriculum in all HEIs to promote holistic and multidisciplinary education. NEP 2020 recommends establishing an Academic Bank of Credit (ABC) to digitally store the academic credits earned from various recognized HEIs so that the degrees from an HEI can be awarded, taking into account credits earned. The move aims to help students earn credit from different disciplines and put them in the Academic Bank of Credit to get their certificates, diplomas, or degrees.

NEP 2020 suggests that every existing affiliating university will be responsible for mentoring its affiliated colleges to develop their capabilities and achieve minimum benchmarks in academic and curricular matters, teaching and assessment, governance reforms, financial robustness, and administrative efficiency. NEP 2020 proposes that all colleges affiliated with a university aim to attain the required benchmarks overtime to secure the prescribed accreditation benchmarks and eventually become autonomous degree-granting colleges. It says that an Autonomous degree-granting College (AC) will refer to a large multidisciplinary institution of higher learning that grants undergraduate degrees and primarily focuses on undergraduate teaching. NEP 2020 envisages that, over a period of time, every college would develop into either an autonomous degree-granting college or a constituent college of a university. The policy also hopes that with appropriate accreditations, Autonomous degree-granting Colleges could evolve into Research-intensive or Teaching-intensive Universities if they so aspire.

The role of SHECs becomes crucial to implement all these recommendations. The SHECs have to counsel and guide HEIs on why to implement these recommendations and the best way to do it. Accordingly, the consultative Meeting strives to initiate a national dialogue on the expectations from and role of SHECs in providing proper guidance to educational institutions and helping state governments develop a mechanism for realizing these significant recommendations of NEP 2020.

Earlier and Present SHECs Meeting by CPRHE, NIEPA

NIEPA has been organizing meetings of the SHECs. The first Consultative Meeting of SHECs was organized by the Center for Policy Research in Higher Education (CPRHE), NUEPA, on 25 and 26 March 2014 in NUEPA, New Delhi. The primary purpose of the consultative Meeting was to engage with the States on issues concerning the role of state higher education councils in state-level planning for higher education. A total of 13 SHEC representatives participated in the Meeting. The second Consultative Meeting organized on February 15-16, 2018, was attended by 16 SHEC representatives. The third consultative Meeting on State Higher Education Councils (SHECs) on February 25-26, 2019, was attended by 12 SHEC representatives. The fourth Consultative Meeting was organized on March 18-19, 2021 in online mode due to the Covid pandemic and discussed the new initiatives in higher education in India and plans for implementation of NEP 2020.

In this series, a fifth consultative meeting of SHECS is being organized by the Centre for Policy Research in Higher Education (CPRHE), NIEPA, on 16 and 17 March, 2022, in online mode. The primary purpose of this Consultative Meeting is to engage with the SHECs of

different states and discuss their roles and responsibilities for state-level planning for higher education and implementation of the NEP 2020 recommendations.

Objectives

The primary objectives of the proposed Consultative Meeting are:

- Discussing NEP 2020 with a focus on preparing a plan for transformation towards Multidisciplinary Educational Institutions.
- Creating a viable opportunity to form a national network of policymakers from the states for sustainable knowledge building.
- Highlighting activities carried out by SHECs regarding implementation of NEP recommendations in 2021-22.

Themes

The Consultative Meeting will specifically focus on:

- Identifying the role and responsibilities of SHECs in implementing the NEP 2020 recommendation on Multidisciplinary Higher Education Institutions in the state.

Methodology

- The Meeting will be conducted in the workshop mode having lectures, discussions, and group work.

Venue and Date

The Meeting will be organized online through the Google meet platform on March 16 and 17, 2022. The meeting will start at 0930 hrs on March 16 and end at 1700 hrs. The second day of the Consultative meeting on March 17 will start at 0930 hrs and end at 1330 hrs on March 17.

Contact for the Consultative Meeting

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