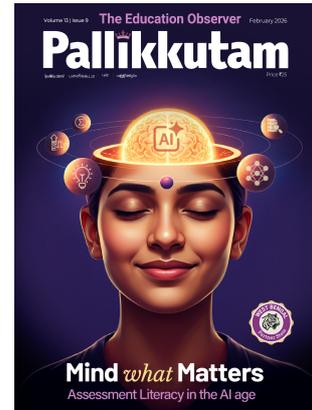


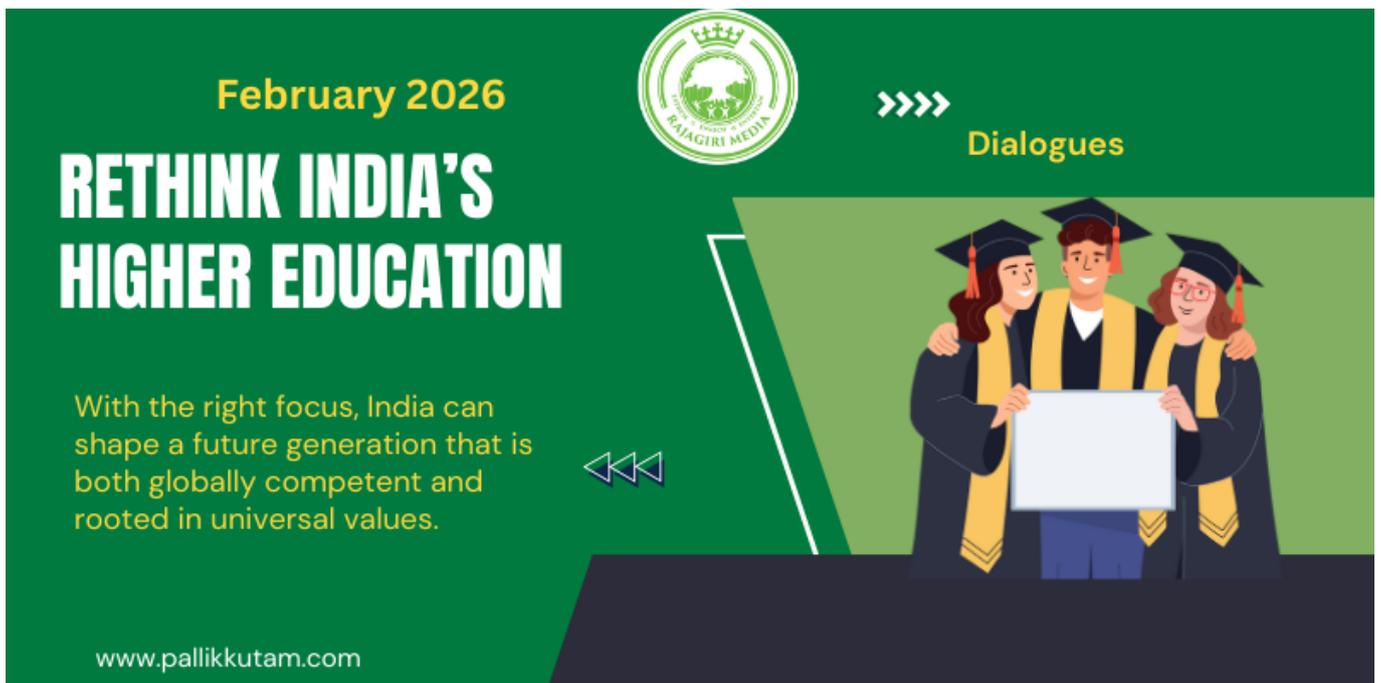
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Dialogues

Rethink India's Higher Education



February 2026

RETHINK INDIA'S HIGHER EDUCATION

With the right focus, India can shape a future generation that is both globally competent and rooted in universal values.

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Dialogues

Prof. T G Sitharam outlines how India can transform higher education through flexible policies, AI integration and renewed focus on quality & core disciplines.

At the 5th Pallikkutam Dialogues, Prof. Dr. T. G. Sitharam, former Chairman of AICTE and senior academic leader, explained that India's higher education system is undergoing a major transformation. He highlighted the progress achieved since the introduction of the National Education Policy 2020, especially in terms of flexibility, multidisciplinary learning and the inclusion of critical thinking and universal human values. He also described the significance of the new Bharat Shiksha Adhistan Bill, which aims to unify regulatory bodies and streamline governance through three commissions for regulation, accreditation and standard setting. According to him, India must recognise that countries like China began their reforms decades

earlier, yet the momentum in the last 10 to 12 years has placed India on a strong growth path, especially in engineering and management education.

Prof. Sitharam emphasised that engineering talent from India is now in high global demand, as demonstrated by the presence of Indian engineers across thousands of global capability centres. He pointed out that higher education has grown rapidly in scale, with India becoming the third largest system in the world, but the next challenge is quality and capacity building. He stressed the need to prepare for the surge of new learners expected by 2035 when the gross enrollment ratio target of 50 percent is set to be achieved. On the future of engineering education, he stated that artificial intelligence should not be feared. Instead, AI must be integrated into every discipline because it is already part of daily life and work. Teacher training, new curricula and hands on, problem solving based models are essential for producing graduates who can innovate and adapt, rather than merely code or execute routine tasks.

In the final part of the discussion, Prof. Sitharam spoke about strengthening India's core engineering disciplines such as civil, mechanical and electrical engineering. He noted that admissions in these branches have begun to rise again and that India is advancing steadily in fields like automobiles, defence technology, semiconductors, quantum technology and space sciences. He stressed the importance of preserving Indian values such as humility, cooperation and inclusiveness, which have helped Indian professionals succeed globally. He concluded that higher education must combine technological depth with human centric qualities, supported by flexible systems, strong infrastructure, teacher upskilling and a shared national vision. With the right focus, India can shape a future generation that is both globally competent and rooted in universal values.

[Click here to watch the 5th Pallikkutam Dialogues:](#)