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Chairman,

University Grants Commission, New Delhi.

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Prof M. M. Salunke, Vice-Chancellor, Shivaji University, Kolhapur, Mrs, Sudha Murthy, Chairman, Infosys Foundation, Bangalore and Krantiveer Shri. Nagnathanna Naikwadi, renowned freedom fighter Members of the Faculties, Staff and students, Honoured guests, Ladies and Gentlemen.

I am indeed glad to be present here today at the 44th Annual convocation function of the Shivaji University, Kolhapur. The Shivaji University was inaugurated by the President of India Dr. Radhakrishnan, on 18th November, 1962. One of the major objectives behind foundation of this University was to cater to the regional needs of South Maharashtra. The University caters to about 2,00,000 students studying in 206 affiliated colleges with 34 Post Graduate Departments. An impressive growth indeed from 1962, when the University started with 34 affiliated colleges and about 14000 students with 5 Post-graduate Departments on the campus.

Efforts by the University to raise the standards of teaching and research are being achieved by exploring new areas of higher learning and research in rapidly emerging fields in addition to basic science disciplines. What is indeed commendable is that a University which was founded primarily to cater to the regional aspirations has now geared up to transcend this regional image and emerging as one of the premier institutes of higher education.

I compliment all those who have worked hard to build this University over the years and have contributed to its professional reputation.

Before I proceed further let me congratulate the students who will receive the degrees, as they realize their 'achievement. I also congratulate the faculty members and non teaching staff for their effort and as they see the fruits of their efforts being realized in the form of several of their students being honored with award of degree, I would also like to congratulate Mrs Sudha Murthy, Chairman, Infosys Foundation, Bangalore and Krantiveer Shri Nagnathanna Naikwadi for 'being conferred D.Litt. (Honoris Causa) felicitated by the University today for their work in their respective fields.

Friends let me now switch over from Maharashtra to the national scene related to higher education.

Relevant Issues

Higher education in India has expanded many folds since independence. The number of universities has increased from 20 in 1947 to 378, colleges from 500 to 18064, teaching staff from a meagre 15, 000 to nearly 4.80 Lakhs and student population in higher education from 1 Lakh in 1950 to over 112 Lakh in 2005. Many fold expansion in institutional capacity of higher education has enhanced enrolment ratio from less than 1 % in 1950 to about 10 % in 2007.

These developments notwithstanding, it is strongly felt that there, are a number of challenges that need to be addressed urgently. The foremost priority, at this juncture appears to be enhancing access to higher education. At the same time the enhancement in enrolment ratio has to come with equal opportunity and inclusiveness and quality education. Therefore access, inclusiveness and quality are the key issues confronting higher education. The higher education system also requires academic and administrative reforms to offer quality education and promotes excellence.

While these issues are well known to you, I would like to recapitulate them briefly and share with you the issue, proposed strategies.

Access - Enrolment level:

Access- to higher education in India at the present level of 10% compares poorly with the world average of 23% and 40% to 60% in developed and many developing countries. Given the international experience that an enrolment of 20-25 percent is a necessity for sustainable economic development, the foremost priority is placed in enhancing enrolment rate such that the GER is raised to this threshold level. The 11th Plan has, therefore, set the target GER of 15 percent to be achieved by 2012.

Inclusiveness and equality

The 11th Plan emphasised on inclusive and equitable higher education. This will call for conscious efforts to ensure that the achievement in higher education does not suffer from disparities across region, gender, social groups

such as scheduled castes, scheduled tribes, other backward castes, minorities, physically challenged and poor. The 11th Plan strategy for inclusion recognised three imbalances namely inter-regional, inter-social group and gender. Plan proposed some measures to reduce these imbalances. .

Firstly it proposed support to universities colleges located in districts having lower GER and under Prime Minister initiative also opening of new colleges with matching contribution from the states in 350 districts, which have lower enrolment than all India average.

Secondly since the districts with lower enrolment rate also happens to be from the rural, hilly, remote, tribal and border area and small towns, we proposed additional supports to the universities and colleges in these areas .

Thirdly simultaneously, it also proposed that the colleges/universities with high concentration of SC, ST, OBC, and Muslim students will be provided with enhanced support.

Fourthly since the strategy for mitigating group imbalances will require support to SCs, STs, OBCs, Minorities, particularly Muslims, women and poor. Plan provides for fellowship, hostel, and programs for competency improvement, including remedial coaching and other specific schemes for girls. Even more important is the establishment of Equal Opportunity Office in all Universities to deal with all schemes under one office.

Quality and Excellence:

The 11th Plan approach recognised increased access to higher education will have to come with better quality education and excellence. Our higher education system is characterized by high degree of inter-institution variations in quality and excellence. It is found that the 60 % of colleges and about one third of state universities are non 12(b) as they do not meet the criteria of permanent affiliation due to deficiencies in physical infrastructure, teachers and other as prescribed by the affiliating universities. The self-financing colleges and institutes, and also the self-financing courses in public universities and colleges do not receive grants and are consequently not assessed for quality.

NAAC assessment indicates that 68% of colleges are rated as 'B' while another 23% colleges are rated as 'C' grade; and only the remaining 9% are 'A'

grade. Universities are somewhat better for only 46% universities are rated as 'B' grade while another 23% are 'C' grade; and the remaining 31% are 'A' grade.

The 11th Plan proposed fourfold strategy, which include (a) bringing of non 12 B institutions under the orbit of UGC's grant (b) reducing the quality gap by helping 'B' and 'C' grade institutions (c) setting up of new universities/colleges/institutions with quality infrastructure, quality faculty and efficient academic and administrative governance and (d) focus clearly on improving the adequate availability of quality of teachers.

Firstly the 11th Plan proposed strategy for bringing non-12 (b) colleges and non-2 (f) universities under the ambit of assessment and development assistance mechanism of the UGC with joint support by centre, state and individual institutions with matching contribution for development of the needed physical facilities and other facilities to make them eligible to receive development assistance from the UGC.

Secondly, it also proposed to reduce the quality gap by bringing 'C' and 'B' grade universities and colleges at par with those in grade 'A' again with the joint efforts of the Centre and States Government.

Thirdly, it is recognised that quality improvement will have to specially focus on ensuring quality faculty in adequate numbers. This calls for strategies to attract and retain the best brains as faculty members including incentives and rewards for promoting excellence in teaching and research and by developing a comprehensive scholarship/fellowship program.

Fourthly it is proposed that new 16 central universities and additional 14 universities and 350 colleges in districts with lower enrolment on the Prime Minister initiative will be based on model institutions with potential for quality and excellence;

Academic and Administrative reforms

Unlike expansion, equity/inclusiveness, and quality/excellence,' where efforts in making, the policies concerning reforms in the arena of academics, administration and governance are already well formulated and publicly announced. These are all elaborated upon in details in the reports of Radhakrishnan Commission (1948), Kothari Commission (1968), National Education Policy (1986), Programme of Action document (1992), CABE Committee reports, Resolutions of

the conferences of the Vice Chancellors organised by the UGC and the AIU and a host of other committees constituted by the UGC and MHRD from time to time.

While these recommendations about credit system, semester system, more of international assessment and less written examination component, teachers' evaluation by students, inter-institutional mobility etc have been generally accepted. Quite a few of them have not been implemented and operationalised as yet. Some of these have been tried and failed while some others have been implemented on selective basis. As a result there is a lot of institutional variations in admission, examination, faculty and governance related practices.

Besides there are issues related to governance, including appointment of Vice Chancellors.

Given the fact that most such recommendations are reflective of the best global practices, the 11th plan proposed that, it is high time that they are put into practice without further delay.

But more important is to identify the necessary pre- conditions for effective implementation of academic and administrative reforms and also create an enabling environment for putting them into practice. This may require selective and stage-wise approach.

This also requires sharing of experience of those who have tried and failed and those who are doing it successfully and those who have not tried at all. It is, therefore, proposed to take a comprehensive stock taking of all such recommendations made so far and revisit them to identify problems in their implementation and operationalisation.

Issue related to Financing

Financing of higher education and funding mechanism are perhaps the most crucial aspects for development of higher education and its capacity to reform often impinges adequate and timely resource availability. While demand for higher education has grown by leaps and bound and, the central and state government financial support to the institutions of higher education has decelerated in real terms during the 1990s.

This has had multiple ramifications. On the one hand the public-funded institutions suffered from under investment, adversely affecting their quality. On

the other hand, demand - supply mismatch prompted increasing participation of private institutions. This has led to demand for revisiting the whole issue of financing and funding mechanism, which were addressed by appointing various committees.

A number of recommendations have been put forward for improving the financing and funding mechanism for higher education. These include such important issues as increase in public spending on higher education and also create enabling environment for private investment in higher education. Closely connected is the issue of reviewing fees structure in public institutions in order to develop an appropriate policy as suggested by the CABA Committee.

As affordability to higher education could be a barrier, the issue of providing large number of scholarship and fellowship cannot be avoided. Yet another important issue that is related with financing is that of the issue of fees in self-financing institutions and programmes and we will have to find ways and means of effectively regulating the fees structure of self-financing educational institutions including private universities, deemed universities and other self-financing institutions.

It was felt that resource constraints in higher education have led to many adverse consequences. Universities and colleges have been introducing self-financing seats in regular courses. Besides, the Universities and colleges have been starting new courses in self-financing mode where fees chargeable from students are manifold higher than the regular courses.

It was, thus, strongly felt that adequate public funding to the state universities and colleges affiliated to them need to provide in order to develop decent infrastructure and maintenance thereof. While it was agreed that fees for higher education should not be ridiculously low, it was strongly felt that fees cannot and must not be considered as a major source of revenue for universities and colleges. Fees should, therefore, be reviewed. But increase in fees should be supported by introduction of scholarship, fellowships and subsidies for a large number of students who cannot afford to pay higher cost due to economic constraints.

Cross Subsidization' in the form of variable fees structure such that those who are able to pay are charged higher fees and fee-waiver for those that are not able to afford was also preferred. It was also felt that 'cross-subsidisation' could

also be introduced for self-financing seats in regular courses and also introduction of self-financing sections but it was felt very strongly that fees for such courses and seats must be regulated to ensure that the quality and equity must not be compromised.

Similarly, Student Loan programme was also recommended but with a strong rider that the same should not be taken as a substitute for fee-waiver, scholarship and fellowships for these remain at the core of ensuring equity and inclusion in higher education.

Role of Private educational institutions:

The spread of higher education was achieved through active state support whereby public funding was considered necessary in order to provide equitable opportunities of higher education to all. It has, however, been a proclaimed policy of the country to also encourage private investment in higher education so long as they are driven by charitable and non-profit motives. While universities have largely been in the public domain, India has had a history of having large number of colleges established and maintained by private management. In recent times, the private self-financing institutions -colleges and other degree awarding institutions has gained prominence. At the same time, there has also been witnessed a tendency among the public funded institutions to start and run courses on self-financing basis. More recently, the private universities, either under state legislature or through the deemed university mode have also come to be established,.

As situations prevail today, the system is characterised by rapid expansion in private self financing colleges specially in medical, engineering, dental and education, self-financing courses in government and government aided colleges, private universities and also in unrecognised private institutions offering diploma and certificate programmes

We do need proper regulatory framework for the private sector, to ensure the quality of higher education and also the equity. It is, therefore, important that we develop regulatory framework for the private universities, particularly in terms of their admission, fees, teaching-learning process and governance. The regulation of self financing courses in government and aided colleges and also those in the self-financing institutions with respect to fees, quality and inclusion of girls, socially and economically deprived groups is imminent.

ACTION PLAN:

The UGC presented the policy and strategy proposed by the MHRD in the 11th Plan for the opinion of the Vice-Chancellors. The proposed strategy was discussed for two days. Based on the consensus arrived

at, the MHRD now proposed the following steps in the form of Action Plan for the 11th Five Year Plan.

The strategy proposed by the MHRD /UGC - The Five Goals: These include

1. Expansion in the enrolment from 10% to 15%
2. Inclusion, that is to increase enrolment of regions and groups with lower enrolment ratio
3. Improve the quality of higher education and promote excellence
4. Promote relevant education
5. Introduce academic and administrative reform in Universities and colleges.

Thus the main focus in 11th Plan is to expand higher education so as to enhance access with quality, inclusion, and relevance and also introduce academic and administrative reforms of universities and college system.

Action Plan for Expansion in Enrolment Ratio up to 15%

It is agreed that increase in enrolment ratio by additional 5% will be realized through dual strategy that is through establishment of new universities and colleges and also through enhancing the intake capacity of existing universities and colleges.

It is suggested that increase in the intake capacity of existing institutions would be faster and cost effective way of increasing the additional enrolment.

Further the expansion should come more from professional and technical courses. The conventional courses that are experiencing decline in enrolment should be redesigned to incorporate skill-based courses to increase the enrolment.

The Action Plan proposed in this regard are as follows:

The number of universities and colleges will be increased during the XI

Plan and that the number of additional universities/colleges will be worked out on the basis of the optimum size of the university and college. Thus it is proposed that new universities will be created by setting new universities, which will firstly through division of existing big affiliating universities and secondly by creating new universities. It has already been announced that 16 new Central universities will be set up in States without central university. Further, 14 more University with excellence will be set up.

Further, 350 new colleges will set up in 350 districts which have lower enrolment ratio, with combined support of Centre and State. It is proposed, that an Empowered Committees will be constituted (a) to work out the number of universities and colleges that will be required to achieve 15% to 20% enrolment ratio in next ten years or so both through splitting of existing big affiliating universities and setting up new universities, and (b) to develop the model university to be set up in 16 States including additional 14 universities and model 350 colleges in 350 districts with lower enrolment rate. The UGC has set up Committee to explore the possibility of starting the Community Colleges.

Action Plan for Equity and Inclusion

It is recognized that goal of expansion of enrolment will have to come from the enhancement of enrolment ratio- in regions, areas and groups with lower enrolment ratio. So it is recognized that objective of expansion is complementary to each other. The Action Plan proposes steps to correct “three Imbalances, namely Inter-Regional, Inter -Social Group and Gender Imbalances”. We have identified the 350 districts with lower enrolment, and hilly, remote, border, rural and small towns. We have also identified SC, ST, semi-nomadic, and denitrified tribe, OBC, Muslim, Girls, physically challenge students and poor (irrespective of social, religious and gender background).

Universities /Colleges located in district with lower enrolment ratio, in rural, small towns, Hilly, remote and border area will receive additional grants.Special Development Grants shall be provided to universities and colleges with relatively higher proportion of SC, ST, semi-nomadic, and denitrified tribe, OBC, Muslim, Girls and Physically challenges (irrespective of social, religious, gender background). Special development Grants will be in the form of scholarships /fellowships for M. Phil and Ph. D students belonging to SC, ST, semi-

nomadic, and denitrified tribe, OBC, Muslim, Girls and Physically challenges, and poor. Special Grants for Capacity Building Initiatives including Remedial Coaching in language and main courses, Coaching for NET, Soft Skill Development for SC, ST, semi-nomadic, and denitrified tribe, OBC, Muslim, Girls and Physically challenges, and poor students. Universities and colleges with relatively higher proportion of population SC, ST, semi-nomadic, and denitrified tribe, OBC, Muslim, Girls and Physically' challenges will receive special grants. Equal Opportunity Office shall be set up in each university and necessary financial support shall be provided by the UGC for the purpose. Besides, the UGC shall provide development assistance to universities and colleges for the construction of Girl Hostels.

Action Plan for Promotion of Quality and Excellence:

The strategies for promoting quality and excellence in higher education during the 11th Plan shall focus around the following three broad objectives:

Improving the physical facilities and faculty in non-12B colleges which are so far not eligible to receive development grants from the UGC Efforts would be made to bridge the quality gap between 'A' grade Universities /colleges and 'B' and 'C' grade universities and steps would be taken to increase availability of teachers in universities and colleges. Thus, in addition to the regular development grant to universities and colleges, the following special schemes are proposed for quality improvement.

The first measure is to assess the financial requirement of non-12 B universities and colleges in various states. Provide fund to these institutions jointly by Centre, State and the concern institutions on matching principle. This will be one-time effort so that these universities and colleges are brought under the grant giving mechanism of UGC and also quality assessment.

Second measure is grants for upgrading the physical infrastructure in the 'C' and 'B' Grade universities and colleges in order to help them come at par with the 'A' grade universities and colleges. The UGC proposes to set up a Taskforce to identify the universities, which are rated as 'B' and 'C' Grade and work out financial requirements for these deficiencies. The financial support from the centre will be based on the matching supporting from the State government.

The government will propose to the States to ensure adequate availability of faculty. The government will propose to the state government to remove ban

on the recruitment of teachers wherever it exist and other restrictions on the creation and filling up of vacant faculty positions.

In order to increase the availability of quality faculty, the most important initiative is to increase the number of PhD fellowships as well as the rate of fellowship. It is also proposed to increase the Post- doctoral fellowship.

Action Plan for Academic and Administrative Reforms

On the issue of academic reforms such as introduction of semester system, credit based courses, continuous internal assessment, inter-institutional mobility, national curricular framework etc, the action plans are fairly known and it is only the issue of their implementation.

It has been decided to set up high Power Committee to prepare a roadmap for academic and administrative reforms and to work out the reasons for non-implementation of these reforms and identify conditions that are necessary and sufficient for their successful implementation. Thus operational difficulties will be sorted out and these reforms shall be implemented in a time bound manner, Probably on selective basis.

The UGC shall develop a National Curricular Framework for higher education. For the purpose, a high-powered committee is being set up by the UGC.

Action plan for Financing of Higher Education Financing

The Government is committed to see that the higher education and the allocation for higher education in the 11th plan is proposed to be enhanced by several folds. It appears that higher education shall not suffer from financial constraints.

Given the fact that the state sector plays a dominant role in higher education, as over 85% enrolment in higher education is in the state universities and colleges affiliated to them, the respective state governments must realize the importance of higher education and accord it the priority that it deserves.

We propose to work out a mechanism whereby adequate funds are ensured to these institutions on matching basis whereby the individual institutions, the respective state governments and the UGC act in tandem to overcome the resource constraints.

As regards fees and cost recovery from students, the CABE committee prescribes that fees from students shall account for a maximum of 20 percent of the operating cost. It appears that universities and colleges across the country are already raising much higher proportion by way of fees; the issue needs to be looked into details. The UGC proposes to set up an expert committee to look into various aspects of the fee related to issue and arrive at a strategy whereby the fee for higher education is neither ridiculously low nor it poses a barrier in equitable access to higher education.

Action Plan for Private Participation and Partnership

On the issue of private participation in higher education, such ' initiatives are welcome provided that they do not engage in gross commercialization of higher education. Such participation is generally conditional on their ability to maintain standards, ensure quality and commitment towards social objectives of higher education.

The UGC shall constitute an empowered committee to evolve an effective regulatory mechanism to ensure the same and also develop a model of Public-Private Partnership in consultation with educational institutions and corporate sectors.

The self-financing courses and self-financing seats in public universities also require a regulatory framework to ensure that these initiatives do not adversely impinge on quality, equity and justice.

The UGC will take a review of this issue and come up with an appropriate action plan.

Thank you

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