Importance of research in UG curriculum

What is the issue?

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There are growing demands that research should be made part of UG curriculum in India.

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What is the background?

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- India has made considerable strides in achieving a near-perfect enrolment rate in primary education.
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- But it has failed to give higher education as much attention.
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- As a consequence, Gross Enrolment Ratio in higher education is 25.8%, against China's 48.44% and the U.S.'s 88.84%.
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What is the importance of research in higher education?

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- In India, about 80% of the students enrolled in higher education are concentrated in undergraduate (UG) programmes.
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- Research and application-oriented education can substantially enhance the quality of UG education.
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- Several studies on such programmes have shown a positive impact on students such as –
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1. Enhanced learning through mentorship
2. Increased retention
3. Increased enrolment in graduate education
4. More prowess in critical thinking
5. Creativity and problem solving
6. Intellectual independence
7. Understanding of research methodologies

- Research at the UG level <u>increases the aptitude</u> for research-oriented career options as well as the <u>employability of students</u>.
- The faculty can also gain by sharing their research ideas with students, receive valuable feedback as well as help in the form of assistantship and apprenticeship.
- Additionally, research also helps the faculty <u>enhance their teaching abilities</u> and content by upgrading knowledge.
- It can also help solve the problem of <u>shortage of faculty</u>, as more students will likely opt for doctoral and post-doctoral studies and teach in their home country.
- Thus, research and teaching should ideally go together in any sound higher education system.

What are the measures taken by the government?

- The government has also floated two ambitious projects towards internationalising higher education in India - 'Study in India' and 'Institutes

of Eminence'.
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- The "Study in India' is an innovative initiative to attract students from our partner countries in South Asia, South-East Asia, Middle East and Africa to come and experience the very best of academic learning from the top institutions in India.
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- This will be achieved through systematic brand-building, identifying quality institutions for receiving the students, creating suitable infrastructure and facilitation structures.
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- Under the Institute of Eminence, 10 private and 10 public universities are to be selected.
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- The selected institutes shall be regulated differently from other deemed to be universities so as to evolve into institutions of world class in a reasonable time period.
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- Both these measures will need institutes to become world class and carry out high-quality research on campuses.
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- Only then will competent faculty as well as doctoral students from across the world come to India.
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- Internationalisation of campuses is important if India wants to be in the global university ranking lists.
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- But this will not happen without encouraging an ecosystem that promotes high-quality research.
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What should be done?

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- Research remains a significant weakness in India's higher education system.
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- It has been traditionally restricted to specialised institutes such as the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research (TIFR), Indian Institute of Science (IISc) etc.,
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- Also, there is hardly any interaction between these institutes and teaching universities.

- Thus, Investment in education should be at least <u>6% of GDP</u> to upgrade infrastructure, labs and resources, which are essential to carry out high-quality research.
- The University Grants Commission and other regulatory bodies will have to come out with a <u>priority list of reputable journals</u>.
- This will reduce the problem of bogus journals and publications.
- Research institutes such as TIFR and IISc should <u>mentor</u> some of the well-performing universities and colleges till they become aware of the nuances of conducting fair and high-quality research.
- Once capable, these trained institutes can then help the second rung of colleges and so on.
- Also, there should be planned ways to embed research in UG curriculum.
- The UGC should make it compulsory for students to submit at least a 5,000-word research paper that should be assessed in the same way as serious research journals.
- Also, students need to be<u>made aware</u> of the value of research from an early stage to recognise the true value of higher education.
- The status quo in education has resulted in education that is not only substandard but also fails to open inquiring minds to the world of research.
- Thus, India must be innovative in its approach if its wants to reap the benefits of its demographic dividend.

Source: The Hindu