

Transforming higher education in Telangana: Inside TGCHE's vision for a global and inclusive future

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INTERVIEW

In a candid and wide-ranging conversation, Professor V. Balakrishna Reddy, Chairman of the Telangana State Council of Higher Education (TGCHE), offered a comprehensive overview of the Council's transformative journey and its forward-looking agenda, with clarity and conviction, he outlined the vision, mission, and strategic planning that have shaped Telangana's higher education landscape since its bifurcation. From the historic transition of the APSHE Act to the TGCHE Act of 1988, to the digital overhaul of the Council's website, Professor Reddy emphasised the importance of institutional autonomy, transparency, and student-centric governance.

Excerpts from an interview with Prof V Balakrishna Reddy

Could you begin by explaining the significance of changing the APSHE Act to the TGCHE Act of 1988?

After bifurcation, Telangana needed its own higher education framework. Through G.O.Ms No. 5, 7, 9 (2014) and 8, we restructured APSHE into TGCHE, granting it statutory autonomy, corporate status, and accountability. Impact: Enabled independent policy evolution, transparent governance, and coordinated academic reforms.

What prompted the major revamp of the TGCHE website, and what has changed there?

The old portal was static. The new site (Nov 2024) offers real-time updates, multilingual support, accessibility compliance, grievance redressal, and analytics. It reflects "Telangana Rising 2047" branding.

Impact: With 1.7 million interactions, it ensures transparency, timely communication, and stakeholder engagement.

Could you tell us more about TGCHE's efforts to build a culture of research and innovation?

We launched TMR (peer-reviewed journal), a reform-

focused newsletter, and a stakeholder suggestion portal to foster inclusive academic dialogue.

Impact: Strengthened research culture, expanded global networks, and promoted transparent policy-making.

You introduced an internship programme under TGCHE for students. What makes it unique?

It's the first state council-led internship in governance. 34 students gained hands-on experience in policy, data analysis, and evaluation, mentored by TGCHE officials.

Impact: Developed policy-aware youth and set a replicable model for experiential learning.

Could you highlight some of your key meetings with government and institutional leaders?

We consulted AICTE, APSHE, MLAs (Nagar Kar-nool, Jikkal, Mudhole), and FDDI to promote innovation, resolve faculty gaps, and align education with industry.

Impact: Led to new proposals, district-level coordination, and inclusive policy development.

Telangana's higher education seems to be going global under your leadership. Could you share the highlights of TGCHE's international outreach?

We partnered with delegations from the UK, USA, Germany, Japan, and Australia for joint research, dual degrees, and skill development.

Impact: Elevated Telangana's global academic profile and fostered cross-border collaboration.



The revision of the undergraduate curriculum has been widely discussed. What are the key features of this reform?

We revised BA, B.Sc., B.Com., B.Tech., Law, and BBA programmes—reducing credits to 142, adding VACs and SECs, enhancing English and employability, and introducing ten new law subjects. Impact: Boosted flexibility, modernised curricula, and aligned education with global standards.

How have the Vice-Chancellors' meetings under your leadership improved coordination among Telangana's universities?

We introduced a Common Academic Calendar, reviewed reforms, and adopted FRBA and ABC/DigiLocker/AFAAR integration for student records.

Impact: Ensured academic coherence, digital governance, and performance benchmarking across institutions.

Telangana successfully conducted all major Common Entrance Tests this year. How did TGCHE ensure such a smooth process?

We managed CETs for over five lakh candidates using QR-coded hall tickets, mock counselling, upgraded software, early conveners, and revised local criteria favouring

Telangana students. Impact: It set benchmarks in fairness, efficiency, and digital integrity and boosted public trust in admissions.

What improvements were brought to the DOST 2025 admission process?

DOST was simplified with a unified window, easier registration, grievance redressal, and spot admissions for all colleges.

Impact: Enabled inclusive, transparent admissions and improved rural enrolment.

Youth engagement seems to be central to your approach. What steps did TGCHE take in this direction?

We held seminars, convocations, and partnered with World Skills 2026 to promote leadership and global exposure.

Impact: Fostered student confidence, innovation, and international representation.

How has TGCHE advanced women's empowerment within higher education?

Through scholarships with Azim Premji Foundation, leadership promotion, and gender-inclusive policies. Impact: Increased access and retention for women, empowering first-generation learners.

You personally guided JNTU-Hyderabad for 75 days as In-Charge. What were your key priorities? Focused on discipline

and welfare via campus drives, hostel checks, faculty recruitment, curriculum workshops, Wi-Fi access, and TCS skill training. Impact: Revitalized governance, improved faculty support, and strengthened research culture.

Tell us about some of the innovative outreach programs launched by TGCHE this year.

Initiatives included T-EAPCET awareness, anti-drug campaigns, RTI sessions, Earth Sciences collaboration, scholarships, placements, and Olympic Day Run. Impact: Linked education with ethics, wellness, and civic engagement.

Could you tell us about the Green Campus Initiative at Jadcherla?

We funded eco-projects at GDC Jadcherla—tree planting, rainwater harvesting, and waste management.

Impact: Promoted sustainability and environmental responsibility in higher education.

Could you highlight some of TGCHE's landmark policy contributions this year?

Key G.O.s included retirement age hike,

new reservations, new colleges at Husnabad, Earth Sciences University, RGUKT Mahbubnagar, and fee regulation. I also contributed to Telangana's Education Policy. Impact: Reshaped governance, expanded access, and ensured long-term structural reform.

What kinds of committees were constituted under your leadership, and what purpose do they serve?

Committees on recruitment, affiliation, curriculum, exams, fees, and admissions—comprising senior academicians. Impact: Enabled expert-led, accountable, and participatory governance.

How has TGCHE supported institutions financially during your tenure?

Provided funds for infrastructure, digital tools, research, Green Campuses, and classroom modernization—based on performance and need. Impact: Improved equity and capacity in rural and smaller colleges.

How important is public communication in education governance?

It's vital for trust. We ensured proactive media engagement to inform and involve stakeholders in reforms.

Impact: Boosted transparency, awareness, and institutional credibility.

What lies ahead for TGCHE in the coming year?

A: Focus on academic consolidation and global integration—via innovation clusters, AI governance, digital platforms, faculty mobility, and industry partnerships.

Impact: Positions Telangana as a leader in inclusive, globally competitive higher education.