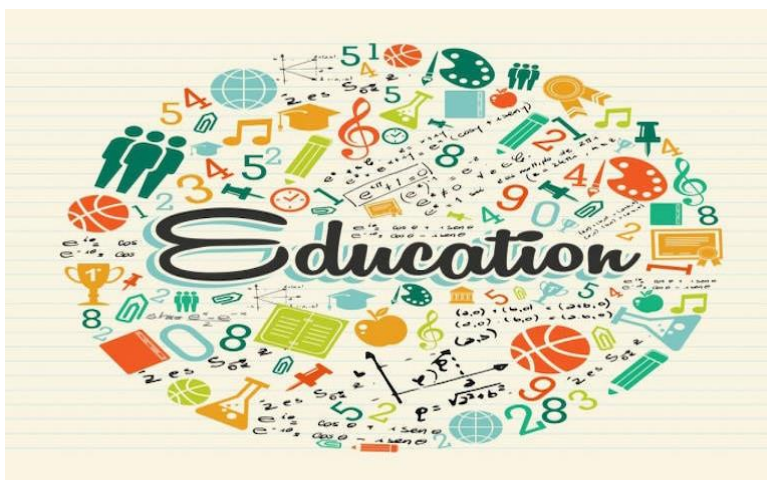




Education reforms for Inclusive Education

Context:

- The lockdown induced by COVID-19 has exposed the urgency of more inclusive employment, employability, and education. It is an established fact that the traditional universities have failed in achieving



the said objective. Moreover, the Skill universities that deliver employability and employer financing are held back by the redundant regulations.

About Skill University:

- As per the **National Policy for Skill Development & Entrepreneurship, 2015**– National Skills Universities and Institutes will be promoted in partnership with States as centres of excellence for skill development and training of trainers.
- The Skills Universities shall offer **sector specific certificate, diploma and degree programmes** directly related to the job roles in demand.
- A skill university differs from a traditional university that it has **governance, faculty, curriculum, and pedagogy** under one umbrella.
- It has four classrooms; **on-campus, on-line, on-site, and on-the-job**.
- It offers modularity between four qualifications; **certificates, diplomas, advanced diplomas, and degrees**.
- It has four sources of financing — **employers, students, CSR, and loans** (though employers contribute more than 95 per cent of the costs).

What is the need for reforms?

- The question “**can we be equal and excellent?**” asked by educator John Gardner’s 1961 book captures the contradictory objectives of universities.



- The education system needs to provide **both equality and excellence**.
- The differential lockdown outcomes for skilled and unskilled workers **highlight our university system's pre-existing conditions** — broken employability promises, poor employer connectivity, and poor return on private investment that frustrate parents and students.
- This raises a question that why can't our universities be 1/4th college, 1/4th ITI, 1/4th apprenticeship, and 1/4th employment exchange.
- A majority of the contemporary institutions of higher learning are **quite disconnected with the requirements of employers**.
- Skill oriented courses available in the country on **the average, have low credibility and acceptability with the employers**, low aspirational value and are perceived as options of last resort.

What are the limitations of Universities?

Educated Unemployment:

- The world has produced more graduates in the last 35 years than the 700 years before.
- The graduates now include 60 per cent of Korea's taxi drivers, 31 per cent of US retail check-out clerks, and **15 per cent of India's high-end security guards**.
- **Mushrooming education centres and the skill gap** has led to the situation where degree holders can be seen in low end jobs to earn a living.

Education Debt:

- More than 50 per cent of \$1.5 trillion in student debt was expected to default even before the COVID pandemic.
- Indian bank **education loans have high NPAs**.

Lack of inclusive character:

- The system works for **privileged students studying full-time**, but today's students are likely to be **female, poor, older, rural, or studying part-time**.
- The lack of inclusivity of education and the **differentiated education outcomes** has failed the purpose of education.



Learning outcomes:

- The learning outcomes of **higher education are unmatched with the skills required in the modern technological era.**
- The rote model of learning can't suffice the requirements of the 21st-century.

Way Forward:

- Skill universities are a **scalable, sustainable, and affordable vehicle** to massify higher education by innovations in finance but they need a regulatory change.

University Grant Commission regulations:

- **The UGC Act of 1956 needs rewriting to equalise four classrooms** (online, on-site, on-campus, and on-job) and to **recognise apprenticeship linked degree programmes.**
- **The UGC Teacher Regulations of 2018 need rewriting** to redefine the qualifications, roles and numbers of teachers required, and to recognise industry experience as a teaching qualification.
- **The UGC Online Regulations 2018 need to be rewritten** to allow innovation, flexibility, credit frameworks, and relevance in online curriculums and to allow universities to work with any technology platforms.

NAAC IQAC Regulations:

The NAAC-IQAC (National Assessment and Accreditation Council-Internal Quality Assurance Cell Regulations) need rewriting:

- To **include work-based learning** and work integrated learning.
- To **include life skills** and proctored/evaluated internships.
- To **Integrate online learning** with university programmes.
- To **recognise teachers with industry experience**, and include industry-based research, criteria.
- To include **industry workplaces** and online classrooms as campus extensions.
- To **incorporate apprenticeships.**



The Apprenticeship Act of 1961:

- The **Apprenticeship Act of 1961** also needs to be modified **to allow and lift the licence raj for degree-linked apprentices** and recognise skills universities.

Conclusion:

- Education reforms are an endeavour of profound optimism that are long due because of vested interests, and archaic regulations. Skills Universities are the need of the hour to fill the long pending need for higher level institutions in the Skills space and would help **harvest latent value in India's existing skills landscape.**