

Higher Education 2.0 : Steps by Central University of Gujarat

By **Prof. Rama Shanker Dubey** - June 12, 2020



Higher education since the swearing-in of the new government in 2019 has taken two major pathways: one, the strengthening and continuation of the schemes and policies that had been introduced in 2014-19 and second, a graded and gradual introduction of new schemes and initiatives to further boost the higher education system of the country. In this regard, the government has taken manifold steps through focusing on quality improvement, enhancing learning opportunities, and providing research impetus to institutions of higher education through various schemes and support structures. The vision of the Hon'ble Prime Minister and the efforts of the HRD Ministry in this regard are laudable. Keeping in line with these new initiatives, the Central University of Gujarat (CUG) too has been proactively involved in implementing the initiatives taken by the government.

One of the areas that higher education has made a valuable contribution is its engagement in innovative academic and research initiatives. The IITs have seen a remarkable growth in the number of patents filed over the last 5 years. Similarly, the introduction of various research initiatives like STARS in basic sciences, IMPRESS in Social Sciences, IMPRINT in translation of innovation to technology, SPARC in promoting academic and research collaborations, and STRIDE for promoting transdisciplinary research has already seen an impressive number of about 1600 projects to the tune of approximately rupees 700 crores. These schemes as undertaken by the HRD Ministry have opened up the possibilities of carrying out research in areas that are of national relevance and are, most importantly, driven by the spirit of local needs and global concerns.

Further, knowledge generation cannot be in a vacuum. It must be ideally blended with the soil of the nation. The vision contained in the New Education Policy to deliver on principles of Access, Inclusion, Quality, Excellence and enhancing employability in Higher Education

by implementing strategic interventions in the sector over the next five years (2019-2024) needs to be understood as a bold step in this direction.

Besides, the social commitment of the higher educational institutions through Honourable P.M.'s initiatives like Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat, Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, Smart India Hackathon and Unnat Bharat Abhiyan provides it with the right blend of inclusiveness and greater community and stakeholder engagement.

To fulfil this vision, CUG has taken major steps towards strengthening interdisciplinary and inter-institutional collaborations in teaching and research with major national and international institutions. The University has Central Instrumentation Facility, one of the most advanced in the country. Moving with the tune of innovation in research CUG has developed an innovative technology for quantitative elucidation of intramolecular structural changes that occur in proteins and biopolymers under various transition states. European Patent no. EP313720A2 has been recently granted to it. An instrument to simultaneously measure viscosity and surface tension of liquid, named Survismeter (Singapore patent 126089), fabricated by a senior Chemistry Professor of CUG, is a green-tech based equipment, which is booming in global market in consonance with the concept of Hon'ble PM 'Be vocal about local'. The students at CUG have proved themselves ably by not only attaining recognition at national and international levels but also bringing laurels to the university by achieving higher academic goals.

In order to march ahead towards building of a new India of the 21st century and making use of enormous e-resources made available recently by MHRD and UGC, the University has implemented blended learning methods with use of more e-contents. During COVID-19 crisis academic activities of the university have been successfully completed via online learning. Library and information science department at CUG has mapped and integrated all possible e-resources available on various platforms for the relevance of students on a single portal at university website. With the help of Information Library Network (INFLIBNET) located at Gandhinagar, a dedicated and unique Learning Management System (LMS) platform has been developed for the various courses taught at CUG where e-resources available at various ends have been aggregated and populated at one place as 'Moodle'. E-content delivery to the students via Moodle provides an exciting teaching learning experience.

The University is in the process of charting out a plan for end-semester examinations based on the guidelines of UGC and MHRD. Most importantly, the teachers of the University are in regular touch with the students and are making sure that they are counselled and provided emotional support during these testing times.

The most crucial pillar of a nation is its education system. History has shown us that it is only through holistic and integrated education that a society can prosper. The initiatives taken by Hon'ble Prime Minister and the HRD Minister, I believe, have opened many possibilities towards achieving a socially equitable and inclusive education system. We, in the higher education sector, have a moral responsibility towards the society and it is through this sense of commitment that we can take our nation forward. As Bharat Ratna Babasaheb Ambedkar noted "cultivation of mind should be the ultimate aim of human existence". We at the helm of the University systems should be able to achieve the vision of Higher Education 2.0 by cultivating young minds for a strong nation.

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