

Cabinet approves Budgetary Support for Multidisciplinary Education and Research improvement in Technical Education (MERITE) Scheme with an outlay of Rs.4200 crore

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The Union Cabinet chaired by the Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi, has approved the proposal for implementation of the 'Multidisciplinary Education and Research Improvement in Technical Education' (MERITE) Scheme in 275 technical institutions comprising 175 engineering institutions and 100 polytechnics. The objective of the scheme is to improve the quality, equity and governance in technical education covering all States/UTs by implementing interventions aligned with the National Educational Policy-2020 (NEP-2020).

It is a 'Central Sector Scheme' with total financial implication of Rs.4200 crore for a period from 2025-26 to 2029-30. Out of Rs.4200 crore, there will be an external assistance of Rs.2100 crore from World Bank as loan.

Benefits:

An estimated 275 Government/ Government-aided technical institutions are expected to be selected and supported under the scheme. This will include selected National Institutes of Technology (NITs), State Engineering Institutions, Polytechnics and Affiliating Technical Universities (ATUs). Apart from this, the State/ UT departments handling technical education sector will also be supported through MERITE scheme. Further, About 7.5 Lakh Students will be benefitted from the Scheme.

Impact, including employment generation:

The major outputs/ outcomes expected from the scheme are:

- i. Digitalization strategies in participating States/ UTs,
- ii. Development of guidelines for multidisciplinary programs among technical courses,
- iii. Increase in learning and employability skills of students,
- iv. Increase in transition rate of students across student groups,
- v. Strengthened research and innovation environment,
- vi. Better quality assurance and governance mechanisms resulting in long term benefits,
- vii. Increase in accreditation and better Technical Education Institution - level Quality Assurance,
- viii. Relevant, labour market-aligned curriculums and blended courses developed and rolled out and
- ix. Development of future academic administrators especially women faculty.

Implementation strategy and targets

The scheme will be implemented in government engineering institutions and Polytechnics in all States/ UTs. The interventions are aligned with NEP-2020 and are aimed at enhancing the quality, equity and governance of the participating institutions. It will be implemented as a Central Sector Scheme and will have the facility of funds transfer from the Central Government to participating entities through a Central Nodal Agency.

Eminent educational institutions like the IITs and IIMs and regulatory bodies in the higher education sector such as the AICTE, NBA etc. will also play a significant role in the scheme implementation.

Employment Generation:

The initiative emphasizes enhancing students' skills to improve their employability through a comprehensive, multi-faceted approach. Key interventions include offering internship opportunities, updating curricula to align with industry requirements, organizing faculty development programs, and setting up research hubs. Additionally, support will be provided to incubation and innovation centers, skill and maker labs, and language workshops. These measures aim to boost the employability of fresh graduates, leading to higher placement rates and ultimately helping to reduce unemployment among engineering students in the States and Union Territories.

Background:

Sustainable and inclusive growth of the country depends largely on technological advancements which require persistent efforts to upgrade academic and research standards. Research fosters innovation which is fundamental to addressing modern day challenges and creates a long lasting positive impact. It is with this approach that MERITE scheme has been formulated in collaboration with the World Bank. The reforms envisioned in the higher education sector in the National Education Policy-2020 are the basis of interventions designed for the scheme.

The major reform areas in the policy include revamping curriculum, pedagogy, assessment, multidisciplinary programs among technical courses, strengthening research ecosystem, development of future academic administrators, faculty skill upgradation, addressing gender gaps in technical education and reducing digital divide etc.

The participating States/ UT are important stakeholders. They have a major role to play in the implementation of the scheme and their views and feedback received during several meetings and consultations have been duly considered while designing the interventions.

MJPS/BM

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