



VIKSIT BHARAT SHIKSHA ADHISHTHAN BILL, 2025: A LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK FOR TRANSFORMING INDIAN HIGHER EDUCATION TOWARDS VIKSIT BHARAT 2047

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Abstract

India's vision to become a developed nation by 2047 requires a robust education system that provides innovative, future-oriented, high-quality and inclusive education that promotes sustainability, research, innovation, entrepreneurship and the development of human capital. The Viksit Bharat Shiksha Adhishthan Bill, 2025 (VBSA Bill) is seen as a landmark step proposing to restructure and strengthen the entire higher education system. The present paper provides a conceptual analysis of the VBSA, 2025 framework. The present paper also examines the contribution of the VBSA Bill in leading India towards Viksit Bharat 2047.

Keywords: *Viksiti Bharat Shiksha Adhishthan Bill, Viksit Bharat, Regulatory Council, Accreditation Council, Standards Council*

INTRODUCTION

Education is our fundamental human right and a cornerstone of national development. It lays the foundation for economic growth, cultural advancement and social progress and is integral to sustainable development, peace and stability within and among nations (Ray, 2024). Countries that have invested heavily in their educational systems are now leading contributors in science, innovation, research and technology, which have substantially contributed to their economic sustainability and growth (Desai & Dhage, 2026). India aims to become a fully developed nation by the 100th year of its independence. During the launch of "Viksiti Bharat @ 2047: Voice of Youth", Prime Minister Narendra Modi called the current period Amrit Kaal and said that this is the right time for our country to take a quantum leap and transform into a

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developed nation (Government of India, 2023). He stressed, “Today, every institution and every individual should move with a resolution that every effort and act will be for Viksit Bharat. The aim of your goals, your resolutions should be only one- Developed India” (Government of India, 2023). India currently possesses the world’s largest youth population and it is the responsibility of each and every higher educational institution to channelise the capabilities and enthusiasm of their students and youth towards achieving the collective vision of Viksit Bharat. For India to emerge as a developed nation by 2047, it requires substantial improvements in its GDP, ranging from USD 30 trillion to USD 40 trillion, zero poverty, upliftment of underprivileged societies through inclusivity and financial security and high-quality healthcare facilities for all its citizens. In the field of higher education, it requires creating an education system that is deeply rooted in the Indian Knowledge System and also futuristic, developing globally recognised and competitive institutions, a vibrant research and innovation ecosystem, competency-based learning and a technologically skilled workforce capable of fulfilling the demands of the twenty-first century. The introduction of The Viksit Bharat Shiksha Adhishthan Bill (VBSA), 2025 by the Government of India marks a legislative reform that aims to overhaul the entire higher education system of the country. It was presented in the Lok Sabha in December, 2025 by the Union Education Minister Shri Dharmendra Pradhan and was further referred to a Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) for detailed scrutiny and broader consultations. The VBSA Bill, 2025 seeks to empower higher educational institutions through strengthened quality assurance, harmonised academic standards, a single regulatory framework, institutional autonomy and technology-driven governance with public disclosure and transparency. It also proposes repealing the existing regulatory bodies, i.e. UGC, AICTE, NCTE and COA.

The present research paper will highlight the key provisions of the VBSA Bill, 2025 and its contribution towards achieving the vision of Viksit Bharat 2047. It will also discuss the contemporary challenges faced by the higher education system in our country and the felt need for the VBSA Bill, 2025.

CONTEMPORARY CHALLENGES IN INDIAN HIGHER EDUCATION

Indian higher education is a vast domain, with more than 1200 universities and more than 50000 colleges in the country, covering a large network of institutions such as central universities, state universities, deemed universities, private universities and institutions of national importance. Despite its rapid expansion, the higher education system faces tremendous challenges, fails to meet globally standardised benchmarks and ultimately poses a barrier to achieving the goal of Viksit Bharat 2047.

1. **Fragmented Regulatory Framework:** The governance of higher education in India has long been characterised by multiple regulatory bodies, including UGC for general education, AICTE for technical education, NCTE for teacher education, COA for architectural education, BCI for legal education and NMC for medical education. This fragmented regulatory framework has resulted in a significant bureaucratic burden, excessive paperwork, delays in decision-making and conflicting regulations and guidelines. As per the vision of NEP 2020, many higher education institutions are now transforming into multidisciplinary institutions offering both professional and non-professional programmes. In such multidisciplinary institutions, the presence of multiple regulators makes it extremely difficult to ensure coherence in governance and hinders sustained focus on educational outcomes.
2. **Low Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER):** India has the world's third-largest higher education system; however, its Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) of approximately 28-30 per cent remains lowest among G20 nations in terms of the participation rate of students in higher education (Ganapathi, 2026). Furthermore, enrolment rates vary across different states. States such as Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand and Nagaland have relatively very low GER compared with other states, reflecting several socio-economic and regional disparities. The NEP 2020 aims to increase the GER in higher education to 50% by 2035. To achieve this target, higher education institutions need to provide high-quality, future-ready education, develop world-class infrastructure, bridge the urban-rural divide and strengthen institutional performance to improve the employability skills among graduates.
3. **Decline in Research and Innovation:** Since Independence, India has made remarkable progress across diverse fields such as agriculture, food technology, space science, nuclear technology and social science. Despite these achievements, the country continues to lag behind many developed and developing countries in terms of citation impact, h-index ranking, top-tier (Q1) journal publications, the Global Innovation Index and patent generation. Several factors contribute to this situation, including the excessive emphasis by academic institutions on the quantity rather than the quality of research publications, inadequate investment in research and innovation, limited institutional autonomy and insufficient financial support for research and innovation. India's expenditure on research and development remains below 0.7 per cent of GDP, considerably lower than that of many developed countries such as the United States (3.5 per cent), China (2.4 per cent), Germany (3.1 per cent) and Israel (5.5 per cent) (Sajjad & Athar, 2025).

- 4. Graduate unemployment:** Graduate unemployment in India is driven by several interrelated factors, including a mismatch between the skills graduates possess and those demanded by industry. Many graduates lack the industry-relevant knowledge, competencies and practical skills required for employment (Brut India, 2026). Additionally, the rapid emergence of artificial intelligence (AI) and other disruptive technologies has transformed the nature of work and generated demand for new skill sets. However, the higher education system in India has been relatively slow to respond to these evolving industry needs, thereby widening the employability gap among graduates.

NEED FOR THE VIKSIT BHARAT SHIKSHA ADHISHTHAN BILL, 2025

Several reforms have been introduced under NEP 2020 to revamp the entire higher education system in India, including introducing innovative pedagogical techniques, curriculum reforms, improving institutional autonomy, reducing complex regulations, strengthening the accreditation ecosystem, fostering research and innovation and establishing multidisciplinary institutions (Government of India, 2020). The existence of multiple regulatory bodies with overlapping roles and responsibilities has resulted in procedural delays, duplication of work and administrative complexities, posing a significant threat to quality education in higher education institutions. NEP 2020 recommended replacing the fragmented regulatory structure with a unified and integrated regulatory system based on the principle of a “light but tight” framework. By “light”, it means more institutional autonomy, simplified regulations and reduced bureaucratic interventions, whereas by “tight” it means greater focus on learning outcomes, quality education and academic integrity (Government of India, 2020). The introduction of the Viksit Bharat Adhishtan Bill (VBSA), 2025 has served as a legislative framework that seeks to establish a single regulatory body, provide autonomy to institutions based on quality accreditation, provide a grievance redressal mechanism for students and create a transparent and technology-driven higher education ecosystem rooted within Bharatiya Gyan Parampara and globally recognised.

MAJOR RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE BILL

- 1. Establishment of the Apex Body:** The bill provides for the establishment of the Viksit Bharat Shiksha Adhishtan as the apex regulatory body for higher education in India. It is envisaged as a single and unified authority responsible for coordinating and setting academic standards across all higher education institutions under its jurisdiction, excluding those offering medical and legal education. It aims to promote quality and excellence in teaching, learning, research and innovation in higher education (Government of India, 2025).

- 2. Three Independent Councils:** The bill seeks to create three independent bodies under the Viksit Bharat Shiksha Adhishthan. These include the Viksit Bharat Shiksha Viniyaman Parishad (regulatory council), the Viksit Bharat Shiksha Gunvatta Parishad (accreditation council) and the Viksit Bharat Shiksha Manak Parishad (standards council). Each council will be assigned specific roles and will perform its functions separately and independently. The Regulatory Council will serve as the common regulator for all higher education institutions. The Accreditation Council will be responsible for overseeing the accreditation system in higher education. The standards council will ensure the maintenance of common academic standards across all disciplines and handle matters related to teachers' professional growth (Government of India, 2025).
- 3. Repeal of Three Legacy Acts:** The Bill seeks to repeal the three main acts, i.e. the University Grants Commission Act, 1956, All India Council for Technical Education Act, 1987 and National Council for Teacher Education Act, 1993. All higher education institutions which were previously under the jurisdiction of these acts will directly come under the VBSA framework. All the rights and powers that belonged to these acts will now be transferred to the Viksit Bharat Shiksha Adhishthan (Government of India, 2025).
- 4. Technology-driven Single Window System:** A technology-driven single window system is introduced under VBSA to simplify and modernise the entire governance structure of higher education. All regulatory approvals, permissions and submissions will be handled through a single online platform. To promote transparency and fairness, the bill further states that all academic, administrative and financial information will be disclosed to the public by every higher education institution on a public website maintained by the Regulatory Council as well as on their institutional websites. This single window system, through its faceless, transparent, public- disclosure based regulations, supported by time-bound workflows and a technology-based automated system, will definitely overcome bureaucratic delays, reduce the administrative burden, make institutions more responsible and accountable and facilitate ease of governance across higher education institutions (Government of India, 2025).
- 5. Accreditation as a Predictor of Autonomy:** Institutional autonomy is considered essential to creating an enabling ecosystem in higher education capable of developing globally competitive institutions. The Bill recommends developing an Institutional Accreditation Framework under which higher education institutions will be accredited on the basis of four parameters, i.e., educational outcomes, good governance, financial probity and stability and transparent public disclosure of all academic, operational and financial

matters. Only high-performing institutions that attain quality accreditation status will be granted autonomy and self-governance progressively. By granting autonomy, the bill aims to overhaul the higher education system, enabling institutions to become multidisciplinary, make independent and dynamic decisions and provide high quality education and research, including vocational education, training and skill development programmes (Government of India, 2025).

6. **Penalties on Higher Education Institutions:** HEIs that violate the Act may be subject to fines ranging from Rs. 10 lakh to Rs. 70 lakh from the Regulatory Council. The Central or State Governments may also be advised to terminate employment of liable individuals, withhold grants, alter the degree-granting authority, withdraw affiliation, or order closure of an HEI. A penalty of at least Rs. 2 crore would be imposed for establishing a university without prior clearance (Government of India, 2025).
7. **Professional Standard Setting Bodies (PSSBs):** The Council of Architecture (CoA) will function as a Professional Standard Setting Body (PSSB) as envisaged in NEP 2020. This provision maintains functional separation from other regulatory functions, ensuring objectivity and freedom from conflicts of interest. The institutions set up under the Architecture Act 1972 are identified as Standard Grading Authority for these institutions, responsible for framing syllabi and fixing criteria for evaluation (Government of India, 2025).

VIKSIT BHARAT 2047 AND THE VIKSIT BHARAT ADHISHTHAN BILL 2025: MAPPING THE CONNECTIONS

1. **Building the Knowledge Economy and \$30 Trillion GDP:** Achieving a GDP of \$30 trillion by 2047 will require India to move decisively up the global value chain. This transition is contingent on producing large numbers of highly educated, innovative, research-oriented and globally competitive graduates. Higher education serves as the 'Knowledge Spine' tasked with transforming India's demographic bulge into a high-value human capital engine, where universities act as incubators for a \$30 trillion economy (Borkar, 2026). The VBSA Bill's emphasis on outcome-based regulation, research excellence, and globally benchmarked institutions directly serves this economic imperative. Industry-academia collaboration facilitated by the Bill through simplified regulatory norms generates new solutions to national challenges while providing employment prospects, research funding, and knowledge of business trends for academia (Borkar, 2026).

2. **Positioning India as Vishwa Guru:** Viksit Bharat 2047 envisions India as a net attractor of global intellectual talent and as a Vishwa Guru (global leader) by 2047 (Ray, 2024). By facilitating the establishment of globally benchmarked institutions, the Bill aims to position India as a knowledge hub while retaining domestic talent and attracting international students and faculty (Ministry of Education, 2025). The adaptation of global best practices in higher education will enhance quality, competitiveness, and international credibility of Indian HEIs. The Bill further facilitates Indian campuses abroad and cross-border academic collaborations. As of now, several foreign universities are opening campuses in India, with institutions like IITs establishing branches in Zanzibar and Abu Dhabi (Borkar, 2026), a trend the VBSA framework is designed to accelerate.
3. **Empowering Youth and Atmanirbhar Bharat:** Central to the Viksit Bharat vision is the empowerment of India's demographic dividend. India currently has the world's largest youth population (Ray, 2024). The VBSA Bill's emphasis on holistic education will pave the way for Atmanirbharta in the higher education sector and create a talented pool of students, facilitating the empowerment of youth by developing critical and innovative thinking with a focus on reskilling and upskilling.
4. **Social Equity and Inclusivity:** The VBSA Bill's provisions for public disclosure-based regulation, technology-enabled access, and inclusion of open and distance learning directly expand opportunities for students in rural areas, smaller towns, and marginalised communities.
5. **Research, Innovation and Technological Advancement:** The Viksit Bharat 2047 envisions India at the frontier of global technology and innovation. The VBSA Bill's outcome-based accreditation, performance metrics, and simplified regulatory norms create the preconditions for a step change in India's research output. The Anusandhan National Research Foundation (NRF), now fully operational in 2026, simplifies research funding and has driven India's patent filings to all-time highs, with domestic educational institutions having tripled their patent contributions in five years (Borkar, 2026). The VBSA regulatory framework is designed to complement these research investments by freeing institutions from compliance burdens to focus on innovation.
6. **Quality Assurance as a Foundation for a Developed Nation:** Transformation in the field of quality assurance and the accreditation system is a must to compete with globally set benchmarks. A unified National Accreditation Framework will emphasise outcome-based evaluation, focusing on employability skills, research productivity and

student success rather than input-based metrics. With the help of AI-driven analytics, technology will also play an important role in maintaining transparency in academic records and a real-time monitoring system. The VBSA Bill's Gunvatta Parishad directly advances this vision by serving as a trustworthy and independent accreditation authority that strengthens quality- assurance mechanisms across the entire higher education landscape.

CONCLUSION

The VBSA Bill, 2025 is introducing one of the most significant structural reforms of India's higher education governance that aims to actualise the vision and mission of NEP 2020. If implemented with transparency and sensitivity, this bill will surely play a prominent role in revamping India's entire higher education system and strengthening the national vision of a knowledge-driven, globally competitive Viksit Bharat, transforming India into a Vishwa Guru by 2047.

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