

# **Executive Summary**



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The Report contains significant results of the performance audit on Outcomes of Higher Education in Punjab in respect of Higher Education schemes being implemented by Department of Higher Education, selected Universities and colleges covering the period April 2015 to March 2020.

### **Introduction and Audit framework**

Higher education system plays a vital role for the country's overall development. The Strategic Framework of 12th Five Year Plan (12<sup>th</sup> FYP) identified Access, Equity, Quality and Governance as four main areas of Higher Education that need attention.

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 envisions an India centric education system that contributes directly to transforming the nation sustainably into an equitable and vibrant knowledge society, by providing high quality education to all. It states that Higher Education is a critical contributor to sustainable livelihoods and economic development of the nation.

As of March 2020, there are 32 Universities and 1079 colleges available in Punjab. Out of total available Higher Education Institutes (HEIs), three State Universities and 361 colleges are providing general higher education. As of March 2020, the National ranking of Punjab State in terms of Gross Enrolment Ratio is 18<sup>th</sup>; ranking for number of colleges is 14<sup>th</sup> and ranking for college density is 10<sup>th</sup>.

Considering the importance of education, the member states of United Nations' jointly committed (September 2015) to the Sustainable Development Goal-4 (SDG-4) which is to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifetime learning opportunities for all.

This performance audit was conducted between August 2020 and March 2021 for the period 2015-16 to 2019-20. The records maintained in Punjabi University, Patiala; Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar and Rajiv Gandhi National University of Law, Patiala and in selected 38 colleges were examined with reference to recommendations of 12<sup>th</sup> FYP, University Grant Commission norms/guidelines and outcome indicators of National Assessment and Accreditation Council. The audit included examination of aspects such as student progression, access, equity, employability, progression to higher education, quality and governance of higher education in state universities and selected colleges. Preparedness of the department for implementation of NEP 2020 was also seen during this performance audit.

The audit objectives for carrying out the performance audit of outcomes of higher education were to ascertain: (i) Whether the State Government/ HEIs ensured accessibility, equity and affordability in Higher Education; (ii) Whether the Quality of Higher Education was ensured; (iii) Whether an effective system for Governance and Management existed; and (iv) Whether the Department was prepared for implementation of NEP 2020.

The audit findings, conclusions and recommendations relating to each of the four audit objectives have been reported in four distinct chapters viz. Chapters II, III, IV and V. The chapter-wise important findings, conclusions and recommendations are as follows:

### **Access, Equity and Affordability in Higher Education**

Government of Punjab has no policy regarding opening of colleges as per geographical mapping, as a result, seven sub-divisions were still devoid of any college (Government/Constituent/Aided) due to non-inclusion in the plan. Besides, construction work of 12 colleges out of 27 planned colleges were not completed within scheduled date due to lack of funds.

*[Paragraph 2.1.1.1]*

The distribution of general degree colleges both regionally as well as among rural and urban areas of the state was not proportionate. During 2015-2020, only 32.56 per cent to 34.78 per cent government colleges were available in rural areas for providing higher education to 62.52 per cent population of age group 18-23 years.

*[Paragraphs 2.1.2.1 and 2.1.2.2]*

Though Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) of Punjab was consistently higher than National GER, it was less than the target set by GoP in respect of Sustainable Development Goal during 2019-20. The GER of SC category improved during 2015-2018 but it declined during 2018-2020.

*[Paragraphs 2.2.1 and 2.2.2]*

Ten colleges ran 16 general courses under self-finance scheme with fee structure of these courses ranging between ₹ 7,143 and ₹ 46,514 which was much higher than the fee of these general courses in normal mode.

*[Paragraph 2.4.2]*

In PU, Patiala, 15 hostels were overcrowded by 12.63 per cent whereas in GNDU, Amritsar, the hostel facility could not be provided to the 18.16 per cent students during 2015-2020 due to non-availability of adequate space.

*[Paragraph 2.5.1]*

The selected HEIs have not yet provided facilities to differently abled students in view of NAAC norms such as tactile guiding path, railing, lifts, ramp, etc. in consonance with the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 and UGC Regulations 2009.

*[Paragraph 2.5.1]*

### **Recommendations**

- *In order to correct the regional imbalances in distribution of HEIs and to adhere to GoP policy decision (March 2017) to open at least one Government college in each sub-division, the State Government should prioritise opening of new colleges in the sub-divisions where there is no Government/constituent/aided college. Further, to promote equity*

*in all disciplines of general education, the State Government may ensure establishment/strengthening of new/existing HEIs with multiple streams (Arts, Commerce, Science, etc.).*

- *The State Government may undertake planned efforts to enhance GER across all categories especially of the disadvantaged/EWS/SC, as envisaged under 12<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan, by setting up of Community Education Development Cell and undertaking preparatory training/special coaching for the disadvantaged section.*
- *The Universities should ensure availability of hostels with adequate capacity to avoid overcrowding/deprivation and availability of basic infrastructure in affiliated colleges as well as in universities for the persons with disabilities, in accordance with the provisions of Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016.*

### **Quality of Higher Education**

All selected universities revised syllabus of their programmes up to desired percentage and were eligible for award of maximum score as per NAAC benchmark.

**[Paragraph 3.1.1.3]**

In the selected universities, 63 to 100 *per cent* teachers used Information and Communication Technology (ICT) whereas in 29 selected colleges, 3 to 100 *per cent* teachers used ICT. The student computer ratio (SCR) in the selected universities ranged between 8:1 and 12:1 while as in selected colleges it ranged between 3:1 and 79:1.

**[Paragraph 3.1.2.2]**

Availability of faculty in colleges was insufficient thereby resulting in an average Student Teacher Ratio (STR) of 49:1 more than two times than its prescribed STR of 20:1. In Government colleges, percentage of contractual teaching staff ranged between 56 *per cent* and 70 *per cent* during the 2015-2020. 35.88 *per cent* of the teachers in 38 test checked affiliated colleges did not possess the prescribed National Eligibility Test qualification.

**[Paragraph 3.1.2.3]**

The centralised evaluation system was in place in Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar and Rajiv Gandhi National University of Law, Patiala. However, in selected universities, the students ranging between 32 *per cent* and 49 *per cent* got their marks modified upon revaluation during 2015-2020.

**[Paragraph 3.1.2.5]**

Punjabi University, Patiala and GNDU Amritsar could complete only 53 *per cent* and 56 *per cent* research projects respectively during 2015-2020 whereas only three research projects were undertaken and completed in three selected colleges. Out of the 99 completed research projects, only eight patents were awarded in selected universities.

**[Paragraph 3.2.1.2]**

Dysfunctional or non-existent job facilitating mechanism and lack of employment enhancement programmes meant that the students were deprived of the necessary assistance in exercising career choices. None of the selected universities was eligible for scoring maximum score under NAAC indicator.

*[Paragraphs 3.3.2.2 and 3.3.2.3]*

The system of maintenance of data related to students' employment, students' progression to higher studies and students' performance in competitive examinations was almost non-existent at all levels of the higher education system in the state. Even in test checked colleges, such data was not being consistently maintained. Thus the main student outcome of '**employability and progression to higher studies**' could not be adequately evaluated.

*[Paragraphs 3.3.1 and 3.3.2.5]*

### **Recommendations**

- *To keep pace with technological advancement and innovations in delivery of education, the HEIs should encourage teachers to use ICT teaching tools and make efforts to improve the student-computer ratio.*
- *In order to maintain prescribed Student Teacher Ratio and to provide quality education to the students in Government colleges, the State Government should expedite recruitment of regular teachers with qualification as prescribed in the UGC Regulations.*
- *The Universities should strengthen the system of evaluation to avoid/minimise the high percentage of alteration of marks/result during revaluation.*
- *Universities should ensure that all research projects are completed timely with due quality.*
- *The State Government and universities should conduct relevant professional development programmes for the teachers regularly and should ensure that all the eligible teachers are provided training in these programmes.*
- *Every HEI should constitute well-functioning placement cell, career counselling cell, and encourage a vibrant alumni association to facilitate graduating students in getting employment or to progress to higher studies.*

### **Governance and Management**

State Level Quality Assurance Cell neither maintained the data regarding the number of colleges which had constituted Internal Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC) nor developed a mechanism to monitor it. Quality assurance activities were not undertaken by 15 colleges out of 38 selected colleges since IQAC was not established in these colleges.

*[Paragraphs 4.1.1.2 and 4.1.2.2]*

There were shortfalls in conducting inspection of affiliated colleges by PU, Patiala (228 colleges) and GNDU, Amritsar (110 colleges). The universities were found overburdened in respect of affiliated colleges against the Rashtriya Uchcharat Shiksha Abhiyan norms.

*[Paragraph 4.1.2.4]*

The position of NAAC accredited HEIs in the state was dismal as only 30.23 *per cent* of eligible HEIs were NAAC accredited as of March 2020. Further only 1.74 *per cent* HEIs were accredited with A<sup>++</sup>/A<sup>+</sup> grade. This indicates that the quality of higher education imparted in the state was not satisfactory.

*[Paragraph 4.4]*

Substantial number of non-teaching posts were vacant in test checked HEIs during 2019-20. In respect of selected universities the vacancies ranged between 27.94 *per cent* and 54.35 *per cent*. In respect of government colleges, the shortage/vacancy in non-teaching staff was 48 *per cent*.

*[Paragraph 4.5]*

## Recommendations

- *In order to increase the number of NAAC accredited institutions, State Level Quality Assurance Cell should maintain report of the State level action plan and effectively monitor functioning of Internal Quality Assurance Cell of colleges and HEIs should ensure constitution of Internal Quality Assurance Cell in every College.*
- *The universities should strengthen their affiliation process and ensure that renewal of temporary affiliation should be granted to colleges after rectification of shortcomings noticed during the Inspections.*
- *The Department and Universities should ensure the recruitment of non-teaching staff for vacant post for smooth functioning of HEIs.*

## Preparedness to implement National Education Policy 2020

Considering the current situation of Higher Education in Punjab as observed in Performance Audit, it appears that the system was still far from ready to adopt the NEP-2020. Despite the initiatives of the GoP across several areas in higher education, the gaps highlighted above represent possible risks for the achievement of the key objectives of the NEP 2020 agenda.

*[Paragraph 5.1]*

## Recommendation

- *Timely and well-coordinated action should be taken by all key stakeholders at the State and Institution level for ensuring time bound and effective implementation of the NEP 2020 in accordance with envisaged priorities.*

