Indian Education Updates through April 2010

On June 25, 2009, India's Minister of Human Resource Development (HRD), Kapil Sibal, unveiled his First 100 Days Plan for overhauling India's education system. The extremely ambitious plan was broken down into three main categories – Legislative Initiatives, Policy Initiatives, and Administrative and Other Initiatives – and covered an extremely broad array of two dozen topics that he hoped to tackle during his first several months in office. In the ten months since he first proposed these reforms, a great deal of attention has been placed on India's education system, both externally and internally. This article seeks to provide brief updates on the status of the proposed reforms.

First, it would behoove us to look at the broader social system in India to see why a major overhaul of education is even necessary. Here are some numbers to set the stage:
*   There are 220 million Indians in secondary schools, and 13 million students prepare for higher education, but only 10 million have the opportunity to go to college
*   Children make up 40% of India's population
*   13 million students prepare for higher education, but only 12% of the population is able to participate in higher education
*   Roughly 100,000 Indians attend college in the United States each year
*   Projections indicate that India will have 40 million more students in the next 10 years

In addition to these statistics regarding the population, it is equally important to identify the relevant figures related to the education system.
*   India currently has 480 public universities and 22,000-25,000 undergraduate colleges
*   In order to meet demand for its growing youth population and increase the Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) from 12% to 30% by 2010 , India will approximately 800 universities within the next decade
*   India needs an additional 27,000 higher education institutions, including 24,000 colleges of general higher education, almost 13,000 technical and professional institutions, and nearly 270 additional universities

Next, let's take a look at the First 100 Days Plans so that we can determine their progress. This article will address each of these initiatives, though some of them will be discussed in more significant detail as the goal of this article is to update the international education community working with the Indian student population.

First 100 Days Plan Department of School Education and Literacy

Legislative Initiatives
1. All steps will be taken to enact the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Bill. This will be followed by notification of the 86th Constitutional Amendment in the official gazette.
2. Evolve consensus for establishment of an All India Madarsa Board.

Policy Initiatives
3. Attempt to formulate a policy framework for PPP in school education, evolve a variety of PPP models, and apply them as feasible.
4. Further the use of ICT in secondary schools and in open/distance schooling through broadband

connectivity.
5. Evolve a National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education in consultation with all stakeholders and in accordance with NCF, 2005.

New Initiatives/Expansion
6. Explore possibilities of setting up an independent, accreditation body in the area of school education.
7. Push the process of examination reform in accordance with NCF-2005. This will include making the class X examination optional, thus permitting students continuing in the same school (and who do not need a board certificate) to take an internal school assessment instead.
8. Introduce a system for replacement of marks by grades in schools affiliated to the CBSE for the secondary classes i.e. IX and X.
9. Recast the National Literacy Mission to focus on women.
10. Awareness generation and intensification of efforts in the area of Madarsa/Maktab modernization and skill development for Muslim children.

First 100 Days Plan Department of Higher Education

Legislative Initiatives
1. An autonomous overarching authority for Higher Education and Research based on the recommendations of Yash Pal Committee and National Knowledge Commission

2. A law to prevent, prohibit and punish educational malpractices

3. A law for mandatory assessment and accreditation in higher education through an independent regulatory authority

4. A law to regulate entry and operation of Foreign Educational Providers

5. A law to establish a Tribunal to fast-track adjudication of disputes concerning stake holders (teachers, students, employees and management) in higher education

6. A law law to further amend the National Commission for Minority Educational Institutions Act, to strengthen the Commission

7. A law to amend the Copyright Act, 1957 to address the concerns relating to copyrights and related rights of the various stake holders.

Policy Initiatives
1. Formulation of a 'Brain-Gain' policy to attract talent from across the world to the existing and new institutions

2. Launching of a new Scheme of interest subsidy on educational loans taken for professional courses by the Economically Weaker Students

3. Strengthening and expansion of the Scheme for Remedial Coaching for students from SC/ST/minority communities, in higher education

4. 'Equal Opportunity Offices' to be created in all universities for effective implementation of schemes for disadvantaged sections of the society

5. A new policy on Distance Learning would be formulated

6. Regional Centre/Campus of Indira Gandhi National Tribal University, Amarkantak to be started in the state of Manipur

7. Model degree colleges would be established in 100 districts with significant population of weaker sections and the minorities

8. 100 women's hostels would be sanctioned in higher educational institutions located in districts with significant population of weaker sections and the minorities

Administrative and Other Initiatives
1. Review of the functioning of the existing Deemed Universities

2. Operationalizing newly established 12 Central Universities and 2 new IITs

3. Academic reforms (semester system, choice-based credit system, regular revision of syllabi, impetus to research, etc. which are already mandated under the Central Universities Act, 2009) to be introduced in other Central Educational Institutions

4. Modernization of Copyright Offices

5. 5000 colleges/university departments to be provided with broadband internet connectivity under the "National Mission on Education through ICT"

6. Assistance would be provided to States to establish at least 100 new polytechnics (over and above assistance already provided for 50 polytechnics in the last financial year) in districts without any polytechnic at present. States would also be assisted for the construction of 100 women's hostels in the existing polytechnics and for upgrading 50 existing polytechnics

7. Approvals would be obtained for establishing 10 new NITS in the un-served States so that every State has one earmarked NIT

8. Operationalising 700 revamped Community Polytechnics for skill development of rural youth

9. Direct credit of scholarship into the bank accounts of 41,000 boys and 41,000 girls every year, under the new Merit Scholarship Scheme for students in the universities and colleges.

Department of School Education and Literacy

All steps will be taken to enact the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Bill.

April 1, 2010 saw the implementation of the Right to Education (RTE) in India that provides for free and compulsory education for all children from ages 6 to 14. With this implementation, India has jointed over 130 other countries that guarantee free and compulsory education to their children, and India is in an even more select group of approximately 20 other countries offering 8 years of primary/secondary education. This right was actually added to the Indian Constitution in 2002, but was passed by Parliament last year. The World Bank has recently approved two projects with more than USD$1 billion to increase the outreach and quality of primary schools. Due to the large population of children in India, the government sees the increased need for an educated populous, and it hopes that the RTE will specifically target children in age groups who had previously dropped out of school. There are estimates that as many as 8-10 million school-age children in India, many of them girls, often stay out of school to do household chores, work, or look after siblings. India's literacy rate is 64%, but many of those who are theoretically literate can barely read or write. It is also estimated that RTE will cost more than USD$35 billion over the next five years.

Status of Initiative: Implemented

Evolve consensus for establishment of an All India Madarsa Board.

The Minister of HRD's plan is to create an All India Madarsa Board in an effort to lay the foundation for modernization of madarsas, or Islamic learning centers. A central board would empower state boards as well as provide funds to improve infrastructures as long as they do not interfere with religious teachings. However, there has been a great deal of backlash against the idea of a centralized board, fearing that it would dilute the identity of madarsas and attempt to reduce their spirituality. In February, the Minister assured the country that the government would not interfere with the Madarsa system and would not set up a central board until consensus is reached among the religious community. Then in March, rumors abounded that the Minister was going to go forward with setting up the board without consensus, but he publicly restated that he will not set up a central board without consensus within the community.

Status of Initiative: Stalled

Attempt to formulate a policy framework for PPP in school education, evolve a variety of PPP models, and apply them as feasible.

The HRD has been accepting suggestions on how to implement Public Private Partnerships (PPP) in school education. The model is has created thus far focuses on setting up 20 Indian Institutes of Information Technology (IIITs) wherein the expenses would be shared 85/15 by the government and private industry.

Status of Initiative: Accepting input

Further the use of ICT in secondary schools and in open/distance schooling through broadband connectivity.

The HRD has instituted a policy regarding Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in schools. They plan for each school to have an ICT teacher whose salary will be paid by the HRD. However, there has been some dispute over the reality of paying salaries for teachers at roughly a million primary/secondary schools throughout the country. As of a January press release, more than 53,000 government or government-aided secondary schools have been approved for establishing and using ICT-based teaching and learning. This idea has been in play since 2005, but the newest version of ICT in secondary schools will focus on covering more schools, building teaching skills, and developing and sharing e-learning content.

Status of Initiative: Approved for funds

Evolve a National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education in consultation with all stakeholders and in accordance with NCF, 2005.

In April, the National Council for Teacher Education Amendment Bill 2010 was introduced to Parliament to regulate the quality of teachers by applying standards of education in schools and determining the qualifications of prospective teachers. This bill would create a system of uniform standards of teaching throughout the country, thus creating a strong foundation for the necessary overhaul of the education system.

Status of Initiative: Introduced to Parliament

Explore possibilities of setting up an independent, accreditation body in the area of school education.

The Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) plans to introduce the process of accreditation for schools affiliated with it. The standards would allow for effective management and education. The accreditation process would also include a rating system which would allow schools to asses themselves and strive for continuous improvement. This emphasis on improving schools will specifically address challenges faced by schools in India such as quality, participation and equity, access, management, resources, and relevance. An accreditation process would establish competency measures for faculty, curriculum, management, and other aspects of providing school education. The CBSE currently has roughly 10,000 schools affiliated with it at present, but there is very little in place currently for monitoring or ensuring quality. The only real indicators of school quality are Class X and XII exam results. The goal of accreditation will be to create minimum acceptable levels of quality on a regular time period.

Status of Initiative: Creation of Framework draft, expectations of accreditation in 2009-2010 school year but nothing officially announced

Push the process of examination reform in accordance with NCF-2005. This will include making the class X examination optional, thus permitting students continuing in the same school (and who do not need a board certificate) to take an internal school assessment instead.

Beginning in 2011, the Class X board examination will be eliminated for students planning to stay at the same school, but they will be assessed at the school level on the basis of Continuous and Comprehensive Examinations (CCE). For students who plan to move out of school after Class X, either to attend school elsewhere or to leave school altogether, exams will be available on an on-demand basis from CBSE. Students remaining at the same school also have the option of taking the on-demand exams for self-assessment purposes.

Status of Initiative: 2010 marks the last year of mandatory Class X Board Exams

Introduce a system for replacement of marks by grades in schools affiliated to the CBSE for the secondary classes i.e. IX and X.

Instead of ranking students by marks from pre-primary grades all the way through Class XII, the CBSE has established a new student performance assessment. Student performance will be assessed using conventional numbers which will be converted into letter grades. Schools will also do away with the terms "Pass" and "Fail" up to class VIII. Schools will be required to promote students from one grade to the next regardless of grades they get in an effort to support RTE.

A student's grade will be based on results of the CCE mentioned above, which will account for 40% of the grade, combined with internal evaluations, which will comprise the other 60%.

Marks Range	Grade	Grade Point	Descriptor
91-100	A1	10.0	Exception
81-90	A2	9.0	Excellent
71-80	B1	8.0	Very Good
61-70	B2	7.0	Good
51-60	C1	6.0	Fair
41-50	C2	5.0	Average
33-40	D	4.0	Below Average
21-32	E1	--	Needs Improvement
0-20	E2	--	Unsatisfactory

Status of Initiative: The new grades are being implemented, but some schools are not promoting students who earn E grades because they feel students are not prepared to move on.

Recast the National Literacy Mission to focus on women.

Saakshar Bharat, also know as the National Literacy Mission, has been implemented to specifically focus on literacy for girls and women. In a country where roughly only half of its population is functionally literate, it is especially critical to recognize that women make up a significant portion of the illiterate adults, thus unable to obtain continuing education or improve living or working conditions.

The goal of the mission is now to make every woman literate in the next five years. There will also be a web-based, e-monitoring Management Information System to target 70,000,000 expected beneficiaries. The revamped literacy program will target roughly 60,000,000 women, half of which are in the SC/ST groups or other minorities.

Status of Initiative: Launched

Awareness generation and intensification of efforts in the area of Madarsa/Maktab modernization and skill development for Muslim children.

Madarsas and Maktabs are Islamic schools at the primary and secondary level that are often attached to mosques are generally, though not always, religious teaching institutions. The Scheme for Providing Quality Education in Madarsas (SPQEM) supports the idea of these traditional schools including math, science, Hindi, English, and other subjects into their curriculum so that children studying at these schools are able to attain academic proficiency. After a series of workshops to improve awareness of the new program, over 2000 Madarsas have been given support.

Status of Initiative: Ongoing efforts

Department of Higher Education

An autonomous overarching authority for Higher Education and Research based on the recommendations of Yash Pal Committee and National Knowledge Commission

The Yash Pal Committee and National Knowledge Commission, which had been established by the prior Ministry of HRD, was convened to examine the University Grants Council (UGC), All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE), and other higher education-related councils. While the original intent of the review committee was to determine the faults within the councils in hopes of updating the existing system, the Committee determined that the best course of action would be to focus on a broader spectrum of rejuvenating higher education in India. For a variety of reasons, including the sharing of ideas and best practices across narrow fields of discipline, the Committee determined that the UGC and AICTE and others should be subsumed within a single body, the National Commission for Higher Education and Research (NCHER). Two other major initiatives of the Committee focus on the increased proliferation of engineering and management colleges which often are merely money-making ventures that offer poor quality education, and the large numbers of low-quality Deemed Universities. This latter topic will be discussed at length later in this article.

Initially, it seemed as those the establishment of NCHER would entirely absorb and replace such entities as the UGC and AICTE. However, as recently as April 19, the task force drafting the NCHER Bill has been reworking the legislation after months of nationwide discussion. There has been much opposition to the idea of a centralized institution that will oversee education and research across the country with elected members from all states; many see it is a political move by the government to strangle education instead of the sharing of information and ideas that was originally intended. The Yash Pal Committee, also known as the Committee to Advise on the Renovation and Rejuvenation of Higher Education in India, had initially recommended a lifelong appointment to the council of elders,

but this idea was rejected and determined to be discriminatory, and will probably be replaced by a 10 year term. Another idea that has been reworked recently is the creation of a reference database of potential vice-chancellors who the NCHER believes would be suitable. In addition, there is still debate on whether the NCHER will be part of the government or the Ministry of HRD or not. The bill is being reworked right now and is expected to be submitted to Parliament this week.

Status of Initiative: Revisions to Bill prior to submission to Parliament

A law to prevent, prohibit and punish educational malpractices

In late March, the Cabinet cleared the "Prohibition of Unfair Practices in Technical, Medical Education Institutions and Universities Bill." However, the Bill is awaiting a Parliamentary Budget session. This proposal is intended to prevent, prohibit, and punish educational malpractices in order to restrict the unfair practices currently employed by unethical higher educational institutions as it relates to non-merit-based admissions; charging capitation fees; and false claims regarding faculty, institutional recognition, and infrastructure. This bill allows for strict penal such as fines of up to Rs 50 lakh (approximately US$11,000) or even imprisonment. As a result of this bill, educational malpractices would be seen as either criminal or civil offenses based on the specifics of the situation.

Status of Initiative: Approved but awaiting Parliamentary funding

A law for mandatory assessment and accreditation in higher education through an independent regulatory authority

A major goal of the HRD's educational reform is to implement mandatory assessment and accreditation at the higher education level. This would enable students and other stakeholders to easily obtain reliable information regarding academic quality and would require institutions to meet minimum standards and continuously identify enhancements to learning. In addition, mandatory accreditation would create ease of teacher and student mobility across institutions. Mandatory assessment would include strict entry barriers but would enable admitting institutions to hold the title of university rather than the now-controversial deemed-university status.

In mid-march, the UGC stated that they will no longer offer government financial assistance to degree colleges and universities that have not been assessed by the National Accreditation and Assessment Council (NAAC) beginning next year. As a result, all state universities and government or government-aided colleges need to be assessed as quickly as possible this year. The announcement was made at a workshop organized by state higher education commissions and the NAAC to explain the assessment process. As of the workshop date, only 12 of 254 state universities, 17 of 125 government colleges, and 103 of 345 government-aided colleges have completed the NAAC assessment. Once the law is in effect, all higher education institutions, whether they receive aid from the UGC or not, and irrespective of degree or diploma offerings will have to be assessed by the NAAC.

Status of Initiative: In effect in stages

A law to regulate entry and operation of Foreign Educational Providers

The Foreign Universities Bill, which will allow foreign universities to open campuses in India, has been widely debated in the media. Many believe that it will revolutionize and revitalize the higher education structure in India while others think it will simply be a money-making venture that will not positively influence education. There have been numerous commentaries on whether or not the regulatory requirements will be more lenient than those for domestic universities, whether they will need to make the same provisions for underrepresented students, and other comparisons between domestic universities.

The basic premise of the bill has been presented to the Cabinet several times over the the last few years with various revisions and past opposition by the former ruling political party. In March, the bill was approved by the Cabinet with some measures to protect India's interests, including measures to prohibit repatriation of funds to the home country and setting a minimum corpus of USD$11 million. There are some foreign higher education providers already operating in India due to a law on 100% direct investment passed in 2000. At present, they are not authorized to grant degrees in India, but many are offering twinning programs with Indian universities. This bill will ensure that all foreign providers meet minimum standards and may have deemed university status, though this is still up for debate. The approved bill stipulates an 8-month turnaround time for granting approval for foreign institutions before being registered with the current regulating body (UGC or NCHER).   There were rumors earlier this year that as many as 50 foreign universities – mostly from Britain, Australia, and the United States – have approached the HRD ministry about setting up campuses in India. However, the Education Minister recently stated that only not-for-profit higher education institutions will be allowed to ensure that India is not flooded by poor-quality or fly-by-night providers.

Status of Initiative: Approved by Cabinet, waiting for approval by Parliament

A law to establish a Tribunal to fast-track adjudication of disputes concerning stake holders (teachers, students, employees and management) in higher education

This initiative, approved by the Cabinet in March, was proposed in order to quickly adjudicate higher education disputes related to education stakeholders. It is closely related to a previous initiative related to malpractice. This particular bill will set up tribunals to adjudicate campus disputes dealing with malpractice and student harassment and will be set up in states. Disputing parties – students, teachers, employees, or even the higher education institutions themselves – will no longer need to go to court in order to air their grievances.

Status of Initiative: Approved by Cabinet, waiting for Introduction to Parliament

A law to further amend the National Commission for Minority Educational Institutions Act, to strengthen the Commission

The Act was approved in 2004 and created a Commission whose responsibility focused on Central and State Governments on the matter of minority education. In January, the Ranganath Mishra Commission – National Commission for Religious and Linguistic Minorities – Report indicated that amendments were needed to streamline the Act. The initial intent of the law was to strengthen the educational opportunities of religious minority communities. The Commission can grant or reject minority status applications as well as hear appeals on status applications. The major revision to the Bill is to increase the Commission from two members to three in order to more quickly process

requests, but it also removes a requirement for involving state governments during the appeals process among other amendments.

Status of Initiative: Approved by Council, waiting for approval by Parliament

A law to amend the Copyright Act, 1957 to address the concerns relating to copyrights and related rights of the various stake holders

The amendment to the 1957 Copyright Act addresses digital technology and the internet to bring the Act into conformity with the World Intellectual Property Organization Copyright Treaty, which is an international treaty on copyright law. The Cabinet has approved the suggestions for modernizing the Copyright Office as well as offering protection for digital works.

Status of Initiative: Approved by Cabinet, waiting for Introduction to Parliament

Formulation of a 'Brain-Gain' policy to attract talent from across the world to the existing and new institutions

The government of India has been encouraging the Indian student community to remain at home for both educational and work opportunities. Their goal of increasing GER in higher education from its current 12% to 30% in the next ten years, along with a stronger job market, has the government set on creating an infrastructure that will entice its best and brightest to remain at home. One of the aspects of increasing Indian talent is removal of a legal barrier that prohibits Persons of Indian Origin (PIOs) who are not citizens of India from working in public sector and government jobs. In particular, the HRD Ministry wants to attract reputed PIOs who are teaching in world-class institutions abroad. This initiative seeks to attract talent via research endowment funds; high quality campus life including school access for children of teachers and residential and health facilities; and forming networks of academics and researchers working outside the country to help identify talented Indians.

A major component of the HRD's brain gain policy is the creation of 14 "innovation universities" to attract global talent. As of March, both Yale University and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) have expressed interest in mentoring these new institutions through leadership programs as the universities are being created. Each innovation university is expected to focus on one area with special significance to India, such as public health or environmental sustainability.

Status of Initiative: Approved by Cabinet, waiting for Introduction to Parliament

Launching of a new Scheme of interest subsidy on educational loans taken for professional courses by the Economically Weaker Students

The government plans to provide full-interest subsidies on educational loans by economically weaker students who pursue technical and professional courses based on fixed parental annual income limits. To facilitate this and other educational financing goals, the HRD has proposed creating a National Education Finance Corporation in order to offer education loans at low interest rates. The Corporation could also provide educational institutions with access to low-cost funds to improve the quality needs of the education sector. Under the current proposal, roughly 80% of educational loans would be

covered, and the loan would include a one-year moratorium after graduation.

Status of Initiative: Proposal stage

Strengthening and expansion of the Scheme for Remedial Coaching for students from SC/ST/minority communities, in higher education

According to the UGC, Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes (SC/SCT) have been identified as the most oppressed groups of Indian society, and special provisions have been made to improve their status educationally and socially to allow them entry into mainstream society. In order to ensure a significant number of qualified SC/ST candidates as lecturers in colleges and universities, the UGC began offering coaching classes to prepare them before appearing for the National Educational Testing (NET), a required qualification for becoming a lecturer in India.

The expansion, suggested in August 2009, will dramatically increase the coaching opportunities such that SC/ST minorities could have coaching for all government examinations, not just the NET exam.

In late April, it was suggested that the government should expand the Right to Education Act – which currently offers free education for children from ages 6 to 14 – through the post-graduate level for SC/ST children, including free food, books, and clothing.

Status of Initiative: Four universities have already received funds from the HRD to begin expanded coaching

Equal Opportunity Offices' to be created in all universities for effective implementation of schemes for disadvantaged sections of the society

The offices were intended to be created in all universities in order to effectively implement new strategies for increasing opportunities for disadvantaged sectors.

Status of Initiative: Approved by Cabinet, waiting for Introduction to Parliament

A new policy on Distance Learning would be formulated

In April, the HRD Minister set up a task force to develop regulations for distance education. The minister was critical of universities offering distance models that compromised the quality of the course offerings. In particular, he expressed concern over private universities that offer courses outside of their territorial jurisdiction, which is against regulations. The task force will check for corruption and identify infringements against existing policies as well as make recommendations on new policies. Among the recommendations made during the September draft of policy is the establishment of NCHER to coordinate regulations and ensure credibility of diplomas, degrees, and certificates awarded through distance learning. Other recommendations state that only programs that do not need practicums can be offered through distance learning, the Distance Education Council (DEC) will assess the ability of an individual institution to offer distance education programs, and no higher education institution can offer distance learning programs without prior approval from DEC and accreditation, among other recommendations.

Status of Initiative: Task Force drafted New Policy

Regional Centre/Campus of Indira Gandhi National Tribal University, Amarkantak to be started in the state of Manipur

The State government identified 300 acres for the creation of of the regional center of IGNTU, and it was inaugurated on September 9, 2009. It will launch a Master of Philosophy program in Political Science. Tribal students in the state of Manipur now have the option to study at a separate facility which is temporarily housed in the Tribal Research Institute until the completion of its permanent campus in Makhan village.

Status of Initiative: Implemented

Model degree colleges would be established in 100 districts with significant population of weaker sections and the minorities
In 2007, Uttar Pradesh became a pilot state for the concept of 'model degree colleges', colleges with the latest courses and infrastructure that would be developed into models of quality education.

For this new implementation of model degree colleges, the HRD is focusing on establishing them in districts with low GER, prioritizing special category States and districts with minority concentrations. In August, the UGC approved guidelines for funding 374 model degree colleges. In January, the HRD and UGC identified 62 districts with minority concentrations greater than 20% on the basis of the 2001 census. The central government will provide about 1/3 of the total funds required to establish the colleges, while the rest will have to be taken care of by the state governments who will also be responsible for providing the lands free of charge.

Status of Initiative: Universities have been asked to identify suitable locations.

100 women's hostels would be sanctioned in higher educational institutions located in districts with significant population of weaker sections and the minorities

Financial assistance has been released to the state governments for constructing 120 women's hostels in minority and weaker sections. This initiative has been implemented in order to increase the representation of women in higher educational institutions, especially in non-metropolitan areas where women have less representation in higher studies.

Status of Initiative: The State of Delhi has received the first round of funding from the UGC

Review of the functioning of the existing Deemed Universities

As part of the UGC legislation, the Central Government may declare certain institutions of higher education as "institutions deemed to be universities," signifying that they could operate as universities but had not yet met all of the requirements of becoming a university. Deemed universities had full autonomy, meaning they could set their own course work and syllabus as well as determine their own

guidelines for admissions and fees. They were able to award university degrees without undergoing the legislative scrutiny of a full-fledged university.

In response to numerous complaints of malpractice against many of the deemed universities and a perceived lowering of quality education, the HRD created a committee to investigate the deemed university status and those institutions with that title. Out of 130 institutions identified as deemed to be universities, only 38 of them could meet minimum standards. Another 44 were found to be deficient in some aspect but were given a three-year grace period in which to improve their standing on specific areas. The remaining 44 actually lost their deemed university status on the basis of negligence, malpractice, lack of qualified faculty or infrastructure, or family-run money-making schemes, creating havoc for the nearly 200,000 students who were currently enrolled at those blacklisted institutions. (Four institutions were not reviewed during the committee review period.) A week after the HRD de-recognized these 44 institutions, the Supreme Court stepped in and determined that those institutions who had previously been affiliated colleges would revert to that state so the students could complete their programs and earn their degrees from the affiliated university.

As of mid-April, the HRD stated that only institutions who earned an A+ quality rating from the NAAC will be eligible for deemed university status going forward. Previously, the UGC and HRD used a set of guidelines for deemed universities that were updated periodically but were not legally binding. However, after the committee review, a new task force has been installed to create new, binding requirements. Previously, one of the two routes to becoming a deemed university was by functioning first as a college affiliated to a full university; the new regulation has changed the minimum affiliation period from 10 years to 15 years before being eligible for deemed university status. The other route to deemed status that had been used in the past – exceptions when institutions are offering programs in emerging areas the government wants to encourage – was determined to have been widely abused by institutions. The review committee identified that only some of the institutions who had been granted deemed status under this except path, also know as 'de novo,' or fresh deemed university status, were actually teaching and researching in the emergent programs which won them their status. In addition, previously only the UGC was involved in approving 'de novo' category institutions, but now a national panel of experts will be involved in the approval process, and the 'de novo' category will most likely be reserved for only government-run institutes. Under the earlier system, again only the UGC was involved in the re-application process, whose length of time was determined on a case-by-case base. Now, an independent panel will be involved with each deemed university's re-application review every five years. In addition, deemed universities are now barred from offering distance education courses, an area particularly noted by the committee for being abused by deemed universities. As a result of the chaos created by de-recognizing the 44 institutions mentioned above, the HRD had suggested doing away with the entire concept of deemed universities during this higher education restructuring.

In mid-March, the Supreme Court extended its order of maintaining the status quo for the 44 deemed universities identified for de-recognition while it reviewed reports from the UGC – which found nothing wrong with any of the deemed universities – and the HRD committee report recommending de-recognition.

The list of institutions the HRD committee recommends for de-recognition follows:

1. Nava Nalanda Mahadma, Nalanda (Bihar)
2. Rajiv Gandhi National Institute of Youth Development, Sriperumhudur (Tamil Nadu)
3. National Museum Institute of the History of Art, Conservation & Museoology (New Delhi)
4. Vignan's Foundation for Science, Technology& Research,Vadlamudi (Andhra Pradesh)

5. Sumandeep Vidyapeeth, Piparia Baroda (Gujarat)
6. Maharshi Markandeshwar University, MuIlana- Arnbala (Haryana)
7. Manav Rachna international University, Faridabad (Hwyana)
8. Lingaya's University. Faridabad (Halyana)
9. Sri Dwraj Urs Academy of Higher Education & Research, Tam& (Kolar) (Karnataka)
10. Yenepoya University Mangalore (Karnataka)
11. BLDE University, Bijapur (Karnataka)
12. Sri Siddhartha Academy of Higher Education, Rmkur (Karnataka)
13. Christ College, Bangalore (Kamataka)
14. Jain University, Bangalore (Karnataka)
15. T i Maharashtra Gdyapith, Pune (Maharashtra)
16. Krishna Institute of Medical Sciences, Karad (Maharashtra)
17. DY Pat3 Medical College, Kolhapur (Maharashtra)
18. Sbiksha '0'Anusandhan, Bhubaneswar (Orissa)
19. Sri BalajiVidyapeeih, (Pondicheny)
20. Janardan Rai Nagar RajasthanVidyapith, Udaipur (Rajasthan)
21. Institute of Advanceed Studies in Education of Gandhi Vidya Mandir Sadarshahr (Rajasthan)
22. Mody Institute of Technology &Science, Lakshmangarh (Rajasthan)
23. Vinayaka Mission's Research Foundation, Salem (Tamil Nadu)
24. Barath Institute of Higher Education &Research, Chennai (Tamil Nadu)
25. Dr. MGR Educational & Research Institute, Chennai (Tamil Nadu)
26. Meenakshi Academy of Higher Education &Research, Chennai (Tamil Nadu)
27. Saveetha Institute of Medical & Technical Sciences, Qennai (Tamil Nadu)
28. Kslasalingam Academy of Research&Education,Vidhnagar mil Nadu)
29. Periyar Maniammai Institute of Science & Technology, Thanjavur (Tamil Nadu)
30. Academy of Maritime Education & Training, Kanathur (Tamil Nadu)
31. Ponnaiyah Ramajayam Institute of Technology & Science, Thanjavur (Tamil Nadu)
32. St. Peter's Institute of Higher Education & Research, Padur (Tamil Nadu)
33. Vel's Institute of Science, Technology and Advanced Studies, Chennai (Tamil Nadu)
34. Chettinad Academy of Research & Education, Coimbatore (Tamil Nadu)
35. Karpagam Academy of Higher Education, Coimbatore (Tamil Nadu)
36. Vel-Tech Rangarajan Dr. Sagunthala R&D Institute of Science & Technology, Chennai (Tamil Nadu)
37. Noorul Islam Centre for Higher Education, Kanyakumari (Tamil Nadu)
38. Gurukul Kangri Vishwavidyalaya, Haridwar (Uttarkhand)
39. Swami Rama Vidyapeeth, Dehradun (Uttarakhand)
40. Graphic Era University, Dehradun (Uttarakhand)
41. Jaypee Institute of Information Technology, Noida (Uttar Pradesh)
42. Shobhit Institute of Engineering & Technology, Meerut (Uttar Pradesh)
43. Santosh University, Ghaziabad (Uttar Pradesh)
44. Nehru Gram Bharti Vishwavidyalaya, Allahabad (Uttar Pradesh)

Status of Initiative: All 130 deemed universities are actively recruiting for future terms

Operationalizing newly established 12 Central Universities and 2 new IITs

In India, universities are generally established by state governments. However, a Central University is

created by an act of Parliament. The Central Universities Act of 2009 increased the number of Central Universities in India to 39. In 2009, the Government established a dozen new central universities and hopes to introduce more.

New Central Universities established in 2009:
- Central University of Bihar
- Central University of Gujarat
- Central University of Haryana *
- Central University of Himachal Pradesh
- Central University of Jammy and Kashmir
- Central University of Jharkhand
- Central University of Karnataka
- Central University of Kerala
- Central University of Orissa
- Central University of Punjab
- Central University of Rajashtan
- Central University of Tamil Nadu
  * This university is not included in the list below from HRD website but is included elsewhere on the HRD website

The complete list of Central Universities in India from the Department of Education website:

1. Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh-202 002. (Central University)
2. Assam University, Silchar -788 11 (Central University)
3. Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar University, Lucknow- 226 025 (Central University)
4. Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi-221 005 (Central University)
5. Central Agricultural University, Imphal-795 004 (Central University)
6. Delhi University, Delhi-110 007. (Central University)
7. Dr Harisingh Gour Vishwavidyalaya, Sagar-470 003(Central University)
8. Guru Ghasidas Vishwavidyalaya, Bilaspur- 495 009 (Central University)
9. Hemwati Nandan Bahuguna Garhwal University, Srinagar-246 174.(Central University)
10. Hyderabad University, Hyderabad-500 046. (Central University)
11. Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU), New Delhi- 110 068. (Central University)
12. Jamia Mallia Islamia University, New Delhi-110 025. (Central University)
13. Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi-110 067. (Central University)
14. Mahatma Gandhi Antarrashtriya Hindi Vishwavidyalay, Wardha.(Central University).
15. Manipur University, Imphal-795 003 (Central University)
16. Maulana Azad National Urdu University, Hyderabad-500032. (Central University)
17. Mizoram University, Aizawal-796 012 (Central University)
18. Nagaland University, Nagaland-797 001 (Central University)
19. North Eastern Hill University, Shilong-793 022. (Central University)
20. Pondicherry University, Pondicherry-605 014. (Central University)
21. Rajiv Gandhi University, Itanagar-791 112. (Central University)
22. Sikkim University, Gangtok (Central University)
23. Tezpur University, Tezpur.- 784 028 (Central University)
24. The English and Foreign Languages University, Hyderabad-500 007. (Central University)

25. The Indira Gandhi National Tribal University, Amarkantak, Madhya Pradesh (Central University)
26. Tripura University, Agartala-799 130. (Central University)
27. University of Allahabad, Allahabad-211 002 (Central University).
28. University of Bihar, Bihar (Central University). *
29. University of Gujarat, Gujarat (Central University).*
30. University of Himachal Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh (Central University).*
31. University of Jammu & Kashmir, Camp Office, Naseemabad, Sadarbad, Srinagar-190 006 (Central University).*
32. University of Jharkhand, Jharkhand (Central University).*
33. University of Karnataka, Karnataka (Central University).*
34. University of Kerala, Kerala (Central University). *
35. University of Orissa, Camp office-28/6 Betin Pal Road Extn., PO-Kalighat, Kolkata-700 026 (Central University).*
36. University of Punjab, Punjab (Central University) *
37. University of Rajasthan, Camp office-Shivaji University, Kolhapur-416 004 (Central University).*
38. University of Tamil Nadu, Tamil Nadu (Central University)*
39. Vishwa Bharati University, Shanti Niketan-731 235. (Central University)

   * Newly created in 2009.

In 2008, the Government has also increased the IIT system. Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs) are autonomous technology- or engineering-oriented higher education institutions designed to train engineers and scientists to create a skilled workforce. They are listed as Institutes of National Importance by the HRD and Parliament, meaning they do not require AICTE recognition. While they are autonomous, they have a joint entrance examination, to be discussed later, and a common admission process for undergraduate students. To ensure the continued quality of the IIT system with this large increase in its numbers, the HRD has been holding workshops for the directors and administrators of the new IITs. In addition, each of the new IITs have been assigned to a mentor IIT.

The current list of IITs is:
• Indian Institute of Technology Kanpur
• Indian Institute of Technology, Bhubaneswar *
• Indian Institute of Technology, Bombay
• Indian Institute of Technology, Delhi
• Indian Institute of Technology, Gandhinagar *
• Indian Institute of Technology, Guwahati
• Indian Institute of Technology, Hyderabad *
• Indian Institute of Technology, Indore *
• Indian Institute of Technology, Kharagpur
• Indian Institute of Technology, Madras
• Indian Institute of Technology, Mandi *
• Indian Institute of Technology, Patna *
• Indian Institute of Technology, Rajasthan (Jodhpur) *
• Indian Institute of Technology, Roorkee
• Indian Institute of Technology, Ropar *
   * Newly created in 2008.

Status of Initiative: All 12 new Central Universities have been opened, though some are still operating in makeshift campuses. Six of the IITs opened their doors in 2008, and IIT Mandi and IIT Indore began operating in 2009.

Academic reforms (semester system, choice-based credit system, regular revision of syllabi, impetus to research, etc. which are already mandated under the Central Universities Act, 2009) to be introduced in other Central Educational Institutions

The UGC identified several areas of academic reform that central and state universities, colleges, and other higher education institutions need to adopt. Some or more of these areas have already been implemented at some institutions.
- Semester-based system
- Choice-based credit system
- Curriculum development (including regular revision of syllabi and emphasis on research)
- Admissions procedures
- Examinations reforms

With respect switching to a semester-based system, this will enable institutions to continuous internal assessment rather than relying on annual, external written exams that are often unreasonable in duration. A new semester system will also allow institutions to identify prescribe specific numbers of contact hours; relative weight of internal assessment, papers, and examinations; and uniform academic calendars across institutions that will enable consistent declaration of results.

Regarding choice-based credits, student mobility and curricular flexibility can also be accomplished by offered credit-based courses and credit accumulation. This also speaks to the need for a minimum and maximum span of time in which a course can be completed as well as identifying course duration in terms of credit hours.

Curriculum development needs to become more deeply ingrained in each higher education institution's academic culture. The UGC recommends that each institution conduct curricula development exercises leading to major updates and revisions to course material every three years. In a related note, the UGC recommends that M. Phil and Ph. D programs be made more formal, particularly by introducing coursework into the PhD program instead of relying entirely on dissertation/thesis writings.

Admission procedures have been hotly debated in India in recent years as the HRD has made the recommendation to begin using a nation-wide aptitude test for college admission across all streams rather than the numerous admissions tests currently offered in the country. The Minister has argued that by forcing applicants to submit to numerous tests, they are increasing pressure on students and decreasing their test-taking abilities due to the stress. While the Minister wants an aptitude test modeled on the SAT, many opponents of the plan have pointed out the known correlations in SAT testing that serves to discriminate on the basis of class and race. As such, the HRD plans to study the idea in more detail. However, just a few weeks ago, seven of the newly created Central Universities banded together to hold a combined entrance exam for admissions for about two dozen of their courses. IITs and IIMs are also currently holding combined entrance exams. The Indian Institute of Technology-Joint Entrance Examination (IIT-JEE) may be replaced by a single nationwide entrance exam for engineering programs throughout the country, affecting not only IITs but other engineering colleges and schools as

well.

Exam reform refers not only to the change in externally written exams mentioned above but also the need for a grading system to bring evaluation and examination in line with best practices. The UGC recommends moving away from marks/divisions to a 9-point scale and Cumulative Grade Point Score.

Status of Initiative: Various stages of implementation

Modernization of Copyright Offices

Phase I of the Modernization of Copyright Offices began in early September. It involved creating a new web portal at Copyright.gov.in for the Copyright office along with an option for online registration of copyright applications and the ability to check the status of a copyright application. The copyright office also moved to a more accessible location. In the second phase, all records since 1958 of the Copyright Office will be digitized and uploaded on the portal for users to easily search. The second phase was supposed to go into effect in December 2009, but it is not yet available on the website.

Status of Initiative: Phase I is already complete.

5000 colleges/university departments to be provided with broadband internet connectivity under the "National Mission on Education through ICT"

The National Mission on Education through Information and Communication Technology (ICT) was created by the Central Government to best leverage the potential of ICT for increasing use in higher education institutions all over India. The first meeting of the entire Mission was held in September. At this meeting, the Secretary of Higher Education summarized the findings from project approval board meetings and more than 40 pilot projects. At the meeting, more than two dozen live demos were presented on virtual classrooms, virtual labs, educational resource planning, learning management tools, software and hardware tools designed to improve learning, and more. The National Mission will be focusing on remote areas, many of which did not previously have fiber optics. As part of the Right to Education Act, the HRD is also now exploring the usefulness of ICT at the school level.

The most recent update from early April indicates that progress has to be made in stages: setting up a nationwide infrastructure of fiber optics with both public and private internet service providers, establishing broadband wireless connections in rural areas, and providing wireless access in rural areas in the next two years.

Status of Initiative: Progress made in stages

Assistance would be provided to States to establish at least 100 new polytechnics (over and above assistance already provided for 50 polytechnics in the last financial year) in districts without any polytechnic at present. States would also be assisted for the construction of 100 women's hostels in the existing polytechnics and for upgrading 50 existing polytechnics

As of the new year, money has been released to the State Governments for the establishment of 178 new polytechnic in districts currently without, for upgrading the infrastructure of 55 existing

polytechnics, and for constructing women's hostels at 120 polytechnic.

Status of Initiative: Funds released and building is in progress.

Approvals would be obtained for establishing 10 new NITS in the un-served States so that every State has one earmarked NIT

In addition to creating new IITs, the HRD planned to establish 10 new National Institutes of Technology (NITs). NITs, like IITs, are prestigious colleges oriented towards engineering and technology. Prior to 2002, 17 of the existing 20 were called Regional Engineering Colleges, but the HRD upgraded them and provided them with autonomy. The other three existing NITs were engineering colleges that were provided with new infrastructure and funding to bring them up to NIT status. The master plan is to establish at least one NIT in each of the 28 states and 7 Union Territories. Like the IITs, the new NITs will be mentored by existing NITs for the first two to three years until they are properly established.

The proposed 10 new NITs are:
- National Institute of Technology-Arunachal Pradesh
- National Institute of Technology-Sikkim
- National Institute of Technology, Dehradun (Uttarkhand)
- National Institute of Technology, Delhi (also catering to Chandigarh)
- National Institute of Technology, Goa (also catering to Daman & Diu, Dadra & Nagar Haveli, and Lakshadweep)
- National Institute of Technology, Manipur
- National Institute of Technology, Meghalaya
- National Institute of Technology, Mizoram
- National Institute of Technology, Nagaland
- National Institute of Technology, Puducherry (also catering to Andaman & Nicobar Islands)

The 20 Existing NITs:
- National Institute of Technology, Agartala (Tripura)
- Motilal Nehru National Institute of Technology, Allahabad
- Maulana Azad National Institute of Technology, Bhopal
- National Institute of Technology, Calicut
- National Institute of Technology, Durgapur
- National Institute of Technology, Hamirpur (Himachal Pradesh)
- Malaviya National Institute of Technology, Jaipur
- Dr. B.R. Ambedkar National Institute of Technology, Jalandhar (Punjab)
- National Institute of Technology, Jamshedpur
- National Institute of Technology, Kurukshetra (Haryana)
- Visvesvaraya National Institute of Technology, Nagpur
- National Institute of Technology, Patna
- National Institute of Technology, Raipur (Chhattisgarh)
- National Institute of Technology, Rourkela
- National Institute of Technology, Silchar (Assam)
- National Institute of Technology, Srinagar (Hazaratbal)

- Sardar Vallabhbhai National Institute of Technology, Surat.
- National Institute of Technology, Surathkal (Srinivasanagar)
- National Institute of Technology, Tiruchirapalli (Tamil Nadu)
- National Institute of Technology, Warangal

Seven new Indian Institutes of Management (IIMs) are also being set up throughout the country. IIMs are graduate business schools that provide consulting services to the Indian government and other sectors as well as conduct research and train in the best management techniques. They are autonomous institutions that offer post-graduate programs in management comparable to MBA programs, executive MBA programs, and PhD equivalent programs as well. They conduct a competitive admissions test called the Common Admission Test (CAT) which is considered one of the most competitive exams in the world; as of 2009, the CAT is a computer-based test

The proposed IIMs will be set up in two phases. The first phase will include the asterisked institutions:
- Indian Institute of Management, Jammu and Kashmir
- Indian Institute of Management, Raipur *
- Indian Institute of Management, Rajasthan
- Indian Institute of Management, Ranchi *
- Indian Institute of Management, Rohtak (Haryana) *
- Indian Institute of Management, Tiruchirapalli (Tamil Nadu) *
- Indian Institute of Management, Uttarakhand

Existing 7 IIMs:
- Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad
- Indian Institute of Management, Bangalore
- Indian Institute of Management, Kolkota (Calcutta)
- Indian Institute of Management, Lucknow
- Indian Institute of Management, Indore
- Indian Institute of Management, Kozhikode
- Indian Institute of Management, Shillong

Status of Initiative: NIT Amendment Bill is currently being introduced to Parliament

Operationalising 700 revamped Community Polytechnics for skill development of rural youth

The HRD plans to operationalize 703 revamped community polytechnic for developing the skills and work abilities of rural youth. There are rumors that India and Germany will set up a Joint Working Group on education in order to facilitate this process of working together in skill development. Community Polytechnics were created in order to act as important centers for rural area skill development and employment assistance through informal training in trades and various skills.

Status of Initiative: 703 community polytechnics have been sanctioned

Direct credit of scholarship into the bank accounts of 41,000 boys and 41,000 girls every year, under the new Merit Scholarship Scheme for students in the universities and colleges

The new Merit scholarships will be awarded based on the results of the senior secondary examination with 82,000 new scholarships awarded each year for graduate or post-graduate studies in colleges and universities or for professional programs such as medical or engineering courses. The scholarships will be divvied up by State population for ages 18-25 to the State Boards. Half of the scholarships are to be set aside for girls and the other half for boys. Students who earn 80% of marks on Class XII exams will be eligible based on family income and other criteria.

Status of Initiative: Scholarships are currently being awarded